Bryant University

HONORS THESIS

Assessment Practices Past and Future: Alternative Approaches and Teacher Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

Current educational policy utilizes standardized assessments to measure students' academic abilities and to determine whether schools are successful in their education of students. The purpose of this project is to expose holes in using only standardized assessments and the implications this practice has for students, teachers and administrators. Proposed alternatives to standardized assessments that could effectively measure students' academic ability include performance assessment, exhibitions, portfolio assessment and computer adaptive testing (CAT). Schools across the country are taking part in initiatives driven by the effectiveness of alternative assessment in action. In order to determine whether the literature on the implications of standardized assessment and effectiveness of alternative approaches was salient and relevant, a survey was distributed to teachers within the states of MA and RI. Survey results concluded that teachers have a negative opinion about standardized assessments in schools regarding their overall effectiveness of gauging academic achievement and their impact on their everyday classroom instruction. Also, teachers favor performance assessment and exhibitions and remain neutral to positive about portfolio assessment and CAT.

INTRODUCTION

Current educational policy calls for data from standardized assessments to measure students' academic ability. Policymakers use these assessments to measure whether schools are fulfilling requirements of student learning and adequate yearly progress (AYP). Although standardized assessments are an objective way to measure a student's ability to accurately solve a math problem or comprehensively understand a story, changing technologies and an argument for different learning styles bring to light important issues regarding which ways are best to measure students' academic achievement. This leads to the first two research questions of this Honors thesis:

1. What are some proposed alternatives to standardized testing that could effectively measure student learning?
2. What evidence exists in the literature to suggest that these alternatives are working?

In order to effectively answer these questions, an in-depth review of the literature was conducted. The focus of the review was on current educational policy and assessment practices, as well as new methods proposed to evaluate students' academic achievement.

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

American educational policy drastically impacts the lives of children and adolescents across the nation. Educational policymakers have the tough job of deciding how to measure students' academic abilities and how to determine whether a school is successful in educating their students. President George W. Bush created No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to make sure that no child falls through the cracks of America's education system. NCLB started a trend towards high-stakes, standardized testing because of the need to measure schools across the nation on a level playing field. Holding schools accountable for test results helped to assure that all children are receiving a top quality education, regardless of the state they attend school in. President Barack Obama continued the trend of holding schools accountable by creating the Race to the Top initiative that awards grants to top performing schools and puts schools on probation if they are not measuring up to the proper standards. Race to the Top puts school reform in the hands of the states by asking them to submit proposals about what

they would do to better the face of education in their state. Because of the trend of accountability, states began to agree that there needed to be a common set of standards across the United States, rather than each state creating their own form of assessment for their students. The Common Core State Standards were created by states and alternative assessments are being created to help gauge if students are knowledgeable in these "common core" principles. Each of these three significant milestones in American educational policy is discussed in detail below.

No Child Left Behind

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which was a law that created the practice of holding states responsible for the quality of its students' education. "Specifically, the law requires states to implement accountability systems with higher performance standards in reading, mathematics, and science along with annual testing of all students in grades 3 through 8" (Thomas, Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2009, p. 13). This law led to a significant change in assessment practices. States began creating standardized assessments that were used across school districts to gauge how their schools were meeting these objectives. NCLB came with the expectation that schools would continuously improve their education as well, which asked states to set "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) goals in reading and math that would increase each year of testing. Because NCLB calls for standards in specific subjects, teachers are more likely to increase their instruction in these areas, at the expense of other subjects that are not tested, such as history. NCLB also called for curriculum realignment in schools to make sure that the information that would appear on these standardized assessments was covered throughout the entire school year.

In addition to just collecting data on student performance on these exams, NCLB also requires that "assessment data must be categorized by poverty, ethnicity, race, disability, and limited English proficiency" (Thomas, Cambron-McCabe &McCarthy, 2009, p. 13). A major success of NCLB is the attention that has been called to subgroups such as students with disabilities or English language learners. An achievement gap between students in different socioeconomic classes became more evident because of this legislation. It gave teachers the opportunity to see that there was a problem that needed to be addressed. Successful schools

were rewarded and underperforming schools were asked to change their practices to make sure that students were making progress towards reaching these standards made for AYP. However, because each state was creating its own standards, a "needs improvement" rating was hard to define and often meant something different from one state to the next.

Race to the Top

When President Obama came into office, he recognized the need to continue to improve the standard of education. He wanted to better the children of America's skills in terms of their future success, not just how they scored on standardized tests. President Obama said "America's prosperity has always rested in how well we educate our children-but never more so than today" (The White House, 2010, p.1). In order to better improve the quality of education, President Obama wished to implement "college and career readiness" standards. He highlighted the importance of a college education and the importance of being a qualified candidate when applying for a job. Challenging states to raise standards to measure "college and career readiness" became a top priority for President Obama's educational reform, and this led to his Race to the Top initiative.

With Race to the Top, President Obama wanted to create an incentive for states to develop reforms that would lead to more graduates leaving high school "college and career ready". This led to a competitive grant program that was meant "to pursue higher standards, improve teacher effectiveness, use data effectively in the classroom, and adopt new strategies to help struggling schools" (The White House, 2013, p.1). Race to the Top has allocated $4 billion to 19 different states that were emulating these goals through their school structure (The White House, 2013, p.1). Because of these competitive grants, 46 states have submitted reform plans to receive funding to better the education of their students and raised their state standards to measure "college and career readiness". Although only 19 states have received the funding, "34 states modified state education laws or policies to facilitate needed change, and 48 states worked together to create a voluntary set of rigorous college- and career-ready standards" (The White House, 2013, p.1). These 48 states realized that there was a need to improve the face of education.

The Common Core State Standards

Because of the state-by-state differences in assessment, educational policy called for a way to assess schools and students on a nation-wide, objective basis. A student in Massachusetts is taking a completely different test than a student from Rhode Island, even though the states are bordering each other. State policymakers realized this was a major problem. Because of the issue of unreliable comparison, states came together to bring a commonality among the assessments that would allow for meaningful and accurate comparison. To validate the need for a common benchmark even more, "the evidence from international studies showed that one of the key factors in the success of high-performing countries was the fact that they had a common benchmark for student performance" (Rothman, 2011, p.55). However, in order to create this "common core", experts in the field needed to determine what was considered a standard of learning and what skill sets actually constituted "college and career readiness". Three words guided the reform strategy of educational leaders as they developed the Common Core State Standards: fewer, clearer and higher.

These experts came together to create a benchmark they believe helps to benefit all of those involved in education. "One of the most common criticisms of state standards was that they tended to be long lists of objectives, too many to teach in a single year" (Rothman, 2011, p.78). Deciding that they wanted to have a shorter list of objectives meant that these experts needed to agree on what was most important in terms of gauging student learning at each grade level. Explicit, straight-forward objectives would create an unyielding path for educators to follow when creating a curriculum for their students. These objectives are not so detailed that they dictate day-to-day learning in the classroom, but rather they provide a framework for instruction. "Standard writers attempted to use language that would be understandable, rather than vague generalities that could mean many things to many people" (Rothman, 2011, p.79). It was believed that making fewer and clearer objectives would result in educators being more likely to adopt these standards into their curriculum and classroom routine. In addition to the need for more realistic objectives, the Common Core State Standards also wanted to raise the bar for some states that held lower expectations for their students. With the bar being set higher for those states, a more even system was created to assess schools across the nation. Nationwide assessment will also become even more

prevalent with states' creation of computer-adaptive tests that will help gauge if students are achieving these Common Core State Standards.

The Common Core State Standards consist of two separate sets of standards: those for English Language Arts and those for Mathematics. English Language Arts Standards include standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening. Communication has proven to be a vital skill in terms of "college and career readiness" and, therefore, became a critical area to assess students on. In addition to recognizing the importance for these English Language Arts Skills, the Common Core State Standards also included "standards for literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects" (Rothman, 2011, p.83). Accounting for literacy in these subjects makes sure that students are able to comprehend what they are reading across subject areas. It was important to the Common Core developers that students were able to perform highly in all aspects of their education, so they developed Mathematics Standards that focused on core concepts that were vital to student growth and progress. "To achieve coherence, the standards laid out a logical sequence of student learning from grade to grade that was intended to lead to college and career readiness by the end of high school" (Rothman, 2011, p.92). These Common Core State Standards give states a proper benchmark to assess how their students are performing in important subject areas in comparison to other schools in different states across the nation.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS

The educational policies discussed above have led to a rise in schools depending on standardized assessments that has, in turn, created a number of negative effects on American education. First, it has been argued that standardized testing does not lead to significant improvement in educational quality. Second, teachers teach to the test and provide a narrow curriculum that is tied to standardized tests. Third, high stakes testing has been shown to create anxiety for many students. And finally, standardized tests only measure limited aspects of student achievement.

For example, Banta and Blaich (2011) discovered that too few faculty members were actually using the results of state-issued standardized assessments to make the changes necessary to improve the quality of students' education. "Accreditors, speakers at assessment conferences, and campus leaders all decry the fact that too few faculty are closing the loop—that is, studying assessment findings to see what improvements might be suggested and taking the appropriate steps to make them" (Banta & Blaich, 2011, p.22). One of the main uses of standardized assessments is as means to improve the quality of education received by students. If these assessments are not being used in the way they are intended, educational policymakers may just have great ideas in theory but not in actual execution. Banta and Blaich (2011) argue that in order to close the "assessment loop", which is what current assessments are lacking, faculty need to take an active role in developing and interpreting evidence from their students' assessment results.

In addition to the danger of standardized assessments not providing teachers with the opportunity to improve, there is also the worry that testing only the "common core", meaning math and reading skills, will lead to a highly undiversified learning experience (Brooks & Dietz, 2012). With standardized assessments so heavily focused on meeting target learning objectives on one test throughout the entire school year, teachers are tempted to teach students how to take the test, rather than actually learn the skills covered by it. "As teachers spent more time preparing students to take standardized tests, the curriculum narrowed…Such subjects as science, social studies, and the arts were pushed aside to make time for test preparation" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 96). However, according to Brooks and Dietz (2012), the common core standards are not the problem. Rather, it is the "standardization" of teaching and learning that has become the product of standardized assessment.

Because there is so much riding on these exams for schools, the temptation to "teach to the test" is overwhelming for teachers in classrooms. Brooks and Dietz (2012) suggest that a teacher would be better judged on the quality of lessons provided in classrooms. They write:

> "The power and efficacy of the programs that schools offer students derive from the knowledge constructed in such conversations, and are built on trusting relationships

> that revolve around the core mission of schooling: to light up children's worlds with opportunities for learning" (Brooks & Dietz, 2012, p.67).

If a teacher creates lessons that are relevant across disciplines and provide students with the ability to learn, they should be considered successful. Relying on how students perform on a standardized assessment provides too narrow a picture of the dynamic learning process that takes place during the 180 days that they are in the classroom with their teacher.

Teachers are not the only ones feeling the effects of the standardized assessments; students are as well. Paul (2013) examines the implications that this era of high-stakes testing has had on students. Test anxiety has become a normal feeling for students whether it is during their SAT tests or their end of the year state-wide summative assessments. This is because consequences of doing poorly on these high-stakes exams have become incredibly clear, such as not getting into their college of choice, or even as drastic as being held back a grade. Because schools are under extreme pressure to perform well on these state exams, students are now feeling the pressure too. Students as young as first and second graders have been documented as to having feelings of anxiety about end of the year summative assessments (Paul, 2013). The standardized way of assessing students is helpful in determining how students rank, but it is taking a toll on them. As Paul (2013) notes, "…this anxiety can expand over time into any situation in which a student is conscious of being evaluated -- from a class presentation to a college-admissions exam like the SAT -- and can lead to diminished self-esteem, reduced motivation and disengagement from school" (p.2). These assessments are meant to better students' experience in school, not make it worse.

Students are feeling anxiety about these incredibly important tests; however, standardized assessments only measure a limited range of students' knowledge and ability. Rather, students should be evaluated on a variety of academic skills and competencies. Stiggins (2004) believes that it is time to rethink current assessment practices and principles. Because policymakers have worked so hard to develop proper ways to assess students, they now have a broad base of knowledge to help them better measure academic ability dynamically. One test at the end of the year is not representative of what occurs each day in a classroom.

According to Stiggins (2004), "high-stakes tests without supportive classroom assessment environments harm struggling students" (p. 24). When learning that has taken place throughout the entire school year is taken to account, students who do not necessarily perform their best on standardized assessments are given the chance to prove that they are academically successful too.

Improvements in teaching and learning are what educational policymakers hope comes out of their use of standardized assessments. With the improvement of the way students are assessed, whether that is through classroom assessment throughout the school year or new technology-based assessment, schools will be given valuable information about how they can improve the quality of education they are providing. There is no one right answer as to how students should be assessed, however this is an important issue to research further. Education is the backbone of an individual's future and new ideas regarding educational policy will lead to a stronger foundation for students to lean on in college and in their careers.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Alternative assessments are becoming more prevalent because educators are realizing that assessments need to mirror classroom learning. Many states taking part in Race to the Top are adopting alternative assessments to give a more holistic view of students' education throughout the school year. States across the nation are piloting these programs, and seeing success within their own grassroots initiatives. These pilot programs submit the information from their alternative assessments to Race to the Top to receive the funding that the initiative gives to schools considered successful at educating students on how to be "college and career ready". These alternative assessments include: performance assessment, exhibitions, portfolio assessment, and computer adaptive testing (CAT).

Performance Assessment

Performance assessments allow educators to determine whether students are able to apply their knowledge to real-life situations. Students are not only asked to critically think about a problem, but they are asked to prove that they have the skills necessary to solve the problem through hands on experience. Performance assessments are defined as "any form of

assessment that requires students to carry out an activity or produce a product in order to demonstrate higher learning" (Woolfolk, 2013, p.559). Assessing a student through real-life situations allows the bridge between learning and assessment to be completely linked. Each day, students take part in hands-on experiences in the classroom. These hands-on experiences allow teachers to gauge where their students' level of comprehension of a topic is and allows them to tailor their classroom teaching to increase comprehension. A performance assessment not only mirrors student learning, but it also encourages teachers to continuously foster a learning environment based on developing applicable skills, rather than just test-taking skills.

Because performance assessments model students' day-to-day learning, pilot programs using performance assessments to obtain data have appeared across the country. One standardized assessment throughout the entire school year proves to not be enough for the New York Performance Standards Consortium. While this consortium believes that "high quality assessment is essential" (Strauss, 2012, p.1), it also believes that performance assessment successfully provides information regarding student ability. A collection of 28 public high schools have adopted an improved performance assessment and eliminated standardized assessments almost entirely. Students are required to complete four performance-based tasks which include "an analytic essay, a social studies research paper, a science experiment and an applied mathematics problem" (Strauss, 2012, p.2). Each one of these performance assessments requires both written and oral components to better judge student knowledge.

Performance assessments have the potential to bring success because the New York Performance Standards Consortium is seeing results. They believe that this performance assessment "works well for the types of students that test-driven 'reforms' are supposed to benefit but so often fail" (Strauss, 2012, p.1). The goal of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was to assure that children across the nation, including those in at risk populations, would not be overlooked when it came to educational standards. The New York Performance Standards Consortium has left behind the standardized assessments that have come to define NCLB and have used these performance-based standards to send as their data to allow for accountability.

The quantitative data from this initiative strongly supports that performance assessment could help redefine assessment in educational policy.

The student body of the 28 public schools in this consortium is representative of New York City's student body as a whole. The population is equally as diverse in ethnicity, English language learners and students with disabilities. Yet, remarkably, "the consortium dropout rate is half that of New York City public schools" (Strauss, 2012, p.1). Graduation rates are also higher for the students attending one of the 28 schools in the consortium. In addition to graduation rates from consortium schools being higher "86% of African American and 90% of Latino male graduates of Consortium schools were accepted to college" in 2011(Strauss, 2012, p.1). Despite the fact that consortium students are much more likely to be low-income, "93% of consortium grads remain enrolled in four-year colleges after the first two years" (Strauss, 2012, p.1) Students are able to see success on these assessments, and in their future, because their assessment model fits the model of their schools. Rather than one standardized test a year, the environment of the consortium schools foster open learning through experience. The assessment supports the fact that teachers' methods are leading to student learning and development.

The performance assessment approach is closely related to Theodore Sizer's vision for the American public education system that argues that "no two schools are or should be alike" ("Coalition of essential", 2013, p.1). He established the Coalition of Essential Schools, which is a group that works to promote equality across the nation in school systems. This coalition has many goals that a performance assessment would help achieve. One of the most important goals is a student's demonstration of mastery. Schools that are a part of the Coalition of Essential Schools believe that "teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks" ("Coalition of essential", 2013, p.1). If students are assessed by how they perform on tasks done while learning, those who have fallen behind are able to be provided with the help and support that they need to succeed. The educational group behind the Coalition of Essential Schools strongly focuses their curriculum around performance assessment, with a strong emphasis on the portfolio approach. A

portfolio approach involves performance assessment, but often uses various other forms of assessment as well.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions are a form of performance assessment that allow for evaluation of students' knowledge through demonstration. An exhibition is "a performance test or demonstration of learning that is public and usually takes an extended time to prepare" (Woolfolk, 2013, p.560). Student preparation includes practicing how to deliver their knowledge to a particular audience, in addition to actually using the skills necessary to gain knowledge in the subject matter of the exhibition. It is seen as "the culminating experience of a whole program of study" (Woolfolk, 2013, p.560). Exhibitions require students to perform their knowledge in a particular context. The time spent preparing for an exhibition allows students to take part in deep self-reflection on both their learning and mastery of the knowledge that their exhibit is supposed to execute. "Communication skills and understanding are essential" (Woolfolk, 2013, p.560) and those are two skills that should be necessary to be considered "college and career-ready".

Exhibitions are strongly encouraged by Ted Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools. Although exhibitions are performance assessments, they are not completely identical. The Coalition of Essential Schools stands behind exhibitions as valid forms of assessment for many reasons. This type of alternative assessment depends "on participation of people from outside the school community as mentors and evaluators" (Davidson, 2007, p.1). This type of participation guarantees that not only the students are engaged in their own personal learning, but their parents, teachers and administrators of their schools are engaged too. The Coalition also argues that exhibitions allow students to create valuable, real-world experiences. "Exhibitions authentically prepare young people for democratic participation, citizenship, and lifelong learning" (Davidson, 2007, p.2). One of the fundamental reasons for all of the high-stake, standardized testing is to make sure that students are leaving their K-12 education "college and career-ready". Exhibitions allow students to use their communication skills to achieve these goals established by the Common Core State Standards to represent "college and career readiness", which make it a viable form of alternative assessment.

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio assessments are becoming increasingly popular across the United States, as they are more representative of the dynamic learning process. Students are learning throughout the entire school year, and standardized assessments' practice of only one test at the beginning or at the end of the year shows only a snapshot of classroom learning. A portfolio assessment is defined as "a collection of the student's work in an area, showing growth, self-reflection, and achievement" (Woolfolk, 2013, p. 560). Portfolios are assembled to show students' skills that have been developed throughout the entire school year. These assessments include "work in progress, revisions, student self-analysis and reflections on what the students have learned" (Woolfolk, 2013, p.560). Rather than just having students put work that is considered their personal best, portfolio assessment shows both learning and progress. When teachers ask students to reflect on the work that has been placed in their portfolio, it "helps students think not only about what they have learned, but about their own learning processes, all of which contributes to the overall goal of improving student learning" (Peterson & Neill, 2011, p.3). Schools could be assessed for national standards by using these portfolio assessments through a "random sampling", which means that student portfolios would be chosen randomly by administrators to determine if and what students are learning. Rather than one standardized, pencil and paper test at the end of the school year, this approach allows for policymakers to make decisions based on year-long learning. Not only does it allow for more informed decisions on policymakers' parts, it also allows for students and teachers to be consistently mindful of their work.

The Learning Record system based out of California was an example of a portfolio assessment system that saw results with this approach. The Learning Record System was based originally on a system used in London, where it saw success on its increasingly diverse student body. In 1990-1991, groups of teachers from many different geographic regions of California began studying this method so implementation could become a reality. By 1994-1995, ten schools "began phasing in the use of the California Learning Record to prepare for the lifting of the norm referenced test requirements" (Syverson, 2006, p.3). However, because of the jump to standardized assessment, the California Learning Record's progress was cut

short. Funding was stopped to this alternative assessment because of No Child Left Behind and the need for a "standardized" way of assessing schools for accountability.

The California Learning Record's main goal was to "use evidence of student work to assess student achievement in the context of classroom learning" (Barr, 2006, p.2). This system was "standards-referenced", which meant that assessment requires looking at performance over time. When teachers were asked what they believed the implications would be of this portfolio assessment, they said that they planned to "reorganize their classrooms to permit more student involvement in learning and assessment" (Syverson, 2006, p.2). Teachers discussed the idea that using a portfolio allowed them to see where their students were struggling, and self-reflections also allowed students to determine where they were struggling on their own. In addition to allowing for a better learning environment, the California Learning Record aligned with national educational policy in terms of levels of student performance. It was an assessment far before its time. Through this system, students were learning while being assessed. This is the point of both performance and portfolio assessment. Authentic learning practices can be evaluated as being truly representative of student knowledge. Although actual sample sizes that took part in the California Learning Record were small, focus groups and teacher reactions to the program proved that this method could have seen success if standardized testing had not become the national norm.

In addition to the Learning Record, the Work Sampling System is a functioning portfolio assessment system based out of Ann Arbor. It was developed by University of Michigan professor Samuel J. Meisels. Currently, "over 75,000 children in more than 3,000 classrooms from Vermont to Michigan, Pennsylvania, Texas, Arizona, South Carolina and other states now use it" (Swanbrow, 1995, p.1). There are three major components of this system that include observations by teachers that use specific guidelines, a collection of student's work compiled into a portfolio and summary reports. The guidelines used "are based on national content standards and current knowledge of child development" ("Work Sampling System", 2011, p.1). These checklists allow for a more objective analysis of students' work. Like most

portfolio assessment practices, the Work Sampling System uses work from throughout the entire school year.

Professor Meisels wanted to see if his portfolio-based approach was really allowing for a better prediction of success, so he performed a study with 100 kindergarten children. He began to look at conventional methods versus his new, more authentic approach to assessment. "Meisels and his colleagues compared the validity and reliability of each approach to assessment in predicting school performance" (Swanbrow, 1995, p.2). It was discovered that the Work Sampling System's evaluations "proved to be consistent and reliable, and they were even more accurate than conventional testing at predicting children's school achievement" (Swanbrow, 1995, p.2). In addition to seeing success with being a predictor of student achievement, the Work Sampling System was seen positively by parents and teachers alike. Because this assessment is not based on just one test, parents were beginning to see their children achieve positive feedback that they never had before. Teachers also reported that "children's self-confidence and ability to see and evaluate their own growth" (Swanbrow, 1995, p.2) had vastly improved. Standardized assessments are known to defeat children's self-confidence at times, and do not give the opportunity to reflect on self-growth. Portfolio assessments give students opportunities they have never had before.

Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT)

Computer adaptive testing is defined as "an interactive, computer-administered test-taking process wherein items presented to the test taker are based in part on the test taker's performance on previous items" (Cohen, Swerdlik & Sturman, 2013, p. 255). Each computer adaptive test that is administered is likely to look very different between test takers. This is due largely to the fact that a test taker's answer to a test question determines the next test question they receive. "Each item on an achievement test, for example, may have a known difficulty level" (Cohen, Swerdlik & Sturman, 2013, p. 255). If a test taker is struggling with test questions deemed to have the highest difficulty level, CAT begins to shape the tests based on their knowledge level to avoid test anxiety. Similarly, if a test taker is racing through most test questions, CAT will deliver harder exam questions so the test taker does not become bored and begin making mistakes because of a lack of focus.

CAT has been proven to reduce floor and ceiling effects. Assessment tools sometimes do not give accurate measurements as to what knowledge base students actually have. A "floor effect" refers to "the diminished utility of an assessment tool for distinguishing test takers at the low end of the ability, trait or other attribute being measured" (Cohen, Swerdlik & Sturman, 2013, p. 256). If a test is given to measure certain ability, but one of the test takers cannot answer a single question on the test, the results of the assessment give absolutely no indication as to what the test taker actually knows. Because of an outlier who does not accurately choose the answer to any questions on a test, it does not give decision makers such as teachers or administrators the chance to really see what their students know. CAT allows for subject knowledge to be assessed, even if it is minimal. This form of alternative assessment also helps to counteract a "ceiling effect" which refers to "the diminished utility of an assessment tool for distinguishing test takers at the high end of the ability, trait or other attribute being measured" (Cohen, Swerdlik & Sturman, 2013, p. 259). If a test taker answers every single question on a test correctly, it also does not give decision makers the information needed to make sufficient decisions for their students regarding their education. If students begin performing well on the questions on a computer adaptive test, questions begin getting harder and, therefore, the results more accurately depict student knowledge.

CAT is becoming a nationwide movement to assess students' academic ability. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) are two major CAT programs that are being adopted by 46 states. These two programs have been created to test the new Common Core State Standards that were created by the states so that all schools can be assessed on a level playing field. PARCC and SBAC are both computer programs that follow the guidelines of standard computer adaptive testing. Both of these programs have received federal funding from the Department of Education to drive these alternative assessment initiatives. States are going to begin using these programs for both mandatory summative assessments at the end of the school year and they can begin to optionally use them throughout the school year to gauge

learning. The first years of the implementation of these computer-adaptive tests will be 2014-2015.

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) includes 18 states that have worked together to develop a better assessment to gauge "college and career readiness", which is the most important aspect of testing in educational policy. PARCC's overall goal is "to provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support" (PARCC, 2013, p.1). This consortium hopes to achieve this goal by creating a "common set of computer-based K-12 assessments in English language arts/Literacy and math linked to the new, more rigorous Common Core State Standards" (PARCC FAQ, 2013, p.1). PARCC states include Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Tennessee. These states have designed these alternative assessments with the idea in mind to create "more meaningful, actionable, timely information for educators, parents and students" (PARCC FAQ, 2013, p.1). CAT allows for results to be tabulated quicker, so teachers are able to address issues in learning so their students are given the chance to learn and improve what they are struggling with.

Similar to PARCC, The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is an effort led by states in order to create new, alternative assessments to gauge how well schools align with the Common Core State Standards. SBAC has made a primary goal to give "all students, regardless of disability, language, or subgroup status…the opportunity to learn this valued content and to show what they know and can do" (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2011, p.1). The main components of SBAC are summative assessments and optional interim assessments. Summative assessments include those tests that are deemed mandatory to measure performance based on the Common Core. These summative measures are "designed to provide valid, reliable and fair measures of students' progress toward and attainment of knowledge and skills required to be college- and career-ready" (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2011, p.1). Interim assessments are going to be an optional component for

schools that can be administered within different intervals of the school year. These optional assessments "involve a large teacher role in developing and scoring constructed response items and performance tasks" (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2011, p.1). Therefore, SBAC interim assessments will combine both CAT and performance assessments in which students are asked to demonstrate their academic knowledge through a task. SBAC is committed to making sure that their question types truly allow for demonstration of knowledge and provide a comprehensive look at student learning. All of these alternative assessments are giving both students and schools the chance to show academic achievement in varied ways.

METHODOLOGY

After conducting an in-depth review of the literature to answer the first two research questions of this Honors thesis, the final two research questions were answered using a survey constructed to gauge teachers' opinions and perceptions. The research questions of the survey portion of this Honors thesis are:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of standardized testing in schools?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of alternative approaches to assess student learning?

Elementary school teachers and administrators are those directly affected by educational policy; however their opinions are rarely taken into account when policymakers are making large scale decisions. It is hypothesized that the opinions of teachers and administrators may not reflect the opinions of educational policymakers. Ultimately, the focus of this project is on the implications of educational policy and the perceptions that teachers have on these policies. Focusing on these opinions and perceptions will shed a new light on how those directly affected by the reforms in educational policy actually feel.

Participants

The participants in the research portion of this Honors thesis included 52 teachers from the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Obtaining the participants for this survey proved to be a difficult task. Originally, the plan was to email the superintendents of school districts in Rhode Island and ask them to distribute the surveys to elementary school teachers within their designated school system. There were minimal responses to the emails asking for this top-

down approach. In order to make sure that there were a significant number of participants, a convenience sampling method was used. Emails were sent to family and friends who worked within school systems of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Then, those family and friends were asked to forward the survey to any teachers or administrators they knew in other public school systems. Eventually, this snowball effect created 52 responses to the survey.

There were 51 female participants and 1 male participant, meaning that 98% of survey participants were female. In addition, an overwhelming number of teachers took this survey, rather than assistant teachers or other administrative roles within the school system. There were 48 teachers, 2 speech pathologists, 1 assistant teacher and 1 principal. A wide distribution of age was seen within survey participants as well. The greatest number of participants fell within the ages of 25 to 30, with that only representing 19.2% of the full sample. The participants of this survey also represented a wide variety in years they were employed in a public school system. The greatest number of participants fell within 11 to 15 years of employment in a public school system, with that only representing 30.8% of the full sample. A full representation of the survey participants' demographics can be found in Appendix A.

While age and years employed saw a wide variety of responses, the following three demographic factors saw the greatest diversity. The first demographic factor was education level achieved by the participants. Of the full sample, 60% of participants earned their Master's Degree, 38% earned their Bachelor's Degree and 2% earned their Associate's Degree. The second demographic factor was the state that the participants were currently teaching in. Of the full sample, 65% of the participants were teaching in Rhode Island and 35% of the participants were teaching in Massachusetts. The third demographic factor was the grade level that the participants were currently teaching. Of the full sample, 46% taught early elementary school (Pre-K through 2nd Grade), 43% taught upper elementary school (3rd Grade through 5th Grade), 9.6% taught middle school and 1.9% taught high school.

Data Sources

In order to better answer the research questions, two data sources were constructed using an electronic survey that could be distributed through email to teachers and administrators. The first data source was titled the Perceptions of Assessment Scale (PAS). See Appendix B for a copy of the PAS. The first part of the PAS addressed the following question: "Are the negative impacts discussed in the literature review salient and relevant for these elementary school teachers in this sample?" It established a baseline for their current view on standardized testing. The second part of the PAS addressed the following question: "How do these elementary school teachers feel about alternative assessments and their implementation?" This is where their opinions regarding the new alternative assessments approaches that are being piloted across the country were expressed. These approaches include: performance assessment, portfolio assessment, exhibitions and computer adaptive testing (CAT). The PAS had a pull-down Likert-scale that asked participants how they felt about each statement presented on the survey based on a 1-5 scale. One represented "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represented "Strongly Agree".

The first 6 questions of the PAS were aimed towards obtaining participants' perceptions of standardized assessments. The first 2 questions asked whether the participant believed that standardized testing is an effective tool for measuring student achievement and if it accurately reflects overall student achievement. The third question was reverse-coded and asked if participants believed that standardized assessments had a negative impact on their teaching habits. The fifth question asked the same thing, but asked the participants whether they felt that standardized assessments had a positive impact on their teaching habits. Within the review of the literature, the problem of "teaching to the test" was discussed. The fourth question of the PAS was aimed towards discovering if this was a true issue participants faced. The sixth and final question about participants' perceptions of standardized assessments asked whether these tests had a positive effect on personal curriculum development.

The last 8 questions of the PAS were constructed to determine participants' perceptions of the four alternatives discussed in the review of the literature. Of the 8 questions, 2 were directed at each specific alternative. Questions 7 and 8 were directed at participants' opinions

regarding the ability of performance assessment to represent students' overall subject knowledge. Questions 9 and 10 were directed at participants' opinions regarding the ability of exhibitions to demonstrate students' subject knowledge. Questions 11 and 12 aimed to discover how participants' felt about the technology of Computer Adaptive Testing and its impact on gauging academic abilities. Finally, questions 13 and 14 were targeted at portfolio assessment and its ability to effectively measure students' learning and academic ability.

The second portion of the electronic survey was titled the Teacher Information Survey (TIS). This portion of the data sources was important for understanding the demographics of the participants' surveyed. The TIS asked what the participants' current position was, what grade they currently taught, how old they were, what their sex was, how many years they had been employed in the public school system, what their highest level of education was and what state they currently teach in. The TIS allowed valuable information about the full sample to be obtained so meaningful comparisons within their means could be looked at.

RESULTS

In order to answer the third and fourth research questions, the survey responses for the full sample of 52 teachers were examined. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the questions on the PAS regarding perceptions of standardized testing and alternative assessments.

Results of PAS

According to the data collected from the first 6 questions of the data sources, teachers have negative opinions about standardized testing. The first findings revealed that the full sample mean was in disagreement with the first two statements that suggested standardized testing was an effective tool for measuring student achievement and for accurately reflecting overall student achievement. The second findings suggest that the full sample disagrees with high-stakes standardized tests having a positive impact on every day teaching habits and personal curriculum development. The third and final findings regarding teachers' perceptions about standardized assessments suggest that teachers feel neutral to positive about standardized assessments having a negative impact on their teaching habits and agree that they feel

pressured to teach to the test to make sure that their students perform well on these exams. The means and standard deviations are as follows:

- Standardized testing is an effective tool for measuring student achievement.
  M= 2.42, *SD*= 1.05

- Standardized assessments accurately reflect overall student achievement.
  M=2.19, *SD*=0.93

- High-stakes standardized assessments have had a positive effect on my every day teaching habits.
  M= 2.23, *SD*= 0.89

- High-stakes standardized assessments have had a positive effect on my own personal curriculum development.
  M=2.21, *SD*= 0.80

- High-stakes standardized assessments, i.e. state-wide testing, have had a negative impact on my teaching habits.
  M= 3.73, *SD*=0.89

- I feel pressured to "teach to the test" to make sure that the students in my classroom perform well on high-stakes standardized assessments.
  M=4.05, *SD*= 0.73

According to the data collected from the last 8 questions of the PAS, teachers had favorable opinions about alternative assessments. After calculating the means and standard deviations, it was found that teachers had the most favorable opinions regarding performance assessment. A clear picture emerged that the full sample of teachers had high means. A 5 represents "strong agree" and means to both questions regarding performance assessment had means above 4. The second piece of information discovered was that teachers also had positive opinions about exhibitions. When asked about social studies fairs giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge versus a standardized exam, teachers were in high agreement with a mean above 4. The second question regarding exhibitions was phrased negatively and therefore had to be recoded to represent how positive their perception was about the effectiveness of presenting an English paper to the class.

Teachers felt neutral to positive about portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment was ranked third in favorability by teachers. Teachers felt neutral to positive about portfolios being an

effective way of gauging student learning, and after recoding the second question about portfolios, it was found that teachers felt neutral to positive about portfolios' ability to measure students' academic ability. Teachers felt neutral about Computer Adaptive Testing. Teachers felt neutral about its ability to be an effective way of gauging student learning, as well as neutral about the statement that students should be tested using innovative technologies because they are more accustomed to technology than paper and pencil tests.

The means and standard deviations of the last 8 questions of the PAS are as follows:

- I believe that a student performing an academic task, such as writing a lab report or writing a poem, is a better demonstration of knowledge in a subject area than being able to accurately choose the right answer on a standardized assessment pertaining to that subject area.
  M=4.26, *SD*=.66
- I believe that a student conducting a science experiment in a laboratory represents greater subject knowledge than answering multiple choice questions about the outcome of the science experiment.
  M=4.40, *SD*=.53
- Exhibitions, such as social studies fairs, give students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in a public forum, while standardized multiple choice assessments do not give students equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge.
  M=4.17, *SD*=.75
- Having children present their English papers to a class of their peers would not be effective at demonstrating student's academic abilities in that subject areas.
  Original *M*=2.69
  Recoded *M*= 3.30, *SD*=1.04
- Portfolio assessments are an effective way of gauging students' learning.
  M= 3.85, *SD*= 0.61
- Portfolio assessments would not be an effective way to measure a student's academic ability.
  Original *M*=2.38

Recoded *M*= 3.62, *SD*= 0.69

- Computer Adaptive testing would be an effective way of gauging students' learning. *M*=3.32, *SD*=.92
- Students should be tested using innovative technologies, such as Computer Adaptive testing, because they are more accustomed to technology than pencil and paper tests. *M*=3.26, *SD*=.91

Subgroup Comparison: Grade Level

It was decided that looking at particular subgroups within the data obtained from the PAS to discover statistically significant differences in means would be important. The first subgroup comparison was made for grade level taught by the participants. This was categorized into three subcategories. The first was lower elementary school teachers (Pre-K through 2nd Grade), the second was upper elementary school teachers (3rd Grade through 5th Grade) and the third was middle school teachers. There was only one survey participant who taught high school and their results were eliminated from this comparison in order to look at results that would be statistically relevant. A one-way ANOVA was run to determine whether there would be any relevance of grade level taught within the data. For the first 6 questions regarding perceptions about standardized assessments, there were no statistically significant differences in the means of teachers who taught lower elementary, upper elementary or middle school. This led to the conclusion that regardless of grade level taught, teachers were unanimous in their dislike for standardized assessments. For the last 8 questions regarding perceptions about alternative assessments, there were no statistically significant differences in the means of teachers for 7 of the questions. However, there was a statistically significant difference in the means of participants regarding the grade level they teach when they answered their opinion on this statement: "Having children present their English papers to a class of their peers would not be effective at demonstrating student's academic abilities in that subject areas." Teachers who taught lower elementary school had a lower mean, after the question was recoded, than those who taught upper elementary school and middle school.

Subgroup Comparison: State Currently Teaching In

The second subgroup comparison was conducted using demographic information about the state that teachers were currently teaching in. An independent samples t-test was run in order

to determine whether or not there was any statistically significant differences in teachers who taught in Massachusetts or Rhode Island. For the first 6 questions regarding participants' perceptions about standardized assessments, there were no statistically significant differences in the means of teachers who taught in Massachusetts or Rhode Island. This means that regardless of the state that the teachers is in, they are unanimous in their dislike for standardized assessments. For the last 8 questions regarding perceptions about alternative assessments, there were no statistically significant differences in the means of teachers for 7 of the questions. However, there was a statistically significant difference (t= -2.14, p<.05) in the means of participants regarding the state they teach in when they answered their opinion on this statement: "I believe that a student conducting a science experiment in a laboratory represents greater subject knowledge than answering multiple choice questions about the outcome of the science experiment." Teachers who taught in Rhode Island had a higher mean (M=4.41) than those who taught in Massachusetts (M=4.00).

Subgroup Comparison: Level of Education Achieved by Participant

The third and final subgroup comparison was conducted using demographic information about the level of education achieved by the participant. Two categories were formed to run an independent samples t-test. Teachers were split into those who had achieved their Bachelor's Degrees and those who had achieved their Master's Degrees. Only one survey participant reported that their highest level of education was an Associate's Degree and their responses were eliminated to discover statistically significant comparisons of the data. For the first 6 questions regarding perceptions about standardized assessments, there were no statistically significant differences in the means. This indicates that regardless of the level of education achieved by the participant, they dislike standardized assessments equally. For the last 8 questions regarding perceptions about alternative assessments, there were also no statistically significant differences in the means. This leads to the conclusion that regardless of the level of education achieved by teachers, they feel the same way (positive to neutral) about the proposed alternatives to standardized assessments.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this Honors thesis is to expose the holes in only using standardized assessments in schools to measure academic achievement and school success. There are implications for students, teachers and administrators. After bringing to light the negative impacts that standardized assessments can have, the next step of the process was to highlight the alternatives to standardized assessments. These include performance assessment, exhibitions, portfolio assessment and computer adaptive testing (CAT). Discovering these alternatives made it possible to determine whether or not they are actually successful in school systems because there is evidence of pilot studies across the nation. These pilot studies utilize different alternative assessments and have been able to use the data collected to report back to policymakers about the effectiveness of their schools. With the realization that there were in fact negative effects and there were proposed alternative methods to assessment, taking into account teachers' opinions became the focus of the second half of the project.

In order to discover whether or not the issues indicated in the review of the literature regarding educational policy and its implications were salient and relevant, a survey was created. This survey was constructed to identify participants' perceptions and opinions regarding standardized assessments and proposed alternative approaches. Issues such as the effectiveness of standardized assessments and the pressure to "teach to the test" were presented to participants to discover if these were just problems created by those who dislike testing in general or if they were realities that teachers faced every day. In addition to attempting to identify whether or not these issues were relevant, it was important to discover whether or not teachers would have a positive outlook on alternatives being identified to better gauge student learning and academic ability than standardized assessments. The results of the survey created were not surprising, given the issues of standardized assessments and strong cases supporting alternative assessments discovered in the review of the literature.

Standardized assessments are known for only measuring a limited amount of students' complete academic abilities. Teachers who took the PAS having a negative perception about standardized assessments' ability to be an effective tool for measuring student achievement means that the end users of the assessments and their data agree with those who are against

using only standardized assessments to measure student's achievement. Teachers are in the classroom with their students 180 days out of the year. Their strong disagreement that standardized assessments accurately reflect overall student achievement suggests that they believe their students achieve more in the 180 days that they are with them than they are able to demonstrate on one standardized assessment given at the beginning or the end of the school year. Because of the strong emphasis on producing strong results on these standardized assessments, teachers are spending time insuring that their students perform well on tests they do not even believe accurately reflect what their students know.

In addition to this lack of belief in the tests, teachers are also feeling negative effects on their everyday classroom life. The strong disagreement that standardized assessments have had a positive effect on every day teaching habits or personal curriculum development suggests that this tendency towards high-stakes exams is stunting personal growth for teachers. Standardized assessments provide an incredibly narrow line that they must walk in order to be successful. Deviation from that line could have detrimental consequences on the results of their students' exam scores. This means that they do not have the time to interpret the results of the standardized assessments based on how they can improve their own teaching. They are spending time interpreting the results based on how they can get their students to improve their test scores. This leads to an incredible focus on "teaching to the test" and improving test taking skills, rather than helping their students learn more effectively. Time that would have been spent developing their students' abilities in art, science and social studies often gets pushed aside to improve "guessing" on multiple choice questions and making funny YouTube videos to popular songs to help relieve test anxiety in their students.

After the results indicated that teachers in this sample believe that standardized assessments have a negative impact on their teaching, it was not surprising that they had positive to neutral feelings about the proposed alternative methods to accurately measure students' academic abilities. Performance assessments ranked highest amongst teachers. It could be speculated that this is because it gives students the best chance to demonstrate what they actually know by performing an academic task. It is easy to measure students' abilities in science when a

teacher is actually watching them perform an experiment, rather than just having them fill in a bubble about the outcome of the combination of two elements. Having students actually produce something, rather than just correcting a test that they could have guessed on provides a better framework to align their instruction with the needs of their students. Ultimately, the goal of assessment is to provide teachers with data that allows them to improve their teaching. Performance assessment gives valuable and valid feedback to teachers; giving them the tools necessary to advance their teaching skills. Rhode Island teachers having a more favorable mean to the question involving science experiments may just be a coincidence, or it could be the product of a performance assessment initiative in the state (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2014). Research was inconclusive, but it could be a local initiative just beginning to pick up support.

Exhibitions were ranked second most favorable by the survey participants. This is not surprising because exhibitions are a form of alternative assessment that teachers are very familiar with. Science fairs are a particularly popular way of allowing students to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge. Teachers are comfortable with the assessment criteria of asking a student to demonstrate what they know through presentation of material that they have been compiling for a significant amount of time. Watching a student demonstrate what they know by creating a visual aid and creating a script of what they need to say gives teachers the opportunity to assess what material they are most comfortable with and what they may need more guidance on to fully understand. Students who are in Pre-K through 2nd grade are not likely to improve their learning from demonstrating their English papers to a class of their peers and this is probably why teachers who taught early elementary school had a lower mean when there was a question asked about this. This question was not developmentally appropriate for those grades and the teachers identified this issue.

Portfolio assessment and Computer Adaptive Testing had the lowest support from teachers when it came to alternative approaches to standardized assessment. Portfolio assessment gives teachers the opportunity to see growth in their students over the school year. However, it may be difficult to objectively gauge a student's overall academic performance based on their

works-in-progress or self-reflections. The participants of the survey may have recognized the need to create an objective way to look at a portfolio and assess a student's academic abilities. Computer Adaptive Testing provides a completely objective way of assessing students, but it was ranked the lowest by teachers. This was the most surprising piece of information discovered through data collection. The one alternative assessment that would require little to no work on the part of the teachers was ranked last. This means that the teachers who took the survey are willing to put in work in order to accurately and effectively measure their students so they are able to properly demonstrate their academic abilities.

In the data collection, there were several limitations within the project. The sample size is small, with the full sample only consisting of 52 participants. Obtaining participants to take the survey proved to be incredibly challenging. A top down approach was unsuccessful in gaining the participation needed for a large scale level. Another limitation of the project was that teachers were originally only supposed to come from Rhode Island. However, because of the difficulty in sampling, there was a need to expand participation to the state of Massachusetts as well. Spring is also standardized assessment time, which made this research project an even more relevant issue for teachers. Most of the teachers who would not take my survey said that it was because they were too busy at the time preparing for standardized assessments. Other limitations of this project include the data collected only being as good as the questions asked on the survey. The question from the PAS about presenting English papers to a class of students in early elementary school is not developmentally appropriate. Another example of a performance assessment should have been used. Additionally, the phrasing of the CAT questions could have been reworded. It suggested that students would prefer computer tests because they are not accustomed to pencil and paper tests, which is inaccurate because they take pencil and paper tests frequently in their classroom learning.

CONCLUSION

An in-depth review of the current climate of education revealed holes in using only standardized assessments as means of gauging both students' academic abilities and the success of schools across the country. Proposed alternatives that could effectively measure

student learning include performance assessment, exhibitions, portfolio assessment and computer adaptive testing. Schools across the country are taking part in initiatives driven by the effectiveness of alternative assessment in action. After diving into the literature, assessing the actual perceptions of teachers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island revealed that the issues about standardized assessments and the opinions of teachers regarding alternative assessments were true. Teachers have a negative opinion about standardized assessments in schools regarding their effectiveness and impact on their teaching. Also, teachers favor performance assessment and exhibitions and remain neutral about portfolio assessment and computer adaptive testing. This project gave a voice to those who do not usually have one when it comes to decisions made about educational policy: teachers. It was a true pleasure to give the opportunity to teachers to express their opinions about important issues that directly affect them and the children that fill their classrooms.

APPENDIX A – SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

		Frequency	Percent
Education Level			
	Associate's Degree	1	1.9%
	Bachelor's Degree	20	38.5%
	Master's Degree	31	59.6%
State Currently Teaching In			
	Massachusetts	18	34.60%
	Rhode Island	34	65.40%
Years Employed in Public School System			
	1 to 5	15	28.80%
	6 to 10	7	11.50%
	11 to 15	17	30.80%
	16 or more	13	21.20%
Position			
	Assistant Teacher	1	1.90%
	Teacher	48	92.30%
	Other	3	5.80%
Grade Level			
	Pre-K through 2nd Grade	24	46.20%
	3rd Grade through Fifth Grade	22	43.20%
	Middle School	5	9.60%
	High School	1	1.90%
Age			
	21 to 25	7	13.50%
	25 to 30	10	19.20%
	31 to 35	8	15.40%
	36 to 40	9	17.30%
	41 to 45	5	9.60%

46 to 50	6	11.50%
51 to 55	3	5.80%
55 and over	4	7.70%

Sex

Male	1	1.90%
Female	51	98.10%

APPENDIX B - SURVEYS

Perceptions of Assessment Scale

School Survey

* Required

Please read each item carefully and select the proper response based on your level of agreement. We appreciate your time and feedback. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree", what is your response to the following statements?

Standardized testing is an effective tool for measuring student achievement. *

Standardized assessments accurately reflect overall student achievement. *

High-stakes standardized assessments, i.e. state-wide testing, have had a negative impact on my teaching habits. *

I feel pressured to "teach to the test" to make sure that the students in my classroom perform well on high-stakes standardized assessments. *

High-stakes standardized assessments have had a positive effect on my everyday teaching habits. *

High-stakes standardized assessments have had a positive effect on my own personal curriculum development. *

I believe that a student performing an academic task, such as writing a lab report or writing a poem, is a better demonstration of knowledge in a subject area than being able to accurately choose the right answer on a standardized assessment pertaining to that subject area. *

I believe that a student conducting a science experiment in a laboratory represents greater subject knowledge than answering multiple choice questions about the outcome of the science experiment. *

Exhibitions, such as social studies fairs, give students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in a public forum, while standardized multiple choice assessments do not give students equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. *

Having children present their English papers to a class of their peers would not be effective at demonstrating student's academic abilities in that subject areas. *

Students should be tested using innovative technologies, such as Computer Adaptive testing, because they are more accustomed to technology than pencil and paper tests. (Computer adaptive testing is an assessment given on the computer that shapes the test based on student's responses to the questions. If a student gets an answer correct, more challenging questions present themselves. If a student gets an answer incorrect, the computer drops down the level of difficulty.) *

Computer Adaptive testing would be an effective way of gauging students' learning. (Computer adaptive testing is an assessment given on the computer that shapes the test based on student's responses to the questions. If a student gets an answer correct, more challenging questions present themselves. If a student gets an answer incorrect, the computer drops down the level of difficulty.) *

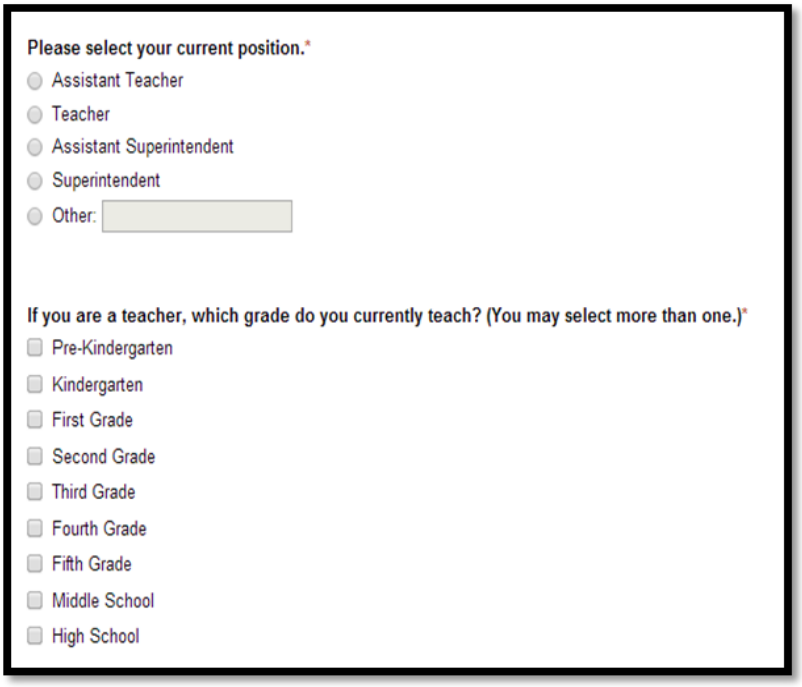
Portfolio assessments are an effective way of gauging students' learning. (Portfolio assessments provide a more dynamic approach to assessment through compiling a collection of student's work throughout the year that demonstrates mastery in a particular subject area.) *

Portfolio assessments would not be an effective way to measure a student's academic ability. (Portfolio assessments provide a more dynamic approach to assessment through compiling a collection of student's work throughout the year that demonstrates mastery in a particular subject area.) *

« Back Continue »

50% completed

Teacher Information Survey

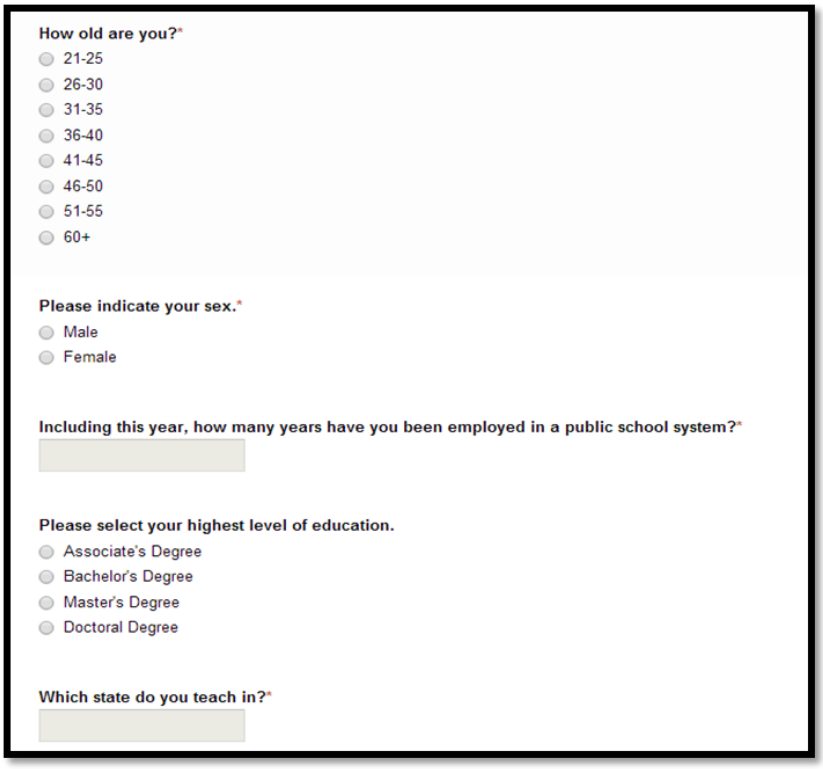


Please select your current position.*

- ○ Assistant Teacher
- ○ Teacher
- ○ Assistant Superintendent
- ○ Superintendent
- ○ Other:

If you are a teacher, which grade do you currently teach? (You may select more than one.)*

- ☐ Pre-Kindergarten
- ☐ Kindergarten
- ☐ First Grade
- ☐ Second Grade
- ☐ Third Grade
- ☐ Fourth Grade
- ☐ Fifth Grade
- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School



How old are you?*

- ○ 21-25
- ○ 26-30
- ○ 31-35
- ○ 36-40
- ○ 41-45
- ○ 46-50
- ○ 51-55
- ○ 60+

Please indicate your sex.*

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

Including this year, how many years have you been employed in a public school system?*

Please select your highest level of education.

- ○ Associate's Degree
- ○ Bachelor's Degree
- ○ Master's Degree
- ○ Doctoral Degree

Which state do you teach in?*

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