

# **High Stakes Testing**

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High stakes testing has been the topic of discussion and a heated debate for a while, with stress being the only outcome. Everybody has developed their own opinions on whether the testing is worth keeping and if they, indeed, record accurate statistics.

ISTEP, NWEA, and SATS are the three tests that I'm familiar with personally. Throughout my high school career, these tests were dreaded among teachers and students alike. Teachers hated giving them and students despised taking them; with the exception of homework free evenings. This year, not only do the students have to take the ISTEP in the fall but the spring as well; this being a transition year between moving the test permanently to the spring semester.

However, tests weren't something the state made up to torture the education community. "Measuring what and how well students learn is an important building block in the process of strengthening and improving our nation's schools. Tests, along with student grades and teacher evaluations, can provide critical measures of students' skills, knowledge, and abilities. Therefore, tests should be part of a system in which broad and equitable access to educational opportunity and advancement is provided to all students. Tests, when used properly, are among the most sound and objective ways to measure student performance. But, when test results are used inappropriately or as a single measure of performance, they can have unintended adverse consequences" (APA).

I don't really have a strong opinion on whether or not high stakes testing is a good thing or a bad thing. Both sides have been argued to death and yet the testing still continues and it's expected that students do their best. Speaking with my sister, who is a

sophomore in high school and happens to be taking the ISTEP this week, I came to the conclusion that even though the students are spending three days taking a test that (face it) is utterly boring; they would rather answer questions that don't affect their grade than sit through a normal class period. From the teacher's point of view, that is three days of class discussion and homework gone for a test that could potentially hurt their career if the general student body doesn't do so well.

All the high stakes tests are a form of assessment. "The main reason for assessment is to provide to all interested parties a clear, meaningful, and useful summary or accounting of how well a student has met the teacher's objectives" (Snowman, McCown, Biehler pg 478). An assessment that the state wants to make sure is positive and continues to stay that way.

Whether the high stakes testing should be implemented and kept as a security measure by the state, or if we should save trees and class time by not using them, is beyond my judgment. However, a world without high stakes testing doesn't look too bad.

Works Cited

APA Office of Public Communications. Appropriate Use Of High Stakes Testing in Our Nation's Schools. May 2001. 2007<<http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/testing.html>>.

Snowman, McCown, Biehler. Psychology Applied to Teaching Twelfth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company. 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA. 2009. Pg 478.