Why High Stakes Testing is a Good Thing

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Abstract

This paper provides an argument in favor of high stakes assessment by pointing out the benefits to both students and teachers. Some of the benefits for teachers include the awareness of educational goals, new teaching strategies, great satisfaction when students succeed, and becoming the best teacher he or she can possibly be (Snowman, McCown, Biehler, 2009). Benefits for students include a higher skill of studying and an increased amount of pride when passing the tests (Snowman, McCown, Biehler, 2009).
Why High Stakes Assessment is an Integral Part of Learning

Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, high stakes assessment has come to the forefront of almost all arguments dealing with education. NCLB mandates that every student in public schools which receive federal funds must be tested over their knowledge of certain skills relating to mathematics and reading (Snowman, McCown, Biehler, 2009). These tests are said to be high stakes tests because they hold teachers and students accountable for high scores. According to Snowman, McCown, and Biehler (2009), numerous arguments are present relating to the acceptance of high stakes assessment. This paper will examine some of these arguments which are in favor of high stakes assessment.

One argument presented by Snowman, McCown, and Biehler (2009) is that high stakes assessment relates to benefits for teachers. Educators in school systems that participate in high stakes assessment are aware of what content needs to be taught to students, and it can provide these teachers with different means to teach by. In Don Hooper’s “Accountability for Student Success,” (as cited in Williams, 2005) he points out how high stakes assessment forces the teacher to be at his or her best while teaching, and can come as a great satisfaction when the students succeed. Also, because of high stakes assessment the teacher knows the educational goals of his or her students, therefore relieving some of the questions about what to teach. The educational goals of students can change over time, and high stakes assessment is a critical part in knowing what to teach.
Another argument that Snowman, McCown, and Biehler (2009) present in favor of high stakes assessment relates to the benefits for students. Students who partake in high stakes testing are required to pass in order to move on into the next grade or graduate, and therefore are more apt to studying harder (Snowman, McCown, Biehler, 2009). The students need to study harder in order to pass the tests creates a more positive learning environment, and could keep the student out of things like drugs and alcohol. Also, the relative toughness of the high stakes assessments causes the students who pass to gain a great deal of pride.

The continued use of high stakes testing is a very important piece to the puzzle of education, and should continue to be used in future generations. When statistics come along to show the effectiveness of high stakes assessment, it is my belief that these statistics will show more positive outcomes than negatives. I believe future research into the use of these tests will provide educators with enough proof that these tests work and will persuade all teachers and government officials that high stakes assessments are a good thing.
References

