

## ABSTRACT

### CONTEXTUALIZING THE RHETORIC OF SCHOOL REFORM: ADDRESSING COMPLEXITY IN SCHOOL REFORM AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Visions of reforming America's public schools are too simplistic to address the complexities of education. The emphasis on assessment and accountability of the current school reform agenda, the No Child Left Behind Act, is narrowing the definition of school performances to standardized test scores. Diane Ravitch's metaphor of the ladder of education illustrates the oversimplified notions of education that justify the reliance on standardized testing because her metaphor only addresses what content should be taught.

A summary of a study will demonstrate that how students are taught impacts their education. School reform methods must address how students will learn and what they will learn to do with their knowledge. Discussions of school reform must be expanded to address how and why content will be learned. Such concepts of school reform will require assessment that allows students to put their knowledge into action, rather than relying on standardized tests.

Christina Dawn Harralson  
August 2005