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ABSTRACT

Questions about the effectiveness of efforts to increase scores on minimum-competency tests and the appropriateness of their use were answered by teachers, education students, and administrators in Ohio, Georgia, and Texas. The first questionnaire was completed by 59 current teachers and 152 education students, who were asked if 30 listed procedures believed to increase scores on high school graduation tests were appropriate, and if not, were they a waste of time or even unethical. In the second questionnaire, 45 recent presenters at the meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) were asked to agree or disagree that the procedures would raise scores and increase learning, and were ethical. There were few major differences across groups. The majority agreed that providing current forms of tests for study was inappropriate or unethical. The great majority agreed that it was appropriate to use similar or previous tests in test preparation. Even many NCME presenters seemed to agree that many procedures that differ from standardized procedures are ethical. Less than a third favored recognizing teachers whose students performed well on the minimum-competency tests. Twelve appendixes contain the questionnaires and cover letters. (Contains 23 references and 6 tables.) (SLD)

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Increasing Scores on Minimum Competency Tests:

Opinions about Effectiveness, Appropriateness and Use

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the

National Council on Measurement in Education

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Abstract

Two questionnaires were completed: #1 by Ohio teachers and education students; and #2 by teachers and school administrators in three states (Ohio, Georgia, Texas) and by measurement professionals. Each questionnaire presented 30 procedures believed to increase scores on high school graduation tests. In questionnaire #1, teachers and future teachers were asked if the procedures were appropriate. If not appropriate, were they a waste of time and/or unethical. In questionnaire #2, responders were asked to agree or disagree that the procedures would: raise scores, increase learning, and were ethical. School personnel were asked if their school used the procedures. There were few major differences across groups, but considerable differences within groups for many procedures. Attitude toward tests in general and minimum competency tests in particular varied but tended not to be related to attitudes toward the 30 procedures. The majority agreed that providing current forms of tests for study was inappropriate or unethical. However, the great majority of each group agreed that it was appropriate or ethical to use similar or previous tests in preparation for taking current tests. Somewhat surprisingly, even many NCME members seemed to agree that many procedures that could differ from standardized procedures were ethical. Less than a third of the teachers favored recognizing teachers whose students performed well on the minimum competency tests.

Increasing Scores on Minimum Competency Tests:

Opinions about Effectiveness, Appropriateness and Use

A Nation at Risk (National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1993) and a series of international comparisons between U.S. students and their educational counterparts in other countries (Stevenson, Lee, & Stigler, 1986; Lapointe, Askew, & Mead, 1992; Lapointe, Mead, & Askew, 1992) have lent force to a reform movement in American education. A central thrust in this widespread series of reforms has been a movement toward improved accountability at the state and national levels. Public support for national standardized achievement tests has been very strong since the Gallup Poll first asked about the issue in 1980 (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1992). Reports of the poor achievement of American students have led all 50 state governors to agree upon a federally initiated reform of U.S. schools (the U.S. Department of Education's *America 2000*, 1991) that has four central foci: (1) improved accountability; (2) new technology; (3) lifelong learning; and (4) greater parental and community involvement.

Accountability. Cooley (1991) proposed three major purposes for state-wide testing: (1) informing state policy; (2) curriculum reform; and (3) accountability. Only accountability need involve high-stakes testing of all or most students. However, the majority of the 50 states already have created a range of state-mandated achievement tests to be used to make schools and their students more accountable to the state and to the general public. Rather than use matrix sampling, careful inclusion of demographic variables, and results used for study and improvement, these tests make individual students, teachers, and districts accountable to the public.

Ohio's accountability approaches. In Ohio, for example, school districts were first asked to establish objectives for all grade levels and for all basic, academic

subjects. Schools were asked to create or purchase tests to match these objectives. Before this activity had been completed, school districts were requested to choose one of the large nationally-normed achievement test batteries and to give these tests at regular intervals. Before this mandate had been fully implemented, the state began creating its own achievement test batteries to replace those national batteries already available from the major testing organizations. Both Georgia and Texas have similarly experimented with various state-mandated test programs.

High School Graduation Tests. In addition to the mandating of the various K-12 testing programs, more teeth have been incorporated into the accountability testing of secondary students in Georgia, Ohio, and Texas. As had been pioneered by Florida and New York, students who were unable to pass a set of paper and pencil, state-wide achievement tests would not be awarded high school diplomas, even if they had met all of their school's traditional requirements. In Ohio, opportunities to take these tests are provided in every grade from 9th to 12th--partly to avoid the series of court challenges that occurred in Florida's initial round of using high-stakes test results as a prerequisite to receiving diplomas. The first set of Ohio seniors who graduate without diplomas will finish the twelfth grade in the spring of 1994. Georgia and Texas have very similar requirements.

The "High-Stakes" aspect. Test results of all kinds have always been important to many students and to their parents. Low scores can cause students to repeat grades, repeat courses, shift to different fields and to be denied entry into many selective programs. However, unless failure rates were unusually high, test failure was not necessarily a major concern for teachers or school administrators. However, the introduction of publicly reported success rates on a school-by-school or district-by-

district basis can open schools, school districts, and their teachers and administrators to public embarrassment. Publicly announced success rates also can produce an increase or a reduction of emotional and financial support for the school district. Open enrollment across districts, frequent crucial school levys, and aggressively competitive private and parochial school systems can increase the pressure to reduce failure rates on those tests whose results are publicly reported--usually the high school diploma tests. No one knows if the upcoming national tests will create additional pressure.

Increasing test scores. One of the most obvious approaches to increasing test scores and reducing failure rates is to reallocate instructional time so as to focus more time on test-related content and to test preparation. Even when done during study hall or after school, spending more time in some areas means spending less time on curricular areas that are not tested. Resnick (1987) has suggested that the teaching of thinking skills will be neglected unless the tests focus upon these skills. Such a focus is believed to be unlikely. Smith and Rottenberg (1991) estimated that Arizona elementary school teachers elected to spend about three hours of classroom time in test preparation for every hour spent on actual testing. The teachers that were studied also seemed to lose another two hours per hour of testing time in "recovery time" after the tests. Students did not seem willing or able to return immediately to regular work after test days. This shift may be happening with secondary school teachers and students.

Appropriate test-preparation practices. In 1991, W. James Popham suggested that score improvement practices could easily extend beyond "realignment" of the curriculum and loss of academic learning time due to time spent on test preparation and post-test "recovery time." Activities that focus instruction upon the actual type of test format, on specific questions or on specific types of questions expected to be on the test

move beyond curricular realignment and may increase scores with no parallel increase in level of learning. Some of these practices could function to invalidate test scores and also to move entire school systems toward a type of cheating not too dissimilar from the cheating of individual students on teacher-made classroom tests. Some time spent on review of tested content and upon the characteristics of multiple choice and interpretative exercise questions may be of value to all students. At some point, "teaching to the test" could become cheating.

Popham (1991) suggested two standards that should be applied to score-raising practices: (1) Professional Ethics, such as violating security associated with test content or any other procedure that would reduce student or public confidence in the ethical character of school teachers and administrators; (2) Educational Defensibility or engaging in practices that increase scores without a simultaneous increase in "student mastery of the content domain tested (p. 13)." Popham labels the study of previously-used forms of the test as educationally INDEFENSIBLE (as raising scores more than mastery) and as possibly unethical (perceived by the public as "coaching students merely for test score gain," p. 14). Popham labels "only...dealing with the explicit item format used on a test" (p. 14) as INDEFENSIBLE in that scores may be increased without an increase in learning--although a focus on only one format is unlikely in most schools. It is unclear at what point generalized test-taking practices (acceptable to Popham because they are "characteristically, rather brief and hence not seriously deviating from a student's ongoing education," p. 14) and focus upon various test formats move over the line from defensible to indefensible. Popham found that school personnel held varied views of "previous form" and "same-format preparation," but tended to find "varied-format" preparation and "general test-taking preparation" to be

appropriate. Preparation focused upon "current test forms" was both unethical and nondefensible for Popham but appropriate in the eyes of from 6% to 36% of school personnel.

Appropriateness of test preparation practices appears to be viewed differently by different people. Although Popham appears very clear as to the appropriateness of five typical groups of practices, school personnel appear less unified.

It is possible that other "testing experts" are unified in their views and all agree with Popham. It is also possible that "test experts" disagree among themselves just as school personnel appear to disagree with one another.

Possible Reasons for Different Views

Popham (1991) has suggested several possible explanations for the failure of some teachers and administrators to agree with his views as to the appropriateness of test preparation practices: (1) The relative recency of high-stakes testing in America has not provided much time for educators to have "devoted serious thought to the appropriateness of different test preparation practices" (p. 12). (2) Some of those who responded to his questions "may regard today's uses of high-stakes tests as sufficiently noneducative so that any sort of test preparation should be considered appropriate" (p. 15).

Two other reasons also may serve as possible explanations for disagreement: (1) Test "experts" and school personnel may see their purposes and situations differently, and these differences may influence their judgments of what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. (2) Some general questions concerning procedures may be understood differently by different people. Use of previous forms could be viewed very differently by Ohio teachers with no access to previous forms, by New York teachers

who may use textbooks that include previous forms, and by Toronto teachers who use ratings of performances both as tests and as part of instruction.

"Test Experts" vs. "School Personnel". Many of those who study and write about testing tend to focus upon the large scale, norm-referenced aptitude and achievement tests produced by major organizations . These tests are designed to compare the abilities of large numbers of people with a potentially representative norm group. It is crucial that all follow the same procedures for the comparisons to be valid. It is also important to obtain a diversity of scores to produce high test reliability values and to reflect the diversity believed to exist when general abilities are measured in a diverse population. Teachers and other school personnel do not deal with strangers, may be more interested in optimal rather than standardized conditions, and may focus more attention upon criterion-referenced interpretations. Although teachers may choose questions that produce a spread of scores, it is the rare teacher that attempts to increase score variance in order to achieve "appropriate" levels of reliability. It is clear that teachers consider a wide range of nonachievement factors when grading students (Griswold, 1993; Stiggins, Frisbie, & Griswold, 1989; Wood, Bennett, Bennett, & Wood, 1990), and practices deviate considerably from those suggested by "test experts." It is possible that the same teachers who use nonachievement factors to make "grading more fair" are likely to use their knowledge of student characteristics to make the results of high-stakes tests "more fair" and less harmful to students who might otherwise be denied high school diplomas. "Standardized" procedures for "nonstandardized" students may seem to ignore factors such as differential test anxiety, differences in ability to follow directions, differences in "test-wiseness," differences in apparent willingness to study and put forth effort, and differences in the conditions

under which a student can produce the most accurate reflection of their true abilities. It would be expected that some teachers and administrators might seek to reduce negative consequences and to make the tests "fairer" to all by applying those procedures that may reduce standardization or modify the pre-test instruction in ways that would be considered to be inappropriate to those with less knowledge of specific conditions, contexts, and characteristics of the schools and students who must pay the costs of low test scores.

Purpose of This Study

This multi-stage study is focused upon six questions:

1. What score-improvement practices are being used by secondary school teachers in three states which have diploma-related, high-stakes, state-mandated achievement tests?
2. Which of these practices are believed to increase test scores?
3. Which of these procedures are believed to improve student learning?
4. Which procedures are believed to be inappropriate or unethical?
5. What are attitudes toward these minimum competency tests (MCT) and toward tests in general?
6. Do teachers and school administrators differ from testing experts in their responses to the first five questions?

Choice of Subjects

English teachers were a study focus because they deal with two of the "3Rs" that are represented on most graduation tests.

Some students who planned to become teachers were included in the first phase of the study to determine if those who had no stakes in graduation tests would respond similarly to teachers now in their future profession.

Method

Subjects/Participants

Participants originally were students and teachers enrolled in classes at Ohio's Bowling Green State University (BGSU). In the second phase of the study, subjects were either testing "experts" or teachers of English (or other secondary subjects), and administrators working in schools in three states that employ similar minimum competency tests. A subsequent study will involve teachers of subjects that are less represented on these tests. A small set of local teachers and administrators also were interviewed.

Measures

The original measure was a two-page, 36-item (30 Likert-scale items and six biographic items) questionnaire. Participants were asked if the 30 procedures "should" be used. They were also asked to identify procedures that were: (1) a waste of time; and/or (2) unethical. The second measure was a four-page questionnaire that contained nine biographic questions, four questions reflecting general attitudes toward tests, and a list of the 30 possible score-raising practices. Responders were asked to use four-point Likert scales (SA, A, D, SD) to report beliefs as to whether each practice is likely to: (1) increase test scores; (2) increase learning; and (3) be appropriate and ethical. Teachers and administrators also were asked if they now employ these 30 practices.

Procedures

(1) Score improvement practices were identified by a review of literature and by discussion with experienced teachers who were enrolled in a "test-score improvement" workshop at BGSU in the summer of 1992. (2) A trial two-page questionnaire was created and distributed to education students and to practicing teachers who attended classes at BGSU during the fall of 1992 and spring of 1993. (3) The central office of the National Council of Teachers of English was contacted for support and provided address labels for 1000 English teachers randomly distributed across three states which have high school graduation tests. (4) Letters to these teachers were typed. Letters to a randomly selected set of 139 presenters at the last annual meeting of the National Council of Measurement in Education (NCME) were typed. (5) Questionnaires and associated letters were sent to 300 teachers of English and to their associates and principals. S · lar letters and questionnaires were sent to 139 testing "experts" (recent presenters at the annual NCME meeting). Similar questionnaires were given to students currently enrolled in preservice education classes. R turned questionnaires were converted into magnetic records and the data analyzed via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results from Questionnaire #1

Tables 1 and 2 present responses from questionnaire #1. Fifty-nine current teachers and 152 education students answered the great majority of the 36 questions on the form. All were enrolled in classes at BGSU when they completed the questionnaire. Seventy-five percent were female (80% of the students), and the teachers had a mean of 12.1 (SD = 6.7) years of experience as teachers.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Differences

There were notable differences in responses within each group. Using a 4-point scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree), standard deviations for opinions about the appropriateness of 30 procedures ranged from .38 to 1.05 points for the teachers and from .52 to .96 points for the students. Comparisons of variances by F-Max tests indicated that variances differed (at the .05 level) across the groups on opinions about nine of the 30 procedures. Mean opinions across groups differed (at the .001 level) on eight of 30 opinions.

Appropriate Procedures

Over 80% of both teachers and students agreed that: teachers should offer special instruction in test-taking skills (86% of teachers, 90% of students); teachers should instruct students in ways to use time wisely during testing (92% of teachers, 99% of students); and teachers should give practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher (95% of teachers, 83% of students).

Advice to "get a good night's sleep" was deemed appropriate by 80% of teachers and 97% of students (but deemed a waste of time by 12% of teachers and 5% of students). Stressing "doing best work" was agreed to by 88% of teachers and 93% of students. Rephrasing or explaining test instructions for some students was agreed with by 81% of teachers (17% identified it as unethical) and 83% of students (8% checked it as unethical).

Inappropriate Procedures

Cleaning up answer sheets (11% of teachers, 4% of students agreed it should be done), darkening-in light answers (19% of teachers, 4% of students agreed), showing copies of the test to students beforehand (8% of teachers, 9% of students agreed), filling in bubbles on omitted items (0% of teachers, 3% of students), and publicly recognizing teachers whose students score high (23% of teachers, 16% of students) were generally disagreed with and were frequently checked as unethical.

Disagreements between Teachers and Students

Only half as many teachers as students agreed with three items: (1) reading individual test items (30% of teachers agreed vs. 72% of students); (2) defining words on the test (23% vs. 68%); and (3) giving teachers copies of test beforehand (21% vs. 63%). Approximately twice as many teachers as students agreed with: (1) supplying snacks around testing time (65% of teachers agreed vs. 34% of students); (2) arranging for select students to take test at a separate time or place (64% of teachers agreed, 24% of students).

Results from Questionnaire #2

Forty-five (of 139 sent or 32%) recent presenters of NCME returned questionnaires. Sixty-one percent were male; the mean age was 46.8 (SD = 8.1); 14% were administrators, 44% reported being teachers, and 42% labeled themselves as researchers. They reported taking a mean of 5 (SD = 2.5) testing/measurement classes and came from a wide range of states. About half (44%) reported having "much" experience with MCT, and 42% claimed having "some" experience.

The 80 responding school teachers (71%) and school administrators (26%) reported a mean of 17.0 (SD = 8.4) years of teaching experience and a mean of 2.3 testing

or measurement classes taken (SD = 1.5; 9% had none; 24% had only one). A majority reported having "much" (51%) or "some" (44%) experience with MCT. Their mean age (reported) was 43.4 (SD = 8.4). There were more women (68%) than men.

Differences between School Personnel and "Experts"

Although there were apparent differences within each group, there were relatively few differences between the groups. The percent agreements with 90 questions are presented on Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Ethics. Fewer school personnel agreed that it was ethical to: (1) clean up student answer sheets (28% vs. 55%); (2) darken partial answers (26% vs. 47%); or (3) rephrase/explain test directions for some students (54% vs. 72%). Fewer NCME presenters (37% vs. 64%) agreed that giving "more time to students who need it" was ethical.

Attitudes Toward Tests

School personnel and measurement professionals were asked four questions about testing in general. There were no differences on the first three questions: (1) MCT tests tend to improve learning; (2) these tests tend to distort school curricula; and (3) teacher-made tests tend to improve student learning. The mean values were 2.7 (1 = SA, 2 = A, 3 = D, 4 SD) for the MCT question; 1.9 for the distortion question; and 2.1 for the teacher-test question. However, the school personnel disagreed with question #4 (students would learn more if there were not tests of any kind; mean = 3.1, SD = .67) while measurement professionals (mean = 3.5, SD = .73) disagreed somewhat

more strongly. Neither group, in general, seemed to want to eliminate all tests, but the measurement professionals (MP) seemed to feel more strongly. Part of this difference may relate to background as MPs reported having taken a mean of 5.1 measurement or testing classes to a mean of slightly over two classes for school personnel. Some MPs volunteered that in addition to taking classes, they taught classes as well as wrote articles and books on the subject.

The percentage of variance between these four attitude questions and agreement concerning any procedure's ethical nature only exceeded 8% twice in 120 comparisons. There was a .34 correlation between agreement that MCT improved learning and agreement that "teaching questions known to be on the test" was ethical. Respondents were somewhat more in agreement that the procedure was ethical if they also agreed that MCT improved learning? A similar relationship, if a more understandable one, existed between agreement that MCT improved learning and that it was ethical to publicly recognize teachers whose students scored high on the test ($r = .37$).

Procedures that Raise Scores and Increase Learning

Procedures that nearly 80% of both groups agreed would (1) raise scores; (2) increase learning; and (3) that were ethical included:

1. Instructing students in ways to use time wisely during testing.
2. Telling students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.
3. Offering special instruction in test-taking skills.
4. Constructing classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency tests.
5. Scheduling meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.

6. Notifying parents of the dates and purposes of tests.
7. Establishing a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.
8. Stressing the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.

Unethical Procedures

Procedures that were considered unethical by most (74%) of both groups included:

1. Arranging for some students to avoid taking the test.
2. Teaching to questions known to be on the test.
3. Showing copies of the test to students beforehand.
4. Filling-in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.
5. Distributing copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.

Other procedures considered unethical by a majority of both groups included:

1. Shifting the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.
2. Darkening or filling-in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.
3. Reading and explaining test items to individual students when asked during the test.
4. Defining words on the test if asked by students during the test.
5. Arranging for selected students to take the test at a separate time or place.
6. Publicly recognizing teachers whose students score high on the test.

Raising Scores, Not Increasing Learning and Appropriateness

The great majority of procedures that were seen as raising scores but not increasing learning also were seen as not ethical. Procedure #18 (telling students to guess if unsure) was an exception in that it was seen as raising scores (71% agreement), not increasing learning (19% to 26% agreement that it increased learning), but 80% to 81% agreement that it was ethical. Procedure #20 (practice using a separate answer sheet) was similar in that most (83% to 93%) agreed it raised scores; a minority (40% to 36%) agreed that it increased learning; but a great majority (87% to 100%) agreed that it was ethical. The answer sheet practice probably falls into Popham's (1991) low-time-cost category.

An oddity. Procedure #26 (public recognition of teachers whose students score high on the test) was perceived as inappropriate by BGSU students (16% agreed it was appropriate), and as unethical by school personnel (31% agreed it was ethical) and by measurement professionals (39% agreed it was ethical). While it might be unfair, is it unethical?

Procedures that Were Employed

Table 4 reports the percentage of school teachers or administrators that reported their or their school's use of 30 procedures. The considerable majority (80% or over) agreed or strongly agreed that they used the following procedures:

1. Instructing students in ways to use time wisely during testing.
2. Telling students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.
3. Giving practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher.
4. Offering special instruction in test-taking skills.

5. Notifying parents of the dates and purposes of tests.
6. Stressing the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.

Insert Table 4 about here

An additional group of procedures were reported to be used by from 69% to 79% of the school personnel:

1. Using commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.
2. Telling students to guess on questions when they are unsure.
3. Constructing classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency tests.
4. Scheduling meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.
5. Establishing a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.

Less than 25% reported using:

1. Cleaning up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.
2. Darkening or filling-in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.
3. Showing copies of the test to students beforehand.
4. Reading and explaining test items to individual students when asked during the test.
5. Defining words on the test if asked by students during the test.
6. Filling-in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.

7. Scheduling a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.

8. Publicly recognizing teachers whose students score high on the test.

9. Distributing copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.

Conclusions

Table 5 summarizes the degree to which respondents agreed that the 30 procedures are either Appropriate (left-hand columns of the table) or Ethical (right-hand two columns). Data from the first questionnaire (Ohio teachers and BGSU education students) are in the left columns and data from the teachers, school administrators and testing experts are in the right-hand columns.

Insert Table 5 about here

Current Form Preparation

Popham (1991, 1992) and Killian (1992) agreed that it would be inappropriate to use the current form of a test as a focus for preparing students to take that test. Most respondents agreed. Almost no one agreed that it was appropriate or ethical to show the test to students beforehand, and only a small percentage of practitioners supported even showing it to the teachers beforehand. Oddly, a majority (63%) of the education students favored showing it to the teachers.

The issue became less clear when the question involved teaching "to questions known to be on the test." Nearly half (48%) of the teachers from the first questionnaire reported this to be appropriate as did 22% of school personnel on the second questionnaire.

Killian (1992) seems to have a point when he warns that even "scrupulously ethical teachers" may not refrain from emphasizing information on a test when they teach students who will take the test (p. 14). Apparently some may even consider this practice to be appropriate. Killian's warning to avoid using the same test twice seems a valid, if expensive, one.

Same Format Preparation and Previous Form Preparation

Over 80% of each respondent group seemed to agree that it was either appropriate or ethical to "give practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher." Over 60% of all groups agreed with using commercially prepared materials and tests that are designed to parallel the test. Over 75% of the school professionals and experts seemed to agree that teachers should construct classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency test (only 50% of the education students agreed??). Popham (1991) seemed to consider these types of procedures to be unethical or inappropriate. Killian (1992) seemed to write that they "can be appropriate" (p. 14). Most of those surveyed seemed to disagree with Popham. Most school personnel also reported using these procedures in their own schools.

Standardized Procedures

A major difference between a standardized test and a teacher-made or regular classroom test lies in the standardization of directions and testing procedures. While teachers may decide to modify test procedures in the middle of their own tests, they are not expected to do so in a test whose results are most meaningful when compared with those of a relevant norm group. Several procedures focused upon this need for standardization of time, directions and similar procedures. A majority (81% of the teachers and 83% of the students on survey #1 and 54% of the school personnel and 72%

of the test experts) agreed that "rephrasing or explaining the test instructions for some students" was either appropriate or ethical. Over 60% of the teachers, 47% of the students, and 37% of the test professionals seemed to agree that it was appropriate or ethical to "give additional time for the test to students who need it." Fewer (under 33%) of the school people or experts agreed with defining words on the test if asked or with reading and explaining items to individual students. Two-thirds of the education students, however, did favor these two practices--perhaps considering their own needs as frequent test-takers of often imperfect tests.

It seems that the obvious need for standardized procedures with norm-referenced tests may be somewhat less obvious with minimum-competency tests. Perhaps MCTs are seen more as a power test in which time limits are not relevant. Perhaps the criterion-referenced nature of MCTs cause even NCME members to forget that the cut-points were established under clearly defined, standardized conditions that should be duplicated during the actual testing. It is also possible that those unfamiliar with specific state tests do not know how much variation the states permit test administrators. If the states permit test administrators to give more time or provide some types of additional information upon demand, these activities would be appropriate and ethical.

In general, very few supported post-test activities such as filling in omitted items. Half or nearly half of the testing professionals did, however, characterize cleaning-up answer sheets and darkening light answers as ethical. Fewer teachers, administrators or education students agreed. Many of the testing professionals were college teachers/researchers and would be much more familiar with the sensitivities of the optical scanners that usually are much more accessible to those who work in college.

Those who regularly use optically scanned tests or questionnaires should know the trouble caused by poor erasures or poorly darkened answers.

The practice of having some students avoid the test drew the most written commentary because Georgia, Ohio, Texas and many other MCT states do provide special exemptions for particular types of students. The question is ambiguous as it could refer to the exemptions already specified by the state or to additional and unethical exemptions not specified by the state but created only to reduce published failure rates.

Special Teaching or Training

Nearly everyone supported special instruction in test-taking skills, and similarly high percentages of most groups supported the teaching of relaxation procedures (to reduce test anxiety) and special classes for high-risk students. Eighty-four percent of the school personnel reported that they did offer special instruction in test-taking skills; 74% reported having special classes for high-risk students "to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests," but less than half (47%) reported teaching relaxation procedures that reduce test anxiety. Our interviews with Ohio teachers found that special classes or special tutoring was commonly provided to students who had failed to pass the MCTs. One junior high school found that the standardized achievement test they already used was quite effective in predicting MCT failures, and they are beginning to offer special instruction to some students who have yet to take the MCTs.

Low-Cost Procedures

A relatively wide range of minimal-cost, minimal-effort, and largely minimal-effect procedures were seen as appropriate or ethical by most. Allowing snacks, advice

to use time wisely and get a good night's sleep, practice with separate answer sheets, and notifying parents as to test dates were seen as appropriate/ethical by the great majority and were reported to be in use by many.

Attention and Recognition

A relatively small percentage of the Ohio teachers and students saw pep assemblies as appropriate. Few saw them as unethical, but many saw them as a waste of time. Less than 30% of the respondents to the second survey saw them as unethical, but only 24% reported them in use in their schools. A considerable majority agreed that it was appropriate or ethical for teachers to meet and discuss ways to increase test scores, and most (72%) reported that their schools already did this.

A different picture is presented with public recognition of high-scoring students and of public recognition of teachers "whose students score high." A considerable majority reported this public recognition of teachers to be inappropriate or unethical. Nearly twice as many teachers on the first survey (44%) saw it as appropriate to recognize high-scoring students as high scoring teachers (23%). Similar results were found on the second survey's ethics question. Only 31% to 39% saw it as ethical to recognize the teachers, while 58% to 61% saw recognizing students to be ethical. Only 6% reported that teachers were recognized in their schools while 43% reported that high-scoring students were recognized.

A practical problem in recognizing high-scoring students lies in many states only reporting a pass-fail result rather than a score.

Curriculum Realignment

About half of the teachers, administrators and test professionals viewed curricular or instructional shifting or realignment to be appropriate or ethical.

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Most(77%) of the teachers and administrators on the second survey believed it would raise scores; some (41%) believed it would increase learning;a and most (61%) reported that their schools were already doing it.

As long as the MCTs focus upon the basic 3Rs that are expected to be mastered before the ninth or tenth grade, the only realignment needed would be to provide remediation to high school students with poor skills. In Ohio, however, a fourth MCT is focused upon "Citizenship." Since students first take the MCTs in the fall of their ninth grade and only have a course focused upon civics or government in a later grade, some of the later-grade social studies content is being shifted down to earlier grades to reduce ninth grade failure ratès. The major curricular shifts are taking place because of an increasing tendency of states to create a specified and mandatory curriculum.

Some General Conclusions

There is little question that the MCT movement will affect schools. If 84% of schools report offering special instruction in test-taking skills and similar percentages are giving practice tests and scheduling meetings to discuss score-raising procedures, the MCTs are producing an effect. Although over a third of schools may be resisting curricular realignment, this resistance will not last very long. One only has to visit history classes or biology classes in New York State in the spring to see a curriculum that almost exactly parallels the content of the Regent's examination. Also on view are textbooks filled with examples of former tests. However, this realignment is more likely to occur because of state-mandated curricular changes and not basic skills MCTs. If MCTs help poorer students to leave school with the basic skills needed to survive--and not leave school before passing these examinations--it might be worthwhile. Its obvious cost is a clear lessening of local autonomy and of teacher empowerment.

Hopefully, the trade-off is a favorable one. The majority of respondents to the second questionnaire seemed not to believe that MCTs would improve learning.

Popham is right in his belief that there is far from perfect agreement as to what practices are ethical and which are unethical. Unfortunately, a clear agreement does not seem to exist even among the members of the testing-measurement community represented in this survey. Some of this disagreement may be attributable to the ambiguity of some of the questions. The disagreement is unlikely to be corrected by more courses in the area since most have already had several courses (Mean = 5) and many actually teach these courses to others.

Some complications. (1) Some teachers in Ohio permit different groups of students to take their tests in settings that are noisy or quiet or are in some way preferred by students. This is not permitted in Georgia or Texas (as far as we know--and may not even be permitted in Ohio). (2) Special populations face different testing requirements and several respondents indicated that their responses would differ for these populations. (3) Most questionnaires sent to school personnel were sent to English teachers with a request to give copies to a colleague and an administrator. The great majority of teacher responses (to date) were from English teachers. Additional questionnaires have been sent directly to school administrators. (4) Money has been very slow to come in from minor-grant requests. Consequently, at $.72 per envelope (to English teacher + 2 colleagues) and $.35 per return, SASE, numbers were cut from 1,000 in five states to 300 in three states. (5) The SA-A-D-SD ratings procedure has some odd characteristics that we are beginning to explore in another context. For example, in another survey, correlations between the 4-point version and a 2-point version

(SA + A = 1; D + SD = 2) were lower than expected (around .6) for scales with Cronbach internal consistencies over .9.

One odd procedure. It was reported that one school district used the percentage of students passing on their first trial (70%) as a base point and promised to increase the base salary of all teachers (K-12) by $?5 for each percentage point increase in percent of students passing all tests on their first (of eight) tries. This year 73% passed on the first try and all teachers received an additional $75 added to their base pay. The teacher who reported this said that her colleagues were insulted--but none returned the $75.

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Table 1

Agreement as to the Appropriateness of 30 MCT Score-Raising Procedures: Opinions of 59 Ohio Teachers and 152 Ohio Education Students

Procedures	Teachers (N = 59) % Agree	Teachers (N = 59) % A Waste of Time	Teachers (N = 59) % Not Ethical	Students (N = 152) % Agree	Students (N = 152) % A Waste of Time	Students (N = 152) % Not Ethical
1. Teachers should teach relaxation procedures that reduce test-anxiety.	54	22	--	85	15	--
2. Teachers should supply or allow snacks around testing time.	65	10	2	34	30	11
3. Teachers should instruct students in ways to use time wisely during testing.	92	--	--	99	1	1
4. Teachers should tell students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.	80	12	--	97	5	3
5. Teachers should give practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher.	95	--	--	83	3	9
6. Teachers should use commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.	68	--	15	61	6	10

(table continues)

Procedures	Teachers (N = 59) % Agree	Teachers (N = 59) % A Waste of Time	Teachers (N = 59) % Not Ethical	Students (N = 152) % Agree	Students (N = 152) % A Waste of Time	Students (N = 152) % Not Ethical
7. Teachers should shift the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.	40	--	31	28	4	26
8. Teachers should offer special instruction in test-taking skills.	86	--	3	90	4	11
9. Teachers should arrange for some students to avoid taking the test.	39	2	44	7	5	54
10. Teachers should clean up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.	11	22	44	4	41	28
11. Teachers should darken or fill-in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.	19	14	7	4	29	32
12. Teachers should teach to questions known to be on the test.	48	--	17	24	3	40
13. Teachers should show copies of the test to students beforehand.	8	--	76	9	--	59
14. Teachers should publicly recognize high scorers on the test.	44	--	15	20	1	38

(table continues)

Procedures	Teachers (N = 59) % Agree	Teachers (N = 59) % A Waste of Time	Teachers (N = 59) % Not Ethical	Students (N = 152) % Agree	Students (N = 152) % A Waste of Time	Students (N = 152) % Not Ethical
15. Teachers should give additional time for the test to students who need it.	76	--	12	47	3	24
16. Teachers should read and explain test items to individual students when asked during the test.	30	--	27	72	1	13
17. Teachers should define words on the test if asked by students during the test.	23	--	29	68	2	18
18. Teachers should tell students to guess on questions when they are unsure.	79	2	14	86	3	7
19. Teachers should construct classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency tests.	76	12	--	50	9	7
20. Teachers should have students practice using and marking a separate answer sheet.	66	32	--	55	35	2
21. Teachers should fill-in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.	0	14	68	3	13	51

(table continues)

Procedures	Teachers (N = 59) % Agree	Teachers (N = 59) % A Waste of Time	Teachers (N = 59) % Not Ethical	Students (N = 152) % Agree	Students (N = 152) % A Waste of Time	Students (N = 152) % Not Ethical
22. Principals should schedule a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.	20	44	2	39	38	3
23. Principals should schedule meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.	78	--	--	79	9	3
24. Principals should arrange for selected students to take the test at a separate time or place.	64	--	22	24	8	36
25. Principals should notify parents of the dates and purposes of tests.	100	--	--	10	2	3
26. Principals should publicly recognize teachers whose students score high on the test.	23	--	25	16	5	30
27. Principals should establish a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.	79	2	7	43	5	16
28. Teachers should stress the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.	88	--	2	93	--	1

(table continues)

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Procedures	Teachers (N = 59) % Agree	Teachers (N = 59) % A Waste of Time	Teachers (N = 59) % Not Ethical	Students (N = 152) % Agree	Students (N = 152) % A Waste of Time	Students (N = 152) % Not Ethical
29. Teachers should rephrase or explain the test instructions for some students.	81	--	17	83	1	8
30. Principals should distribute copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.	21	--	39	63	3	20

Table 2

Appropriateness of 30 MTC Score-Raising Procedures: Opinions of 59 Ohio Teachers and 152 Ohio Education Students

	Teachers			Students				
Procedures	M	SD	(N)	M	SD	(N)	t	p
1. Teachers should teach relaxation procedures that reduce test-anxiety.	2.4	.53	(59)	2.0	.65	(146)	4.7	.001
2. Teachers should supply or allow snacks around testing time.	2.6	.99	(54)	2.8	.78	(134)	.9	.38
3. Teachers should instruct students in ways to use time wisely during testing.	1.7	.62	(59)	1.6	.52	(152)	1.2	.22
4. Teachers should tell students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.	1.8	.75	(59)	1.7	.59	(147)	.73	.47
5. Teachers should give practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher.	1.6	.60	(59)	1.8	.75	(146)	2.7	.008
6. Teachers should use commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.	2.2	.87	(59)	2.4	.77	(132)	1.7	.09
7. Teachers should shift the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.	2.6	.81	(58)	2.9	.82	(139)	2.3	.03

(table continues)

Procedures	Teachers M	Teachers SD	Teachers (N)	Students M	Students SD	Students (N)	t	p
8. Teachers should offer special instruction in test-taking skills.	1.9	.58	(59)	1.9	.59	(145)	.1	.95
9. Teachers should arrange for some students to avoid taking the test.	2.8	.82	(54)	3.5	.65	(134)	6.1	.001
10. Teachers should clean up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.	3.4	.78	(57)	3.5	.57	(140)	.4	.66
11. Teachers should darken or fill-in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.	3.1	.81	(57)	3.4	.60	(140)	2.6	.02
12. Teachers should teach to questions known to be on the test.	2.6	1.05	(59)	2.9	.78	(135)	2.8	.006
13. Teachers should show copies of the test to students beforehand.	3.7	.62	(59)	3.4	.72	(142)	2.4	.02
14. Teachers should publicly recognize high scorers on the test.	2.8	.85	(59)	3.1	.77	(145)	2.2	.03
15. Teachers should give additional time for the test to students who need it.	2.2	.96	(59)	2.6	.96	(143)	2.9	.005
16. Teachers should read and explain test items to individual students when asked during the test.	2.6	.94	(53)	2.1	.79	(140)	3.9	.001

(table continues)

Procedures	Teachers M	Teachers SD	Teachers (N)	Students M	Students SD	Students (N)	t	p
17. Teachers should define words on the test if asked by students during the test.	3.0	.93	(48)	2.3	.84	(126)	4.9	.001
18. Teachers should tell students to guess on questions when they are unsure.	2.0	.62	(53)	2.0	.60	(125)	.6	.59
19. Teachers should construct classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency tests.	2.1	.65	(59)	2.6	.74	(131)	4.6	.001
20. Teachers should have students practice using and marking a separate answer sheet.	2.3	.85	(59)	2.4	.89	(135)	1.1	.28
21. Teachers should fill-in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.	3.8	.38	(58)	3.7	.56	(140)	2.0	.06
22. Principals should schedule a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.	3.0	.77	(54)	2.8	.89	(122)	1.3	.20
23. Principals should schedule meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.	1.9	.71	(58)	2.0	.74	(140)	.4	.70
24. Principals should arrange for selected students to take the test at a separate time or place.	2.5	.94	(58)	3.0	.81	(129)	3.6	.001
25. Principals should notify parents of the dates and purposes of tests.	1.5	.50	(58)	1.7	.70	(144)	1.5	.13

(table continues)

Procedures	Teachers M	Teachers SD	Teachers (N)	Students M	Students SD	Students (N)	t	p
26. Principals should publicly recognize teachers whose students score high on the test.	3.1	.94	(52)	3.1	.70	(136)	.1	.94
27. Principals should establish a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.	2.0	.73	(57)	2.7	.77	(123)	5.8	.001
28. Teachers should stress the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.	1.6	.70	(59)	1.6	.62	(149)	.6	.54
29. Teachers should rephrase or explain the test instructions for some students.	2.1	.74	(59)	2.0	.74	(141)	.9	.37
30. Principals should distribute copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.	3.2	.79	(58)	2.4	.96	(139)	5.6	.001

Note: Pooled variance estimates were used with all t tests even though separate variance estimates were appropriate when SD was underlined.

Table 3

School Personnel (N = 80) and MeasurementExpert (N = 45) Opinions about 30 Procedures that Could Increase MCT Graduation Scores

	% Agreement/Str. Agreement that Procedure:					
	Raises Scores		Increases Learning		Is Ethical	
Procedures	School	Expert	School	Expert	School	Expert
1. Teaching relaxation procedures that reduce test-anxiety.	89	89	74	64	95	100
2. Supplying or allowing snacks around testing time.	46	36	38	26	75	80
3. Instructing students in ways to use time wisely during testing.	98	100	98	91	100	100
4. Telling students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.	95	90	92	68	100	100
5. Giving practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher.	93	96	75	61	95	88
6. Using commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.	92	96	66	52	84	65
7. Shifting the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.	77	89	41	39	47	43

(table continues)

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Procedures	% Agreement/Str. Agreement that Procedure: Raises Scores School	Raises Scores Expert	Increases Learning School	Increases Learning Expert	Is Ethical School	Is Ethical Expert
8. Offering special instruction in test-taking skills.	100	98	85	77	97	97
9. Arranging for some students to avoid taking the test.	62		8	6	19	8
10. Cleaning up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.	57	54	7	10	28	55
11. Darkening or filling-in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.	60	58	6	12	26	47
12. Teaching to questions known to be on the test.	81	91	32	29	22	14
13. Showing copies of the test to students beforehand.	73	77	13	9	1	0
14. Publicly recognizing high scorers on the test.	43	38	21	43	58	61
15. Giving additional time for the test to students who need it.	91	92	56	44	64	37
16. Reading and explaining test items to individual students when asked during the test.	79	95	49	40	28	33
17. Defining words on the test if asked by students during the test.	79	96	45	51	20	33

(table continues)

Procedures	% Agreement/Str. Agreement that Procedure: Raises Scores		Increases Learning		Is Ethical	
	School	Expert	School	Expert	School	Expert
18. Telling students to guess on questions when they are unsure.	71	71	19	26	80	81
19. Constructing classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency tests.	96	96	61	61	89	79
20. Having students practice using and marking a separate answer sheet.	83	93	40	36	87	100
21. Filling-in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.	57	70	2	0	2	0
22. Scheduling a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.	46	62	29	35	78	70
23. Sheduling meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.	89	87	75	73	91	84
24. Arranging for selected students to take the test at a separate time or place.	68	73	30	37	39	49
25. Notifying parents of the dates and purposes of tests.	87	82	59	76	98	100
26. Publicly recognizing teachers whose students score high on the test.	25	47	13	37	31	39

(table continues)

Procedures	% Agreement/Str. Agreement that Procedure: Raises Scores		Increases Learning		Is Ethical	
	School	Expert	School	Expert	School	Expert
27. Establishing a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.	97	9€	81	74	80	78
28. Stressing the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.	93	95	75	71	96	97
29. Rephrasing or explaining the test instructions for some students.	88	91	59	48	54	72
30. Distributing copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.	66	83	29	15	26	17

Table 4

Characteristics of 30 Procedures that Could Raise MCT Scores: Opinions of 80 School Teachers and Administrators in Three States

Procedures	% Who Agree or Strongly Agree that the Procedure: Raises Scores	Increases Learning	Is Ethical	Is Used by Their System
1. Teaching relaxation procedures that reduce test-anxiety.	89	74	95	47
2. Supply or allowing snacks around testing time.	46	38	75	31
3. Instructing students in ways to use time wisely during testing.	98	98	100	87
4. Telling students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.	95	92	100	96
5. Giving practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher.	93	75	95	85
6. Using commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.	92	66	84	74
7. Shifting the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.	77	41	47	61
8. Offering special instruction in test-taking skills.	100	85	97	84

(table continues)

Procedures	% Who Agree or Strongly Agree that the Procedure: Raises Scores	Increases Learning	Is Ethical	Is Used by Their System
9. Arranging for some students to avoid taking the test.	62	8	19	35
10. Cleaning up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.	57	7	28	23
11. Darkening or filling-in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.	60	6	26	18
12. Teaching to questions known to be on the test.	81	32	22	25
13. Showing copies of the test to students beforehand.	73	13	1	1
14. Publicly recognizing high scorers on the test.	43	21	58	43
15. Giving additional time for the test to students who need it.	91	56	64	50
16. Reading and explaining test items to individual students when asked during the test.	79	49	28	18
17. Defining words on the test if asked by students during the test.	79	45	20	13
18. Telling students to guess on questions when they are unsure.	71	19	80	77

(table continues)

Procedures	% Who Agree or Strongly Agree that the Procedure: Raises Scores	Increases Learning	Is Ethical	Is Used by Their System
19. Constructing classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency tests.	96	61	89	69
20. Having students practice using and marking a separate answer sheet.	83	40	87	64
21. Filling-in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.	57	2	2	1
22. Scheduling a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.	46	29	78	24
23. Sheduling meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.	89	75	91	72
24. Arranging for selected students to take the test at a separate time or place.	68	30	39	26
25. Notifying parents of the dates and purposes of tests.	87	59	98	89
26. Prublicly recognizing teachers whose students score high on the test.	25	13	31	6
27. Establishing a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.	97	81	80	74

(table continues)

Procedures	% Who Agree or Strongly Agree that the Procedure: Raises Scores	Increases Learning	Is Ethical	Is Used by Their System
28. Stressin g the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.	93	75	96	95
29. Rephrasing or explaining the test instructions for some students.	88	59	54	38
30. Distributing copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.	66	29	26	8

Table 5

An Abbreviated Summary of Opinions about Score-Raising Practices

From Questionnaire #1 % of Agreement (SA + A)			From Questionnaire #2 % of Agreement (SA + A)	
Appropriateness			Ethics	
Teachers	Educ. Student	An Abbreviated Description of the Practices	Admin./ Teacher	Expert
		Current Form Preparation		
48%	24%	Q 12 Teach to test's items	22%	14%
8	9	Q 13 Show test to students (before)	1	0
21	63	Q 30 Show test to teachers (before)	26	17
		Similar/Previous Form/Format		
95	83	Q 5 Practice tests-similar items	95	88
68	61	Q 6 Parallel test practice	84	65
76	50	Q 19 Similar tests used in class	89	79
		Standardized Procedures: During		
76	47	Q 15 Give additional time	64	37
30	72	Q 16 Explain test items	28	33
23	68	Q 17 Define test words	20	33
		Q 24 Some take test at different time/place	39	49
64	24	Q 29 Explain/Rephrase directions	54	72
81	83			
		Standardized Procedures: Post		
11	4	Q 10 Clean-up answer sheets	28	55
19	4	Q 11 Darken light answers	26	47
0	3	Q 21 Fill-in omitted items	2	0
		Standardized Procedures: Who?		
38	7	Q 9 Have some avoid test	19	8
		Special Training/Teaching		
54	85	Q 1 Teach relaxation	95	100
86	90	Q 8 Teach test taking	97	97
79	43	Q 27 Class for high-risks	80	78

(table continues)

From Questionnaire #1 % of Agreement (SA + A)			From Questionnaire #2 % of Agreement (SA + A)	
Appropriateness			Ethics	
Teachers	Educ. Student	An Abbreviated Description of the Practices	Admin./ Teacher	Expert
		General Advice and Typical/Low Cost		
65	34	Q 2 Pre-test snacks	75	80
92	99	Q 3 Advise: Use of time	100	100
80	97	Q 4 Good sleep; good breakfast	100	100
79	86	Q 18 Guess on ? questions	80	81
66	55	Q 20 Practice with answer form	87	100
100	10	Q 25 Tell parents: When, why	98	100
88	93	Q 28 Tell "Do best work"	96	97
		Attention-Recognition-Rewards		
20	39	Q 22 Pep rally before test	78	70
78	79	Q 23 Teacher meetings: Advice	91	84
44	20	Q 14 Publicly recognize hi students	58	61
23	16	Q 26 Publicly recognize hi teachers	31	39
		Major School Change		
40	28	Q 7 Shift instruction and curric. toward test	47	43

Note: Results are underlined if they are notably higher or lower than the other three.

Appendices

A1, A2: The two-page questionnaire used in the first phase of this study.

A3 to A 10: The four-page questionnaires used in the second phase of this study.

A11, A12: Copies of letters sent with the four-page questionnaires

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES THAT MIGHT RAISE STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

During the past several years, the State of Ohio has mandated a major expansion in its educational testing requirements. For example, secondary students must pass minimum competency tests (3 Rs and Citizenship) in order to graduate from high school. The results of these tests are reported to the state and, often, by newspaper, to the general public. Students, parents, teachers and administrators can be hurt and embarrassed by low test scores. Consequently, many school districts have considered or engaged in special activities that might raise test scores.

Below is a list of statements describing activities or practices which have been used in some schools. Please indicate your agreement--or disagreement--with each statement by placing a NUMBER on the line in front of the statement.

For statements with which you Disagree (3) or Strongly Disagree (4), please indicate the reason for your disagreement. Circle TW for procedures which seem like a Waste of school Time, wouldn't' be effective, or wouldn't raise student scores. Circle E? for procedures which seen unEthical or unprofessional.

1 = SA =	Strongly Agree	Circle TW for each procedure
2 = A =	Agree	that seems a waste of time
3 = D =	Disagree	
4 = SD =	Strongly Disagree	Circle E? for each procedure
5 = ? =	I really can't answer this question	that seems unethical

_____	1.	Teachers should teach relaxation procedures that reduce test-anxiety.	TW E?
_____	2.	Teachers should supply or allow snacks around testing time.	TW E?
_____	3.	Teachers should instruct students in ways to use time wisely during testing.	TW E?
_____	4.	Teachers should tell students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.	TW E?
_____	5.	Teachers should give practice tests that use questions provided by the test publisher.	TW E?
_____	6.	Teachers should use commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.	TW E?
_____	7.	Teachers should shift the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.	TW E?
_____	8.	Teachers should offer special instruction in test-taking skills.	TW E?
_____	9.	Teachers should arrange for some students to avoid taking the test.	TW E?
_____	10.	Teachers should clean up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.	TW E?
_____	11.	Teachers should darken or fill-in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.	TW E?
_____	12.	Teachers should teach to questions known to be on the test.	TW E?
_____	13.	Teachers should show copies of the test to students beforehand.	TW E?
_____	14.	Teachers should publicly recognize high scorers on the test.	TW E?
_____	15.	Teachers should give additional time for the test to students who need it.	TW E?
_____	16.	Teachers should read and explain test items to individual students when asked during the test.	TW E?
_____	17.	Teachers should define words on the test if asked by students during the test.	TW E?
_____	18.	Teachers should tell students to guess on questions when they are unsure.	TW E?

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1 = SA = Strongly Agree
2 = A = Agree
3 = D = Disagree
4 = SD = Strongly Disagree
5 = ? = I really can't answer this question

Circle TW for each procedure that seems a waste of time

Circle E? for each procedure that seems unethical

_____	19.	Teachers should construct classroom tests that are of the same type of format as the competency tests.	TW	E?
_____	20.	Teachers should have students practice using and marking a separate answer sheet.	TW	E?
_____	21.	Teachers should fill-in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.	TW	E?
_____	22.	Principals should schedule a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.	TW	E?
_____	23.	Principals should schedule meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.	TW	E?
_____	24.	Principals should arrange for selected students to take the test at a separate time or place.	TW	E?
_____	25.	Principals should notify parents of the dates and purposes of tests.	TW	E?
_____	26.	Principals should publicly recognize teachers whose students score high on the test.	TW	E?
_____	27.	Principals should establish a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.	TW	E?
_____	28.	Teachers should stress the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.	TW	E?
_____	29.	Teachers should rephrase or explain the test instructions for some students.	TW	E?
_____	30.	Principals should distribute copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.	TW	E?

Background Information. People with different types of experiences and goals may have different views. Would you answer the following questions by writing the NUMBER of the best answer on the short line in front of each question.

_____ 31. Sex/Gender? 1 = Female 2 = Male

_____ 32. Current college level? 1 = Freshman 2 = Sophomore 3 = Junior 4 = Senior 5 = Graduate

_____ 33. Do you teach now (or plan to become a teacher)? 1 = Definitely not 2 = Probably not 3 = Maybe 4 = Probably 5 = Definitely

_____ 34. If you teach (or were to teach), what grade level do (would) you most like to teach?
1 = Kindergarten-Primary (K-3) 2 = Intermediate Grades (4-6)
3 = Secondary (7-12) 4 = College

_____ 35. About how many years have you taught?_____

_____ 36. What subject(s) do (would) you most like to teach?_____

M:39

OPINIONS ABOUT MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTS

Almost every state legislature has required school students to pass Minimum Competency Tests before they can receive high school diplomas. Many states also require passing scores before students can be promoted from one grade level to another.

Passing these tests is very important to students, to their parents, and to their teachers. Success also can be very important to school administrators. Because test results often are reported in local news media, success or failure can become even more important to all involved in education.

The legislation of state-wide tests, the significance attached to their results, and the activities used by schools to raise test scores have generated many questions. For example: (1) What procedures or activities tend to help students do better on these very important tests? (2) Do these activities increase learning or just increase scores? (3) Which procedures are appropriate and ethical, which are questionable, and which seem clearly unethical? (4) How useful are these tests--or tests in general?

We would very much like your help in answering these questions. Your answers will remain COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL, but will be combined with the answers of other students, teachers, administrators and measurement professionals from five states (California, Florida, Georgia, New York and Ohio).

Please help us by giving us your opinions and returning the questionnaire as soon as possible (within a week?). We will report the results at local and national meetings and furnish copies to education departments of the states you represent.

Thank you for your help.

Directions

Please indicate your beliefs concerning the activities on the next three pages by circling the best answers. It is important that you rate each statement according to how you honestly feel. Just circle the letters that correspond with your beliefs. Each focus question for each activity or procedure should be rated as:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
SA	A	D	SD

Omit any question you can't answer. Your help is entirely VOLUNTARY, but we would really appreciate a QUICK return.

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SPECIAL ACTIVITIES THAT MIGHT RAISE MINIMUM COMPETENCY TEST SCORES

A-4

Strongly Agree SA | Agree A | Disagree D | Strongly Disagree SD

Procedure/Activity	This Procedure Should Raise Scores				Improve Learning				Is Ethical				I/We Do This Already			
1. Teaching relaxation procedures that reduce test anxiety.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
2. Supplying or allowing snacks around testing time.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
3. Instructing students in ways to use time wisely.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
4. Telling students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
5. Giving practice tests that use questions provided by the test publishers.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
6. Using commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
7. Shifting the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
8. Offering special instruction in test-taking skills.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
9. Arranging for some students to avoid taking the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
10. Clearing up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
11. Darkening or filling in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
12. Teaching questions known to be on the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
13. Showing copies of the test to students beforehand.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD

Strongly Agree SA | Agree A | Disagree D | Strongly Disagree SD

Procedure/Activity	This Procedure Should Raise Scores				This Procedure Should Improve Learning				Is Ethical				I/We Do This Already			
14. Publicly recognizing high scorers on the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
15. Giving additional time for the test to students who need it.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
16. Reading and explaining test items to individual students when asked during the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
17. Defining words on the test if asked by students during the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
18. Telling students to guess on questions when they are unsure.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
19. Constructing classroom tests that are of the same type or format as the competency tests.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
20. Having students practice using and marking a separate answer sheet.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
21. Filling in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
22. Scheduling a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
23. Scheduling meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
24. Arranging for selected students to make the test at a separate time or place.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
25. Notifying parents of the dates and purposes of tests.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
26. Publicly recognizing teachers whose students score high on the test.	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD

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Strongly Agree SA | Agree A | Disagree D | Strongly Disagree SD

Procedure/Activity	This Procedure Should Raise Scores	This Procedure Should Improve Learning	Is Ethical	I/We Do This Already
27. Establishing a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
28. Stressing the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
29. Rephrasing or explaining the test instructions for some students.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
30. Distributing copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD

Are there other procedures you have found to be useful? _____

_____

Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements (circle the best response to each).

1. Minimum competency tests tend to improve the learning of school students. SA A D SD
2. These tests tend to distort school curricula. SA A D SD
3. Teacher-made tests tend to improve student learning. SA A D SD
4. Students would learn more if there were no tests of any kind. SA A D SD

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please answer the following by circling or writing the best answer to each.

1. Sex/Gender? Male Female 2. Approximate age? _____years
3. Current Status? student administrator teacher researcher
4. Approximately how many years have you taught? _____years
5. Approximately how many testing/measurement classes have you taken? _____classes
6. Your teaching or administrative or research experience has been (or will be) focused most upon what grade levels?
   K or pre-K elementary secondary college graduate school Other? _____
7. Your experience has been (or will be) focused most upon what subject area?
   special education elementary English math science social studies
   languages/art/music educ. classes (in college) Other? _____
8. State? California Florida Georgia New York Ohio Texas Other? _____
9. Your experience with minimum-competency tests? none some much

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OPINIONS ABOUT MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTS

Almost every state legislature has required school students to pass Minimum Competency Tests before they can receive high school diplomas. Many states also require passing scores before students can be promoted from one grade level to another.

Passing these tests is very important to students, to their parents, and to their teachers. Success also can be very important to school administrators. Because test results often are reported in local news media, success or failure can become even more important to all involved in education.

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We would very much like your help in answering these questions. Your answers will remain COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL, but will be combined with the answers of other students, teachers, administrators and measurement professionals from five states (California, Florida, Georgia, New York and Ohio).

Please help us by giving us your opinions and returning the questionnaire as soon as possible (within a week?). We will report the results at local and national meetings and furnish copies to education departments of the states you represent.

Thank you for your help.

Directions

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Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
SA	A	D	SD

Omit any question you can't answer. Your help is entirely VOLUNTARY, but we would really appreciate a QUICK return.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES THAT MIGHT RAISE MINIMUM COMPETENCY TEST SCORES

Strongly Agree SA | Agree A | Disagree D | Strongly Disagree SD

Procedure/Activity	This Procedure Should: Raise Scores	Improve Learning	Is Ethical
1. Teaching relaxation procedures that reduce test anxiety.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
2. Supplying or allowing snacks around testing time.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
3. Instructing students in ways to use time wisely.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
4. Telling students to get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast before tests.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
5. Giving practice tests that use questions provided by the test publishers.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
6. Using commercially-prepared material and tests that are designed to parallel the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
7. Shifting the classroom instruction and curricula to correspond with the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
8. Offering special instruction in test-taking skills.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
9. Arranging for some students to avoid taking the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
10. Cleaning up students' completed answer sheets, e.g., erase stray marks and smudges.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
11. Darkening or filling in light or partial answers on student answer sheets.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
12. Teaching questions known to be on the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
13. Showing copies of the test to students beforehand.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
14. Publicly recognizing high scorers on the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
15. Giving additional time for the test to students who need it.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD

Strongly Agree SA | Agree A | Disagree D | Strongly Disagree SD

Procedure/Activity	This Procedure Should: Raise Scores	Improve Learning	Is Ethical
16. Reading and explaining test items to individual students when asked during the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
17. Defining words on the test if asked by students during the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
18. Telling students to guess on questions when they are unsure.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
19. Constructing lassroom tests that are of the same type or format as the competency tests.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
20. Having students practice using and marking a separate answer sheet.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
21. Filling in the bubbles for omitted items on student answer sheets.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
22. Scheduling a pep assembly to promote the test and its importance.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
23. Scheduling meetings for teachers to discuss ways to increase test scores.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
24. Arranging for selected students to make the test at a separate time or place.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
25. Notifying parents of the dates and purposes of tests.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
26. Publicly recognizing teachers whose students score high on the test.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
27. Establishing a special class for high-risk students to work exclusively on subjects covered by the competency tests.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
28. Stressing the importance to students of doing their best work on tests.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
29. Rephrasing or explaining the test instructions for some students.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD
30. Distributing copies of the test beforehand for teachers to examine.	SA A D SD	SA A D SD	SA A D SD

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Are there other procedures you have found to be useful? _____

_____

Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements (circle the best response to each).

1. Minimum competency tests tend to improve the learning of school students.	SA	A	D	SD
2. These tests tend to distort school curricula.	SA	A	D	SD
3. Teacher-made tests tend to improve student learning.	SA	A	D	SD
4. Students would learn more if there were no tests of any kind.	SA	A	D	SD

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please answer the following by circling or writing the best answer to each.

1. Sex/Gender? Male Female 2. Approximate age? _____years
3. Current Status? student administrator teacher researcher
4. Approximately how many years have you taught? _____years
5. Approximately how many testing/measurement classes have you taken? _____classes
6. Your teaching or administrative or research experience has been (or will be) focused most upon what grade levels?

   K or pre-K elementary secondary college graduate school Other? _____
7. Your experience has been (or will be) focused most upon what subject area?

   special education elementary English math science social studies

   languages/art/music educ. classes (in college) Other? _____
8. State? California Florida Georgia New York Ohio Texas Other? _____
9. Your experience with minimum-competency tests? none some much

Return to: BENNETT, EDFI, BGSU, Bowling Green, OH 43403.

M:36A

From the Desks of

Peter Wood and Tom Bennett
EDFI Department
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403

Dear Fellow Teacher/Researcher/Educator and Member of NCME/AERA/MATEP:

We would like your help. We know that you are at least as busy as we are with your research and many other obligations. However, we would genuinely appreciate your completing one of the enclosed questionnaires and returning it as soon as possible.

For the past three years, we have been involved in helping students and colleagues with high school proficiency tests. In the process, we and our school-based colleagues have begun to wonder what works to help students to pass the tests and receive their diplomas. We would also like to know what others are doing ETHICALLY to help students to do well.

It would really help us if you would mail your questionnaire to us in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Please feel free to add ideas or procedures that we might have omitted. Although each of us has taught for over 20 years, we're still relatively new to research and to helping students pass state-mandated tests.

Thank you for sharing your limited time. Your professional courtesy is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Thomas Bennett Peter Wood

Thomas Bennett and Peter Wood

M:38

From the Desk of

Charla Bennett
English Department
Liberty Center Schools
Liberty Center, OH 43532

Dear Fellow Teacher of English and Member of NCTE:

I would like your help. I know that you are at least as busy as I am with planning lessons, reading papers, scoring tests, etc. However, I would genuinely appreciate your answering one of the enclosed questionnaires and returning it as soon as possible.

For the past three years, I have been involved in helping our students with their high school proficiency tests. I have been tutoring students in math as well as in reading and writing. In the process, my husband, another colleague, and I have begun to wonder what works to help students to pass the tests and receive their diplomas. We would also like to know what others are doing ETHICALLY to help students to do well.

It would really help us if you would mail your questionnaire to us in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. It would help even more if you could ask your Principal or Assistant Principal AND ANOTHER TEACHER (preferably one who tutors students to pass math tests) to complete and return the other two questionnaires.

Please feel free to add ideas or procedures that we might have omitted. Although I've taught for over 20 years, I'm still new to research and to helping students pass state-mandated tests.

Thank you for sharing your limited time. Your professional courtesy is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Charla Bennett

Charla Bennett