

## ***What Happened to Recess and Why Are Our Children Struggling in Kindergarten?***

by Susan Ohanian

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### **Book Description**

This book arms parents with everything they need to know to fight the pro-standards movements. Parents all across the political spectrum have united on one issue: when it comes to standardized testing, they all lean toward some kind of educational reform. Drawing on her 20 years of classroom experience and enriched by real-life anecdotes, Susan Ohanian's *What Happened to Recess, and Why Are Our Children Struggling in Kindergarten?* explains the misguided mania for testing children, why a child's success or failure is currently determined by a set of tests, and what parents are doing to change public policy on education.

Even children who are able test takers are hurt by the politics surrounding testing. Ohanian's moving insider's view imparts a sense of urgency about the situation of individual children caught on the front line of our treacherous education system. This beacon will inspire parents who are confused, angered, or intimidated by the forces that control their children's education to take action.

### **From the Back Cover**

Union members, Army recruits, even trained animals get scheduled breaks during their workday. But not schoolchildren. With an increasing focus on standardized tests, many educators say there simply isn't time for fun and games. Administrators are so preoccupied with preparing children for tests, that even the concept of recess is regarded as superfluous. In fact, many schools being built today are deliberately designed without playgrounds all for the sake of standardized tests.

*What Happened to Recess and Why Are Our Children Struggling in Kindergarten?* spells out the present obsession with standardized tests and arms parents with the knowledge they need to take an active role in combating it. From California to Chicago to New York, teachers have complained for years that they "teach to the tests, not to the children." Rather than a child's ability to learn, his or her ability to take tests is what teachers are forced to evaluate throughout the country. Drawing on her twenty years of classroom experience, author Susan Ohanian argues that the present boot-camp mentality of educators is cruel and counterproductive. Children are not soldiers, she points out, and teachers are not drill sergeants; education is a process, not a commodity.

Filled with actual classroom anecdotes, this book begins by explaining the manic rush to form children into productive components of the global economy. The author documents the grueling tests (some going on for five days), the fear and exhaustion children experience as a result, and how the final evaluations are often dead wrong. She then describes in detail the forces behind the pro-Standards movement, which often place political and business interests above those of the children's education. Finally she advises parents on how to fight

This document is available at:

<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/EPRU/resources/Ohanian.Book/Ohanian.Book.doc>

against this. Teachers and administrators will also find this book a valuable source for explaining Standards issues to parents.

On the subject of education, conservatives and liberals alike are finding themselves in similar territory; parents of all stripes are joining together in an increasingly powerful grass-roots effort to combat the pro-Standards movement. Well-informed, highly readable, and often comical, *What Happened to Kindergarten* educates parents so they can make sure their kids are taught not merely evaluated.

### **Education or evaluation?**

#### **How parents can combat the pro-Standards movement**

"Kids enter kindergarten identified as deficient in skills that weren't even introduced to kids a decade ago." So says Susan Ohanian, author of *What Happened to Recess and Why Are Our Children Struggling in Kindergarten?* In the mad rush to whip young children into shape for an increasingly competitive global economy, the political and business elite have determined standardized tests to be the right tool for the job. While standards are higher than ever, children deemed unable to meet them are valued less than ever. The result? The process of educating is giving way to a reckless method that more resembles military training. The need for change is urgent.

Many parents and teachers are united in their effort to fight the pro-Standards movement. With twenty years of teaching experience, author Susan Ohanian describes the problems behind much standardized testing, and educates parents and teachers on how to fight the trend. Filled with actual stories from the classroom, *What Happened to Recess* is both a poignant commentary on the present state of our children's education and a useful tool to help the adults change it.

### **Chapter Descriptors**

#### **Chapter 1 Training the National Guard Way**

- \*The Boy Who Ate Pencils
- \*And the National Guard Shall Lead Them
- \*Fighting Back
- \*The End of Childhood
- \*Lice Abatement and the Business Executive Dream of Assembly-Line Education
- \*Just the Facts, Ma'am

#### **Chapter 2 Maybe College Shouldn't Begin in Kindergarten**

- \*Bombing in Kindergarten
- \*Slogans to Loose Sleep Over
- \*A Lizard Career Path
- \*Homework Toxic Buildup
- \*Critical Kindergarten Skills
- \*Primary Upgrades
- \*Kindergarten: The Great Debate

#### **Chapter 3 Child Abuse: Test Absurdities and Outrages**

- \*Bribes for Test Scores
- \*Shhh! It's a Secret!
- \*All the News that Reporters Want to Print

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- \*When Reading Ability is not Good Enough
- \*Choosing the Best Pancake Topping
- \*Stealing Childhood
- \*Writing for a Test
- \*Soiled Tests
- \*A Test Potluck
- \*Washing the Dog

#### **Chapter 4: One Shoe in the Chicken Coop: Keeping an Eye on What Really Counts**

- \*What's in a Number?
- \*Let Me Count the Ways
- \*Leave No Child. . In a Crumbling School Building
- \*Summer Reading
- \*Okay to Be Different
- \*Counting What Counts

#### **Chapter 5 The Global Economy Smokescreen and the Rest of the Story**

- \*Schools for Globalized Business
- \*Benched
- \*A One-Eyed Plan
- \*International Business Machinations
- \*Capital, Human and Money
- \*Award Winning Schools: When is a Rose Really Stinkweed?
- \*Media Weirdness
- \*The New Strike Zone

#### **Chapter 6 Ask the Experts: Should the Fox Be in Charge of the Henhouse?**

- \*Speeding up the Three-Minute Egg
- \*Twenty Percent Expendable
- \*Funding Patterns
- \*Students Perform Poorly Because They Are Asked to do the Wrong Thing
- \*Algebra or Else
- \*Glimpses of Real-World Math
- \*Fact Checkiing
- \*Parent Experts
- \*Choosing Sides