

12-1-1999

Another Response to Dancis

Ted Eisenberg

Ben Gurion University of the Negev

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Recommended Citation

Eisenberg, Ted (1999) "Another Response to Dancis," *Humanistic Mathematics Network Journal*: Iss. 21, Article 8.

Available at: <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/hmnj/vol1/iss21/8>

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I hope this discussion serves as a reminder of some of the attributes of test construction that we take for granted and assume preservice teachers know because they have been through 12 years of schooling. Dancis showed that in many cases this might be a flawed assumption. If the teacher depicted in Dancis's article taught one of your students, then you could be sure that the teacher does not know how to construct a test. Although reform efforts in mathematics education introduce assessment techniques that may be more suitable and more motivating than traditional tests, let us not neglect to pass on the simple principles of sound test construction.

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Ted Eisenberg
Ben Gurion University of the Negev
Beersheva, Israel

The following is taken from an email message to Jerome Dancis.

I just read your paper "Middle School Math Teaching and How It Harms Our Children" in the *Humanistic Mathematics Network Journal*; I particularly liked your "sidebar" on the factoring problem. But you seem to think that the question would have been graded differently in some other school—who are you kidding?

I once taught in a school where the principal was considered to be a good principal if he had no riots in the

school. When that happened, the principal was moved up to an even higher position. (That was at Crane in Chicago in the middle 60's). And how did the principal ensure that there were no riots? He **never** (not once) came out of his office when the kids were in the building. All doors were locked after 8:00, and there were uniformed cops in the halls. No one worried about the kids learning anything—teachers were only interested in getting through the day. Compared to Crane, your "magnet school" sounds like a haven for learning!

"No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right;
a single experiment can prove me wrong."

--Albert Einstein
