

Discuss the problems created by high stakes testing, and give testing alternative...



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High stakes testing: Problems and alternatives May 31, High-stakes testing:

Problems and alternatives A high-stakes test is a test that results in an important decision based on the results of the test by the test taker, such as a diploma from an educational facility or the license to practice a profession without resorting to applying for a job in someone else's place of employment. Therefore, people who do not pass these tests are at risk for having to take remedial classes until they do pass the test, or are else forbidden from graduating or obtaining a work license (Johnson, 2005). There has been a lot of controversy in regard to high-stakes testing, with numerous problems being pointed out over the unreliability of high-stakes testing.

These controversies bring about the concept that people, students in particular, are not being tested with the knowledge that they actually know, therefore being graded unfairly.

One of the biggest controversies over high-stakes testing is that the creators of the exams seem to be under the mindset that every student sitting the exam has had the same educational experience. For example, the test may make mention of a specific book, yet is done so without the thought that perhaps not every student has read that book. The majority of high-stakes testing are formed with the assumption that everybody should have the same knowledge when, in reality, not every school, or every teacher, follows the same curriculum as the rest of them. Furthermore, students may not have the knowledge through no fault of their own. Not every student is given an equal opportunity to learn the material that will be present on the test.

Another issue that can go hand-in-hand with the previously mentioned problem is that high-stakes testing does not correctly measure the

knowledge or skills of the individual. The tests tend to focus on specific  
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subjects such as, as aforementioned, a specific book while claiming to see how well a student has been able to grasp English. Instead of focusing on a broader subject that many students may have learned, the creators of these tests seem to want to focus more on narrower subjects that there is a good chance that few students have learned. While the student may understand the concepts, they are unable to use this unread book to help them solve the answers. These tests seem to be measuring more what someone does not know rather than what they do.

A third contention in regard to high-stakes testing is that these tests are attached to questionable rewards, such as high school diplomas. As previously mentioned, it is not always the case in which the students are at fault for not having the required knowledge; unqualified teachers are often the problems when it comes to a student taking the test. A student may spend all four years of high school obtaining above average grades though may show to have issues with passing a high-stakes test, therefore denying them the right to graduation despite the fact that they have done everything else required of them to graduate.

There are alternative tests that students can take that really do measure their knowledge and skills based on the knowledge and skills that they should have on an individual basis. One of these alternatives is formative assessments, meaning that schools would stick to homework, chapter tests, discussions, and start-of-class quizzes (Mathews, 2008). This helps to focus the student on one thing and understand if they are absorbing all of the necessary knowledge. High-stakes testing sums up their knowledge as a whole, while formative assessments sum knowledge up in pieces. Another alternative is end-of-course examinations, which would be written locally by <https://assignbuster.com/discuss-the-problems-created-by-high-stakes-testing-and-give-testing-alternatives/>

teachers within each school district, enabling them to create a test based on knowledge that their students have in fact learned. This alternative would also give teachers the opportunity to make sure that their students feel comfortable with the subject material.

#### References

- Johnson, B. (2005). *High stakes: Children, testing, and failure in American schools*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated.
- Mathews, J. (2008, March 31). Ways to measure schools without high-stakes testing. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/Article/2008/03/31/AR2008033100704.html>