High Stakes Assessment Position Paper

A very controversial topic in many states is whether or not we should make High Stakes Assessments a requirement for the determination of children’s success in school. In most states there is some type of standardized testing to determine whether children pass a class, move onto the next grade level, or graduate from high school. States are becoming more strict on the way teachers present assessments, because they want every child to achieve to their best potential. The NCLB, No Child Left Behind, act verifies this. I am against high stakes assessments, because I believe that we need to focus on other factors to teach children, rather than solely relying on one test to make a determination of passing or not.

As teachers it is our responsibility to monitor whether our students are learning the adequate material that they need to know in order to move onto the next grade level. In order to do this we have to monitor students progress. The state is in charge of how we monitor students scores and so fourth. They set a numerical amount that needs to be achieved for our students to “pass” the grade level. This is where the No Child Left Behind Act comes into play. “In December 2001, the U.S. Congress passed legislation proposed by President George W. Bush to implement testing of student in reading and mathematics in all public schools that receive federal funds.” (Snowman and McCown and Biehler, 526) The purpose of this act is that the state does not want any child to fall behind in school. This includes the special education children. Therefore, they make a set amount for passing scores, and if the school does not achieve this,
then they lose all funds. I do not agree with this. I think that it is hard to include special education children, because they need extra help on certain subject areas more than other children. This puts more strain on teachers, because they already have to cram learning in and if you add special education children to the mix it makes it harder to teach sufficiently. I think it is unfair to solely base achievements on one standardized test.

I do not like that idea of relying solely on one standardized test to determine whether a child gets to move onto the next grade or graduate from high school. The state implies that in 2014, every child must pass the test, and they mean EVERY child. Even the children that are special education or ones that have a learning disability. Therefore, we must take the initiative to teach everything that students need to know in order to pass the test. Another example that I believe that high stakes testing is unfair, is that some children are not good test takers to begin with. I am one of those children. I will do just fine in the classroom with grades, but once it comes to a standardized test, I tend to get nervous and I usually do not do as well on tests as I would like. Relying solely on scores from one test to determine success or progress in broad areas such as reading or math is likely to lead to incorrect inferences and then to actions that are ineffective or even harmful (FairTest.org).

I do not think that high stakes tests are beneficial for schools. Every school in each state is different from one another. Some schools have many children and other schools have very few children, yet the state standards are the same for both of these schools. There are several requirements, set by the state, that schools must follow. These requirements are Standards, Testing, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). For standards each “state must establish what the law calls challenging content and achievement standards in mathematics, reading, or language arts, and science, but the legislation leaves it to each state to decide for itself the
meaning of the word challenging“ (Snowman and McCown and Biehler, 526). Each state has annual testing of all students in grades 3 through 8 in math and language arts/reading. Decisions about test format, length, and item type have been left to each state. Finally, by 2014 all students must score at least at the “proficient” level (as defined by each state) of their state assessment in reading/language arts and math. To ensure that this goal is met, states must demonstrate each year that a certain additional percentage of all students have met that goal. This feature is referred to as adequate yearly progress, or AYP. The state is very strict on what we need to be teaching in the classroom.

State standards are often too long and detailed to ever be taught. Many states fail to distinguish what is important from what is unimportant or to separate what all students ought to learn in a subject from what only the most interested might learn. Standardized tests are poor tools for evaluating important kinds of learning. I wish we could eliminate standardized tests, because I do not really think that they are beneficial to students or school corporations, and we focus way too much on achieving these tests.
Works Cited Page

"The Case Against High Stakes Testing." FairTest. 17 Dec. 07. 13 Sept. 08