



High-Stakes Testing and Teacher Accountability

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What Is High Stakes Testing

Whenever we use a single assessment instrument to make major decisions about students, we're using a ***high-stakes test***.

High-stakes testing is used to make judgements about mastery of a school subject matter. Because of this, the determination of the mastery is based on a certain generalized criteria points students must meet.

Common Examples of High-Stakes Tests:

On a National Level:
The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)
American College Testing (ACT)

On a State Level (NJ):
New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA)

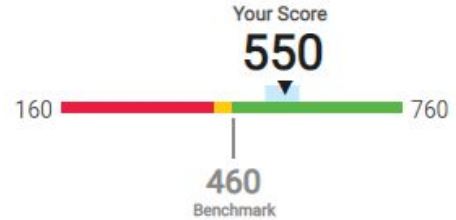
Example of Grading Criteria: SAT

Score Key

-  **Your Score Range**
This range shows how much your score can change with repeated testing, even if your skills are the same. It's a better representation of your true ability.
-  **Red**
Need to strengthen skills
-  **Yellow**
Approaching Benchmark
-  **Green**
Meet or exceed Benchmark

As you can see, the label score of red, yellow and green determines the mastery of subject, and determines whether the student is ready for college.

Your Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Score ?



Your score shows that you're on track to be ready for college.

High Stakes Testing and Teacher Accountability



Whenever teachers are evaluated on the basis of how their students perform on achievement tests, we're talking about teacher accountability.

For example, if students in a collective class earn exceptionally high scores by the end of the year, the teachers responsible could receive a higher pay raise, along with other potential benefits.

Similarly, if students in a collective class do poorly, the teachers responsible may find themselves without a job the following year.

The Every Student Succeeds Act

*Passed in 2015 by President Obama, the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, is the nation's most updated education law that states a commitment to preparing students for life after primary education, as well as ensuring equal learning opportunity for ALL students.*

- The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 originally dictated the testing behind determining student learning accountability.
- Highlights of the ESSA include:
 - Mandate to implement educational practices, strategies and programs that meet legislation requirements for having been proven effective.
 - Requirement to provide a high-quality education for all students to prepare them for postsecondary and career success.
 - Required annual statewide assessments for students grades 3-8, and once during high school, to ensure students meet academic standards.
 - Necessitates accountability and implementation of change strategies to improve underperforming schools.

Problems with High-Stakes Testing

- The tests don't always reflect important instructional goals.
- Teachers spend a lot of time teaching to the tests.
- Teachers and schools centralize attention on helping only SOME students.
- Some teachers and administration support dishonesty.
- Different criteria to what is determined "high performing", lead to different solutions.
- Low-performing teachers and schools are punished, not helped.
- Students' motivation affects test taking, test taking affects students' motivation.

Productive Steps Forward in High Stakes Testing

- Assess topics most important for students to know.
- Educate the public about the pros and cons of standardized testing.
- Consider alternatives to traditional standardized testing.
- Advocate for the use of multiple measures in testing decisions about students.
- If tests are being used to measure teacher effectiveness, advocate for a focus on academic improvement, rather than age-group averages.

Although high-stakes testing has some positive qualities, it is important for us as the next generation of educators to understand what testing can and cannot do for us.

Too much emphasis is being placed on student performance in standardized exams. In reality, high-stakes testing are not a just indicator of a students' intelligence level. The weight standardized exams have on the education system not only affect a students' self esteem and professional future, but it also negatively affects the careers of many teachers and administrators who truly make positive impacts in their work.

The weight high-stakes testing has financially is also a reason why many school districts who are lesser funded, minority dominated or those who centralize in special education will continue to underperform. That is unless public figures understand the faults of standardized testing, and a change is made in how we accurately assess student achievement.

In Conclusion

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Thanks for tuning in!

Hope you enjoy the activity :)