

# Letters

06 October 2014 by Dr Richard House

## TIME TO REASSESS

Your Laevers assessment-scales article contains much sound sense ('Measuring Up', 22 September). If we're determined to assess young children, then we should render any such process as child-appropriate as possible; and Laevers certainly strives for that.

But there exists a host of commonly ignored problems with an 'assessment ideology'. First, early assessment is a creature of England's exceptionally early school-starting age; and it's the dragooning of young children into institutional schooling that generates the need to assess them. Witness how little assessment they have in educationally high-flying Finland or within Steiner education, for example.

Next, children always know when they're being assessed, no matter how much we try to camouflage it; and they will then often 'introject' strong (if unconscious) self-judgements and self-monitoring, generating inappropriate precocious development and possible life-long negative health effects.

Our Anglo-Saxon obsession with technologies of assessment is symptomatic of the 'modernist' myth that it's appropriate to specify, codify and control young children's learning - and that adults know best both what, and how, children need to learn.

Distinguished university professors of early childhood take fundamental issue with the view that it's in young children's best interests to be the subject of continual adult assessment and surveillance. Anyone asserting the beneficence of early universal assessment should consider these critical arguments very carefully, and be able to refute them convincingly, before buying into the assessment ideology. Making assessment 'warm and fuzzy' doesn't begin to address these issues at the depth that's needed.

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