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SECTION

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## BACK AND FORTH

Ruthe Deskin



### *Flawed exams don't pass the test*

One chance and you are out. Actually students get more than one chance to qualify for high school diplomas, but the first test can be a big eliminator. Subsequent exams give second chances but often come too late for students to qualify for graduation ceremonies.

Basing a student's right to graduate on a single exam has been a debatable subject among educators. Four years of attendance and study with passing grades should qualify for a diploma, many believe.

Their arguments are strengthened by revelations of testing problems and scoring mistakes from New York to California.

The rating of school districts by the test scores of students has been marred by accusations of cheating on score results and inadequacy of the tests.

Is too much emphasis placed on test scores? Ask 54 Minnesota high school students who were denied diplomas because of mistakes by a private testing firm in New York City — more than 8,000 elementary school students were held back because of scoring errors.

Twelve thousand sophomores in Arizona received lower math scores than they actually earned, and other states, including Nevada, are plagued with testing troubles. As more states rely on tests, more errors eventually will occur.

Marguerite Clarke, associate director of the National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy, describes tests as "very seductive."

"They're very appealing to the public and it looks like an objective, scientific way to make decisions about students," she said.

Parents and educators are beginning to question the efficiency of the tests and the manner of grading.

"It might have been a good idea when it all began," one educator said, "but it's time for us to test the testing program."

Hundreds of students, victims of the snafus, would agree.

Say the words "perseverance" and "faith" and two people come to mind.

Several years back Pat Dingle had an idea that Las Vegas needed a zoo. After years of confrontations with public officials, aggravation, wrangling with backers and frustration in general, Dingle seems to have accomplished his goal.

The Southern Nevada Zoological Foundation Zoo on North Rancho Drive is a tribute to Dingle's dogged determination and the loyalty of supporters and helpers who have shared his dream. They deserve a smoother future with all of the roadblocks of the past forgotten.

Joe Behar has been like a beacon of light for the furtherance of the arts in Las Vegas. His Community Drama Workshop has been inspiring young actors for years — even through lean times.

The workshop is now holding auditions for the "Great Pretenders" at small sessions at the Gold Coast hotel-casino. For information about times and other details call Joe or Carol Behar at 457-0234.

Behar, like Dingle, has never wavered in his endeavors to assist young thespians-to-be.

Both are men of vision who have persevered to make their dreams come true.

Ruthe Deskin is assistant to the publisher. Her column appears Thursdays. Reach her at [deskin@lasvegassun.com](mailto:deskin@lasvegassun.com)

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SUBMITTED BY: ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIUNGHILIANI