

**Thitirat Thanomsingh (tthanoms@lhup.edu)**  
**EDTL 604: Unit 3 State Performance Standards**  
**April 1, 2007**

Standardized tests, such as the ACT, SAT, LSAT, MCAT and GRE, are creating anxiety for test-taking students who hope to further their education. Scores on these exams can be life-changing events for some students, and many are cracking under the pressure. Students across the nation with excellent grade point averages sometimes do not do well on standardized testing. These tests are called "high stakes" tests because they directly influence the educational future of young adults.

High stakes tests are the tests which are designed in such a way that the "questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent" and are "administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner". Those mean something important will be determined by test performance. According to the assessment, it can determine not only promotion to the next level, graduation from high school, and admission to college for students, but also shows the effectiveness of teachers' performances and schools' curriculum and programs. Although, we use only this measurement to evaluate students' outcomes and the quality of school, it would cause problems which could lead to many disagreements among teachers, students, parents, school, and including communities.

Nowadays, many school districts are mandating tests to measure student performance and to hold individual schools and school systems accountable for that performance. Knowing if and what students are learning is important. Test results give classroom teachers important information on how well individual students are learning

and provide feedback to the teachers themselves on their teaching methods and curriculum materials.

How Should Student Learning and Achievement Be Measured? Measuring what and how well students learn is an important building block in the process of strengthening and improving our nation's schools. I think that tests, along with student grades and teacher evaluations, can provide critical measures of students' skills, knowledge, and abilities. Therefore, the appropriate use of high stakes testing can be valid measures of student achievement that provide them with critical measures of students' skills, knowledge, and abilities. On the other hand, the misuse of high stakes testing tends to narrow the curriculum and limit the instructional approaches, especially when the test is used in making decisions about students' future; it undermines the educational quality and the equal opportunity. Students should be treated equally and fairly; they should have had a real opportunity to master the materials upon which the test is based. The test should not be a single measurement to gauge their achievement and test results should also be reported by sex, race/ethnicity, income level, disability status, and degree of English proficiency for evaluation purposes. For example, if students with limited English skills are to be tested in English, their test scores should be interpreted in the light of their limited skills.

For teachers and schools, I think high stakes tests are to reflect a performance and progress of teachers and school districts in terms of curriculum, materials and programs. Some people might think tests are a way to make teachers and students accountable, even though there are more comments from some teacher unions, student groups and parent organization disagree with the trend toward high-stakes tests. Those results can provide

the powerful information to parents and to communities to ask the question of teachers and schools, and to evaluate the qualities of education in their districts. I do believe that schools' performance might affect their fund and teachers' salary evaluation. So, when used the tests to assess teachers and schools as well as students, teachers and schools must develop their curriculum, materials and programs to increase their student's academic performance to meet or exceed state's standards.

In conclusion, I think high-stakes tests are a valuable part of educational assessment, but it should not be the main scale to gauge students' future, teachers' instructions and schools' qualities, which can create extreme pressure and lead to depression and anxiety. When high-stakes tests are used, safeguards must be in place. Test developers must ensure that certain groups of students are not disadvantaged by a test. Ethnic/racial minority students, students with low income levels, students with disabilities, and students with limited English skills should be treated equally and fairly depending on their status and abilities.