

Stephanie Hofer

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Educational Psychology

High Stakes Assessments

Various forms of high stakes assessments are used in the United States, but in similar ways. I do not believe that these types of assessment are beneficial to students, parents, teachers, or schools. Too much pressure is placed on all involved with the students' success that hardly any true learning can take place. Examples of high stakes testing in Indiana include the ISTEP at the elementary, middle school, and high school level; the SAT and ACT at the high school level; and the Praxis at the college level. Of course, there are countless other examples of high stakes testing at various levels. These tests are designed to supposedly ensure knowledge before entering a consecutive level of learning. In fact, the text book defines high stakes assessments as "using test results to hold students and educators accountable for achievement" (Biehler & Snowman, 2008, p. 526).

Looking specifically at high school level high stakes testing, there are mainly the ISTEP, SAT, and ACT for Indiana students. However, many states have standardized testing that is mandatory for students to pass in order to graduate as well as being an indicator of school and teacher quality.

"Because standardized test scores, either by themselves or in conjunction with other data, are being used to determine whether students get promoted to the next grade level or graduate from high school, whether teachers and administrators receive financial rewards or demotions, and whether school districts receive additional state funds or lose their

Comment [jcg1]: Good position statement

accreditation, this practice is commonly referred to as high stakes testing, and it has swept the nation” (Biehler & Snowman, 2008, p. 526).

High school students across America rely on these standardized test scores in order to graduate. The main issue is that not all students can pass these high school exit exams, causing graduation rates to fall. In fact, many researchers have found support of this argument.

One researcher, Gerald W. Bracey, did most of his research concerning the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). He found that “there is persuasive evidence drawn from the studies that exit exams reduce graduation rates by roughly one or two percentage points on average.” (2009, p. 88). This is a remarkably notable percentage because those students did not graduate simply because they could not pass an exam, regardless of their other high school accomplishments. Within his research, Bracey compared the classes of 2006 and 2007, which did need to pass the exit exam with 2005 where the exit exam was expected to graduate, but was not as highly enforced. Bracey’s results for graduation rates showed that “substantially fewer of the classes of 2006 and 2007 in the bottom quartile graduated than those in the bottom quartile of the class of 2005” (2009, p. 89). Bracey then concluded that “the CAHSEE test requirement had the effect of pushing some students out of school” (2009, p. 89).

Catherine Gewertz is yet another researcher against standardized testing. She raised the eye-opening concept that “the stakes attached to high school exit exams have risen since 2002, with 16 more states withholding diplomas from students who can't pass them than did so that year” (2009, p. 4). This is a shame to hear this as a future teacher, especially when more states are using high school exit exams for accountability under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Gewertz explains that “of the 26 states that require students to pass high school exit exams in order to graduate, 24 also use the exams for federal accountability, up from just two in 2002,

according to the CEP” (2009, p. 4). Her most shocking point against high stakes testing is that “not all states use the same cutoff score to decide whether students pass the test as they do for federal accountability, however. Fourteen states use the same cut score for test passage and for NCLB, and nine use a lower score for passage than they do for accountability” (2009, p. 4). This proves that some students are at a disadvantage to pass before they even write their name on their test.

The textbook provides some insight to reasons why high stakes tests are mainly criticized as valid arguments against high stakes testing and shows some researched effects of high stakes testing. High stakes assessments are “criticized because of structural limitations, misinterpretation/misuse of results, narrow view of motivation, [and] adverse side effects” (Biehler & Snowman, 2008, p. 532). The textbook also shows that high stakes testing effects achievement, motivation, teachers and teaching, the curriculum, the dropout rate, and school choice and supplemental instructional services (Biehler & Snowman, 2008, p. 536-539).

There are many reasons why high stakes testing is not beneficial to students, parents, teachers, or schools. I only mentioned a few countless examples of how this can be proven. If high stakes testing is going to continue, it must be adapted because the current versions are clearly not effective in the right ways for anyone in the world of education.

References:

- Biehler, R. F., & Snowman, J. (2008). *Snowman Psychology Applied To Teaching Twelfth Edition* (12 ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Bracey, G. (2009). Mandatory exit exams discourage graduation. *Phi Delta Kappan* 91(3), 88-89. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier database.
- Gewertz, C. (2009). HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMS. *Education Week*, 29(11), 4. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier database.

Criteria	Unacceptable	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Position Statement R5 E7	Statement of position cannot be determined.	Position is stated, but is not maintained consistently throughout work.	Position is clearly stated and consistently maintained. References to the issue(s) at hand are missing.	Position is clearly stated and consistently maintained. Clear references to the issue(s) are stated.
Supporting Information R5	Evidence is unrelated to argument.	Argument is supported by limited evidence.	Evidence clearly supports the position; but there is not enough evidence.	Evidence clearly supports the position; evidence is sufficient.
Organization R5	There is a total lack of structure	Some attempt to structure the argument has been made, but the structure is poorly developed.	Structure developed reasonably well, but lacks clarity.	Structure of work is clearly developed.
Tone Of Letter R5	Tone is inappropriate to purpose.	Tone does not contribute to persuasiveness.	Tone enhances persuasiveness, but there are	Tone is consistent and enhances

			inconsistencies	persuasiveness.
Sentence Structure R5	Work pays little attention to proper sentence structure.	Work contains structural weaknesses and grammatical errors.	Sentence structure is generally correct. Some awkward sentences do appear.	Sentence structure is correct.
Punctuation & Capitalization R5	There are four or more errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.	There are two or three errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.	There is one error in punctuation and/or capitalization.	Punctuation and capitalization are correct.

Comments:

Excellent work!

TOTAL 24/24