

*The entire purpose of
education is to nurture
individuals to discover their
full power and potential.*

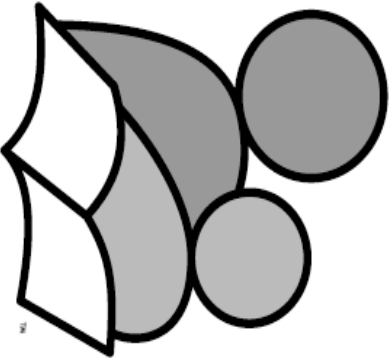
John Dewey

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*How Can We Prepare Students for
High-Stakes Tests?*

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***Trojan Horse in the Schoolyard:
Hidden Threats in
High-Stakes Testing***

- See the special issue of Issues in Education, (2000) for 6 articles by me and my students with commentaries by others

Costly Side-Effects of High-Stakes Testing in America: Students

- Distorted Goals: Good Education = High Test Scores
- Developmental Disillusionment
- Less Effort by Students At Risk
- Unfair to Minorities & ESL Students
- Maladaptive Test-Taking Strategies
- Cheating, Boycotting, & Sabotage

Costly Side-Effects of High-Stakes Testing in America: Teachers

- De-Skilling Assessment Abilities
- Narrows Teaching & Curriculum
- Test Pollution Invalidates Scores
- Teaching Competence Wrongly Judged By Students' Scores
- Pay, Status, and Career Threatened from Evaluation by Test Scores
- Demeaning, Frustrating, & Coercive

Costly Side-Effects of High-Stakes Testing in America: Parents

- Blind Faith in Test Scores
- Poor Understanding of Scores
- Scores Used for Political Leverage
- Parents Undermine Children's Education
With Emphasis on Scores

Suggested Reforms: National

- Reduce the amount of high-stakes tests at all educational levels
- Interpret test scores clearly
- Prohibit educational decision-making on the basis of a single test score
- Use high-stakes tests to distribute incentives not punishments
- Establish non-political committees to oversee educational assessment

Suggested Reforms: State

- Reduce the amount of high-stakes testing and eliminate testing of every student every year.
- Align the curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment procedures so they are consistent within a district.
- Use multiple measures of student progress
- Devise "meta-assessment" procedures to evaluate consumer satisfaction
- Use the results of assessment to increase the quality of students' thinking and learning

Suggested Reforms: Local

- Create portfolio assessments that reflect the unique talents of students
- Measure the growth of cognitive processes in addition to outcomes
- Create processes to inform parents about high stakes tests
- Encourage a developmental model of progress rather than a comparative model of achievement.

*Coping With the Reality of
High-Stakes Tests*

Some Pragmatic Suggestions for Test Preparation

- Do not increase students' anxiety by stressing the importance of the high-stakes test
- Do not stress eating a big breakfast on test day
- Do not abandon the regular curriculum
- Do not teach counterproductive test-taking strategies, such as, reading test questions first
- Do not teach the exact test items or vocabulary

Some Pragmatic Suggestions for Test Preparation

- Do teach useful test-taking strategies for multiple-choice tests such as:
 - Re-read and understand the question
 - Identify the target of the question
 - If totally confused, skip it
 - Consider all the options before responding
 - Eliminate the unlikely answers
 - Choose wisely by re-reading
 - If two equal options exist, guess

Some Pragmatic Suggestions for Test Preparation

Provide practice with high-stakes testing:

- Rules and procedures
- What to do if pencil breaks or if a student needs to go to the bathroom
- Duration of the test sections
- Length of passages
- Number of questions
- Kinds of questions

Some Pragmatic Suggestions for Test Preparation

Practice should teach students about:

- Variable difficulty of test items
- Formats of questions
- Directed searching for info when re-reading
- Time monitoring for test completion
- Underlining or note-taking if allowed
- Whether to guess at answers

Some Pragmatic Suggestions for Test Feedback

- Discuss students' reactions to the test
- Reassure students of the specific purpose of the test
- Clarify any confusions or frustrations
- Re-teach test-taking skills by noting which ones students used and found effective
- Build students' self-efficacy and confidence

Where Do High-Stakes Tests Fit in a District Assessment System?

High stakes tests should be:

- One type of evidence among several types
- Balanced with additional data on students, teachers, and schools
- Interpreted accurately in media reports
- Open to public review and reform

Overall Assessments Should Inform All Stakeholders

- Guide instructional decisions of teachers
- Motivate children's learning
- Report progress and standards of performance to parents
- Report achievement to administrators

3 Types of Assessments

*Multiple Examples of Each Type Should
Be Evident at Every Grade*

- Milestones & Benchmarks
- Learning Indicators
- Enabling Skills

Milestones & Benchmarks

- National tests - NAEP-like in design & sampling
- Criterion-referenced tests
 - Tied to State & district standards
 - Tied to school curricula
 - Multiple content areas
- Norm-referenced tests
 - Commercial tests (e.g. CAT, CTBS, SAT9)
 - Multiple content areas

Assessments of Milestones & Benchmarks

High-Stakes & Summative Assessments

- Criterion-referenced tests
 - School administered
 - Some for every student; some random sampled
 - Not every content area each year
 - Public reports
- Norm-referenced tests
 - Fee-based, optional testing
 - Not school function
 - Private reports

Learning Indicators

Classroom-based, teacher-controlled ***assessments of individual progress***

- Performance
 - Report cards
 - Conferences
 - Projects & work samples
- Processes
 - Strategies for learning & studying
 - Discipline-based strategies
- Perceptions
 - Motivation
 - Attitudes

Assessments of Learning Indicators

- Made by teachers and students
- Some are 2 - 4 times per year, e.g., report cards, conferences
- Most are daily, formative assessments
- Includes work samples, observations, interviews, not just test scores & worksheets
- Collected in portfolios, journals, binders,
- Exhibited in demonstrations, projects

Assessments of Learning Indicators Must Be

- **Balanced**
- **Comprehensive**
- **Practical**
- **Developmental**
- **Authentic**
- **Engaging**
- **Revealing**

Enabling Skills

- By content area
 - Reading - letter identification, decoding, phonemic awareness,
 - Math - number facts, computation,
 - Science - technical vocabulary, observation skills
- By grade level
 - K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

Assessments of Enabling Skills

- Selected & given by teachers
- Different for various students
- Given for screening, diagnostic, & monitoring purposes
- Connected to instruction & IEPs
- Embedded in curriculum
- Reinforced by parents, tutors, pull-outs

Advantages of This Taxonomy

- Clear distinction between formative and summative assessments
- High-stakes tests given a restricted role
- Empowers teachers to use assessment to enhance learning
- Provides parents with useful information

More Advantages

- Avoids long lists of skills and standards
- Clear standards in milestones & benchmarks
- Can reduce external testing burden on students and teachers

An Example of Practical

Assessment for Literacy: Grade 4

- Milestones & Benchmarks
 - State-wide reading test
 - District writing assessment
 - Optional norm-referenced test, e.g., SAT9

An Example of Practical

Assessment for Literacy: Grade 4

- Learning Indicators
 - Report card (graded skills provide a guide for other assessments)
 - Student-led parent conference
 - Portfolio with work samples
 - Reading strategy assessments
 - First □ final drafts of writing
 - Reflection journal

An Example of Practical

Assessment for Literacy: Grade 4

- Enabling Skills
 - Oral reading fluency
 - Word recognition
 - Grammar skill sheets
 - Vocabulary tests

A State-Wide Example of Practical Assessment: MLPP

Michigan Literacy Progress Profile

- Created by state educators
- Supported with staff development
- Initially K-3, soon K-5
- Used selectively by teachers
- Used for state-wide reports of progress

A State-Wide Example of Practical Assessment: MLPP

- Milestone Assessments
 - Oral language, Oral reading, Comprehension, Writing
- Enabling Assessments
 - Concepts of print, Letter/sound identification, Sight words/decodable words, Phonemic awareness, Known words, Hearing and recording sounds

What Is Required to Implement Practical Assessment?

- Coherent model across content areas and grades
- Leadership at every level
- Professional development
- Teacher acceptance & participation
- Accurate public information about assessment

Three Traps To Avoid

- **Teacher avoidance**
- **Student disengagement**
- **Parental confusion**

Teachers' Choices of Assessments Depend on:

- Purpose and use of information
- Familiarity with task and training
- Alignment with instruction
- Authentic evidence
- Usefulness for parents and students
- Easy to use

Teachers Need Training

- To prepare students for each assessment
- To administer assessments
- To select formative assessments to match their students' needs
- To interpret assessment results for
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Administrators

Teachers' Concerns

- Program needs to be fabric not threads
- Teachers need coherent systems of assessment
- Assessment & instruction must be aligned
- Not enough time; I am a teacher not a tester

Necessary Teacher Supports

- Principal's leadership
- School-wide system
- Early identification & continuous assessment of struggling students
- Remedial programs at K-3
- Tutors & volunteers in classrooms
- Family involvement
- Staff development

*A teacher who is attempting to
teach without inspiring the pupil
with the desire to learn is
hammering on cold iron.*

Horace Mann

Motivational Consequences of Assessment for Students

Negative

- Norm-referenced
- Public comparison
- Impersonal
- External evaluation
- Routine tasks

Performance

orientation

Positive

- Self-referenced
- Diagnostic
- Personal goals & voice
- Self-assessment
- Reflective

Mastery

orientation

Keys to Intrinsic Motivation

- *Choice*
- *Control*
- *Challenge*
- *Collaboration*
- *Constructing personal meaning*
- *Consequences that build self-efficacy*

Parents' Views of Assessment

- Deeply rooted in their own experiences
- Based on variety of notions about the role of effort vs fixed abilities
- Based on comparative/competitive success, usually norm-referenced
- Often misinformed by neighbors & media

What Do Parents Need?

- *Clear View of the Assessment Model*
- *Understand the Purposes of Assessments*
- *Consistent Information Over Years & Teachers*
- *Authentic Evidence of Progress & Achievement*
- *Advice About How to Help Their Children*
- *Opportunities to Watch Their Children Excel*

Enduring Issues

- High-stakes tests have many liabilities
- Tension between classroom usefulness and state accountability
- Easy to assess skills are not necessarily the most important accomplishments
- Simplified assessments lead to narrow instruction: Rich, deep, assessments lead to engaging instruction and self-regulated learning
- Continual need for professional development
- Parents do not understand assessments well