

Association of Teacher Educators

Commission On High Stakes Testing

Commission Members

- Carol Donnelly, Worcester State College
- Frederick Erickson, UCLA
- Susan Hetzler, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Beverly Klug, Idaho State University
- Joyce Murphy, U.S. Department of Education (Retired)
- Peter C. Murrell, Jr., Northeastern University
- James O'Donnell, New Mexico State University
- Ed Pultorak, Southern Illinois University
- Rebecca Sanchez, New Mexico State University
- Sylvia Seidel, NEA
- Mary Selke, Elmhurst College
- Eileen Westerman, University of Houston
- Boyce Williams, NCATE
- Allen R. Warner, University of Houston, Chair

Commission Charge

To examine the issues surrounding high-stakes testing for teachers, teacher candidates and pupils, and to advise the Association's membership and leadership on appropriate Policy positions.

Timeline

The Commission, under ATE's *Corporate Bylaws*, officially came into existence at the conclusion of the 2004 Annual Meeting. Our charter expires at the end of the 2007 Annual Meeting.

What We Intend to Achieve

- To promote a scholarly but spirited discussion of the issues surrounding high stakes testing
- To develop potential position papers for consideration by governance bodies within the Association
- To seek avenues for publication of possible products from the Commission

What is High Stakes Testing?

We define *high stakes testing* as the assessment of individual performance, normally through paper-and-pencil measures, and the use of those data to make decisions about promotion, graduation, instructor effectiveness, program performance, and the approval of educational programs and institutions.

The term thus has at least two dimensions: the technical issues of assessment, and the policy issues of assigning responsibility for performance (or lack of performance).

Related Concepts

- Accountability
- Achievement Gap
- Alignment
- Authentic assessment
- Bias
- Collateral damage
- Consequential validity
- Data-based decision making
- Educator Licensure
- Graduation Tests
- Higher-order thinking
- Multiple measures
- Performance-based assessment
- Public and media fascination with numbers
- Referents (norm, criterion, self)
- School Campus Report Cards
- State and federal policy (e.g., NCLB)

Preliminary Issues

1. What are the varying perspectives on high stakes testing of policymakers, public citizens, teachers, teacher candidates, pupils?
2. What evidence exists of the positive effects of high stakes testing programs? (e.g., Rand studies; Texas Business and Education Coalition)
3. What evidence exists of negative effects of high stakes testing?
4. What evidence exists that high stakes testing elevates academic proficiency and scholastic development?
5. What evidence exists that high stakes tests for teacher candidates assess knowledge and skills needed for effective practice in varying communities and contexts?
6. What are the policy components that must accompany high stakes tests to improve learner achievement? (e.g., curricular alignment; provision of human, fiscal and material resources to support instruction; timely and effective feedback)
7. In what ways are multiple measures of assessment (such as performance-based or authentic assessment) superior to more common paper-and-pencil measures?
8. How can educators who are uncomfortable with the current strong emphasis on high stakes paper-and-pencil measures, accommodate the continuing public pressure for results? What evidence other than test scores are we willing to put forth to the public?
9. How do state and federal policies differ between public and private educational institutions?

Other Possible Areas of Study

- What are the uses of high stakes testing in the established professions (medicine, law, etc.)?
- What other public institutions are held accountable for product?
- What determines the measure of accountability, and the accountable entity?
- Are the proficiencies of successful and effective teaching, and the elements of accountability, the same? What proficiencies matter?
- What are the international dimensions of the high stakes testing and accountability movements?

Initial Assignments

- Jim & Rebecca - Historical context
- Beverly - School Case Study
- Peter - Consequential Validity
- Al - Policy Shifts
- Mary - Implications from other professions
- Carol - Database on pupil testing
- Ed - Relationship between test success and performance as a teacher
- Joyce - Schools where good teaching and testing go hand in hand