

Testing Gone Amok: Leave No Teacher Candidate Behind

By Shelley B. Wepner

Let's face it. Testing has been part of the educational landscape our entire lives. Testing has been used to determine our fate in K-12 education and the types of doors, if any, open to us in college, graduate school, and professional school. As an elementary-school-aged student in the late fifties and early sixties, I took some type of standardized test every year. I especially remember how my fourth-grade teacher handled our test results. She invited our parents into our classroom to discuss our standardized test results. She arranged the room so that we sat between our parents in a circle as she explained the purpose of each section of the test and what our scores meant.

While I was too young to really understand the implications of our test results, I do not think anyone was really blamed or congratulated for our scores. We all knew who tested well and who did not, who was a fast learner and who was not. We knew that these tests determined our fate with grouping and classroom assignments. Although we did not know much about colleges at that age, we could have predicted fairly accurately who would have gone to the best colleges and who would not go at all because of academic abilities that did not seem to change over time.

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Although seemingly simple to educate a student in the late fifties and early sixties because teachers did not have to worry about "scientifically-based research," the teachers of that era nevertheless used standardized tests to assess and predict learning achievements. Besides, it was the post-Sputnik era,

and the United States was threatened by the Soviet Union's ability to launch the first man-made satellite. Our teachers had pressure to design better science programs and create budding scientists so that our nation could win the war in space and, by extension, the Cold War. My student peers, now referred to as the baby boomers, were not classified or identified by their learning disabilities or ethnic/racial/cultural differences. Rather, we were taught and tested similarly to determine our abilities and next steps in our schooling experience.

Fastforward 40+ years, and the nation's schools now must use testing to label themselves as successful or unsuccessful to provide information for, among other things, the United States' international standing. While the nation is more sensitized to the needs of minority and low-income students and those with special learning needs (West & Peterson, 2003), this new-age testing focus, promoted in *No Child Left Behind*, is being used to make public every school's performance on some type of standardized test. Those studying the politics and practice of this law are finding that students actually are less accountable for their performance on these tests than teachers and that student subgroups—those labeled according to their special learning needs and racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds—are given short shrift by the very law that is supposed to help them because of the many compromises to the curriculum that are made to address testing requirements (Hess, 2003; Peterson & West, 2003).

Meanwhile, teachers far and wide are trying to figure out their role in doing the jobs they were hired to do without hurting students or themselves too much in the process. At the same time, and because of the impossibility of implementing NCLB as written, states are trying to figure out ways to beat the law by identifying loopholes that allow for lower state standards, easier tests, or ways to delay implementation of its toughest parts.

The situation reminds me of the 70s and 80s, when statewide minimum basic testing initiatives for graduation and promotion were implemented. While the initiatives were celebrated for their attempt to create a minimum standard of achievement, it turned into a reality game of survival for educators in districts where the student population would not fare well. Although my experience told me that the teachers tried in earnest to help such students succeed, they knew that certain student subgroups simply were not going to pass. Thus, administrators did what they could to represent their schools and districts in the best possible light by keeping certain students from attending school the day of testing or hiding in drawers the tests of low-performing students.

Today, because of the widespread involvement of the federal government in public education, more attention has been given upfront to the problems of meeting NCLB's mandates (Meier, 2004; Popham, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Wise, 2004). As a result, we already have seen the federal government soften the requirements, and we probably will see even more changes to avoid having an overwhelming number of districts fail. And, because presidents eventually come and go from The White House, we can anticipate that NCLB will morph into something else. However, the

essence of the law—high-stakes testing and accountability—probably will not change because of its evolution over the last 20 years.

Teacher preparation, now acknowledged for its impact on K-12 student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2000), needs to be part of the discussions about ways to address emerging issues with testing and accountability. What then do we, as teacher educators who work with those preparing to teach, do to guide our students about their responsibilities with regard to high-stakes tests? How do we help teacher candidates learn to balance externally driven mandates with their own understanding of effective instruction? Given that our ability to work with the present is dependent on our knowledge and appreciation of the past, I describe how NCLB evolved and how its development has impacted current common views about reading instruction. I then present ideas and strategies to share with teacher candidates to help them work successfully with directives for accountability with high-stakes testing in reading. I use reading as the centerpiece of my discussion because of its importance in testing and instruction and my own set of experiences in the field.

Understanding the Context of High-Stakes Testing in Relation to Reading Instruction

Today's teacher candidates face a very different set of expectations than previous generations of newly certified teachers. I graduated from a teacher education program with a clear message to experiment and explore with different reading strategies without worrying too much about my own accountability in relation to children's standardized test scores. I was to be most concerned with identifying ways to motivate a student to engage in text. Although annual testing definitely existed, I did not have to worry about too much negative publicity about my teaching skills. In contrast, new teachers today must address standards and high-stakes testing at every turn because of their unmistakable prominence and permanence. As high-stakes testing has come to symbolize educational progress, the field of literacy has experienced a shift in focus to address this widespread interest in test results.

Events in Education and Reading Leading to NCLB

During the early eighties, when Ronald Reagan was president, there were two competing forces that were vying for national prominence: whole language and standards. On the one hand, Reagan was bemoaning our educational system's low standards and lack of clear goals. *A Nation at Risk* (1983), published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, highlighted "the rising tide of mediocrity in [public] schools" and criticized K-12 education for its inability to truly prepare students to have the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. *A Nation At Risk* prompted states to increase high school graduation requirements, lengthen the school year, and add more tests (Cuban, 2001).

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On the other hand, Ken and Yetta Goodman, two noted researchers in the field of literacy, were publishing seminal research on preschoolers' knowledge of print and the notion of whole language as a concept for developing literacy (Goodman & Altwerger, 1981; Goodman & Goodman, 1981). Although basals with all the adjunct materials (leveled readers, phonics activities, and workbooks for comprehension skill practice) were the primary reading material at the time, the Goodmans and other researchers were promoting the importance of having students transfer what they knew from their real world to the printed page to have them feel successful as beginning readers (Smith, 1982; Vogt & Shearer, 2003; Weaver, 1980). The Goodmans believed that children's literature was more effective than basals to help students learn to read.

While we saw the national government beginning to endorse standards and testing, we saw leaders of literacy (Ken Goodman et. al) promote a broader view of literacy learning that did not focus on standards and testing, but rather on the child as a whole who was brought to learn by concentrating on what he or she brought to the situation. The publication of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) supported Goodman's belief that students should be instructed with noncontrived, noncontrolled, real literature as the principal material.

When President George H. W. Bush became president in 1989, the whole-language movement took the education field by storm with, unfortunately, terrible misinterpretations of its purpose. Entire school districts had become whole-language districts overnight without having a clue of what it meant. I remember visiting a school district where it was reported to me that the superintendent announced at the opening faculty meeting that the district had become a whole-language district, and no one knew what he was talking about. Literature-based programs were the instructional method of choice, and standardized testing was criticized harshly for its interference with more naturalistic forms of assessment.

While Ken Goodman was promoting his beliefs about whole language and literature-based instruction, Jeanne Chall, another noted researcher in the field of literacy, was promoting her ideas that reading acquisition could only occur after moving through a series of specific stages, and was supporting skill-oriented and phonics instruction. Theorists and researchers from across the fields of psychology, linguistics, and education were researching how readers think about text, how they make connections while they read, and how they ultimately construct meaning. At the time, there definitely was a decreased emphasis on teaching discrete skills, whether phonics/decoding or comprehension.

In the meantime, and as a result of the first Governor's Education Summit convened by President George H. W. Bush, a movement that had started in the Reagan era began to gain momentum to build a set of national standards for schools, referred to by President Bush as national education goals. These goals, renamed Goals 2000, were mandating "curricular and performance standards, new tests, and

accountability of principals, teachers, and students for test scores” (Cuban, 2001, p. 177). As the country was moving toward a set of national standards for schools, the field of literacy was focused more on constructing meaning from literature-based programs and using performance-based assessment techniques.

The nineties, when Bill Clinton was president, marked the beginning of the end for the whole-language movement for two major reasons. First, in some states where whole language teaching approaches were used, standardized test scores were low. Second, a series of federally funded research studies revealed that, for most children, learning to read is not a “natural process.” Rather, children appeared to benefit from explicit phonics instruction, and they needed practice in reading texts with a high percentage of decodable words. Young children who had difficulty learning to read would benefit from early, intensive reading intervention (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

When President Clinton convened, in 1996, the Second National Education Summit, it led to the creation of standards and testing systems in almost every state. When he convened the Third National Education Summit in 1999, it led to increased specificity of standards, alignment of the school curriculum with standards, more focus on teachers with standards raised for both teachers and students, recognition of high-achieving schools, and intervention in low-performing schools. Also introduced was the idea, picked up by NCLB, that all children should be able to read well by the end of third grade. The federal government funded initiatives such as America Reads to promote this goal. Larry Cuban observed that progressive classroom approaches such as portfolios and performance-based testing, which had blossomed between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, were no longer flourishing because of the constant pressure for higher test scores (Cuban, 2001). We increasingly saw phonics instruction having a prominent role in reading instruction alongside standards and standardized testing.

When George W. Bush was inaugurated as president, several very influential documents had already been published about literacy development: the Report of the National Reading Panel, the Report of the Committee on Reading Disabilities, and the reports of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA). Major findings of these reports included the inextricable link between assessment and instruction, the need for systematic and explicit instruction in decoding, the need for fluency for good comprehension, and the need for explicit instruction in comprehension skills and strategies (Vogt & Shearer, 2003).

The National Reading Panel report, in particular, served as the catalyst for Reading First. However, because of the limited methods used by the Panel to select research studies, the report was considered to have serious flaws (Cunningham, 2001; Purcell-Gates, 2000; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). Of particular concern was the influence that this report had on the NCLB legislation. Instruction in reading would have to be scientifically-based, meaning that experiments would have had to be conducted where teachers adopted a method or practice to see whether this led to subsequent learning advantages for children (Shanahan, 2003).

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The fourth National Education Summit, convened in 2001 by President Bush, focused on three main areas: measuring results through testing; strengthening state, school and district accountability to hold schools and students responsible for achievement on tests; and improving teaching both by making it more attractive in terms of compensation and support, and by challenging teachers to accept more responsibility for student results. When President Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* into law on January 8, 2002, high-stakes testing and scientifically proven strategies became the responsibility of the teaching community.

With standards and testing having bipartisan support since the Reagan era, the main purpose of NCLB is not going away anytime soon. While it might take on a different form, basic elements of standards and testing probably will not. Meanwhile, as the government expects higher reading achievement and the use of scientifically-based reading research to determine how to best teach reading, debates still continue over differing philosophies about reading instruction (Reutzel & Mitchell, 2003).

Helping New Teachers Function Effectively in the NCLB Era

As teacher educators, we no longer have the luxury of promoting specific philosophies in reading to prepare our students, or encouraging the type of instructional experimentation that we were afforded without concern for specific outcomes on high-stakes tests. Our curriculum must focus on helping teacher candidates understand how to use a wide range of instructional strategies to address standards that are measured through testing. Teacher candidates need to practice with this instructional mindset in different field-placement environments — suburban and urban, rich and poor, monolingual and multilingual — so that they get a sense of what is realistic with K-12 students' performance on such tests. Thus, we need to provide teacher candidates with the necessary knowledge base for instructing and assessing students, as well as the tools needed to survive in different environments, so that they have a reasonable chance for success in this era of accountability.

Insure that Teacher Candidates Have a Sufficient Knowledge Base

A teacher candidate's knowledge base in reading should include knowledge of the field itself, knowledge of how to instruct in reading in relation to students' needs, and knowledge of ways to succeed with testing.

Knowledge of reading: Teacher candidates preparing to teach reading should have knowledge of the five essential components: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension strategies. Teacher candidates also should be able to assess all aspects of reading, and organize and manage literacy instruction using a wide range of methodologies. Research indicates that classrooms that are well managed have a positive impact on reading achievement (Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980).

Teacher candidates should come to understand as much as possible about the relationship between comprehension and testing. Comprehension of text is not just about knowledge of strategies such as mental imaging, rereading, and retelling. Comprehension of text also depends on students' knowledge of the passage's topic. Passages that address everyday topics such as food, popular music, oral hygiene, and automobiles are one type of topic that tap into students' life experiences and require students' strategic knowledge. Passages that address academic topics such as the life of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley or the life of the former Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton are quite another, for they also require students' academic and content knowledge (Feeley, Wepner, & Willging, 1985; Feeley, Wepner, & Wehrle, 1987). It is important for teacher candidates to know what the tests measure so that they know what they should teach to help students process text and what they can realistically teach. It is one thing to teach comprehension strategies to help with test taking. It is quite another to figure out the content of topics included in tests to teach students so that they can respond to the questions asked.

Knowledge of instruction in relation to students' needs: The International Reading Association's position statement (1999) says there is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read. Rather, it is the ability of a teacher to put together many pieces that are based on the needs of the child (Adams, 1990). Certain common-sense understandings still prevail, where teachers need to insure that learning experiences have personal meaning, build on prior knowledge, use their understanding of students' lives to motivate them to read, use explicit (direct) instruction for beginning readers, intervene early (and often), and use print-rich environments (Malcolm, 2003). Although scripted programs for reading have now returned stronger than ever to help with standardized testing, they have taken on a mechanical quality that truly is taking the life out of teaching and learning. Teacher candidates are well served if they learn about such programs in the context of common-sense understandings about how to best meet students' needs.

Teacher candidates also should be shown how to use assessment-driven instruction and responsive adaptive teaching. I observed one teacher read aloud to the children, and then have them read before moving into skills activities. I observed another teacher of the same grade in the same building with the same material introduce the vocabulary first, then have the children read with her, and then have the children read silently. It does not so much matter the method but one's ability to assess who is processing, and who is not; who is with the teacher, and who is not.

Additionally, teacher candidates need opportunities in the field to work with and reflect on different levels and abilities of students. According to an informal survey of 191 teachers, the critical issue for teachers is how to support struggling readers and writers, and to what degree (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003). Highlights of these researchers' recommendations on what teachers need include: knowledge of students' interests and books about their interests, methods to help

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students navigate text, ways to monitor students' reading behavior, ways to motivate students and engage parents, and mechanisms for communicating across grade levels about students' literacy behaviors.

I had the opportunity to interact with and observe throughout a semester a veteran first-grade teacher, Eileen Harkins, who teaches in an elementary school in Ridley School District in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. With more than 30 years teaching experience, she is concerned with NCLB, yet believes that it has sharpened her attempts to help even struggling readers perform decently on the tests. She explained what she is doing to work with her struggling readers and what she does differently for her high reading group (reading independently followed by questions) and low reading group (reading together passage by passage). She explained how she monitors carefully students' acquisition of a sight vocabulary to guide how she instructs with specific passages from the first-grade readers. Although Eileen Harkins' overall approach to teaching has not changed, she has added new instructional techniques and is monitoring more closely students' literacy behaviors that will be tested. She meets with the kindergarten teachers to discuss the reading abilities of her own students when they enter her class. She also meets with the second-grade teachers to give them input about the students' reading behaviors from her class the previous year.

Knowledge of ways to succeed with testing: Contrary to the opinion of many, an essential part of teacher candidates' knowledge base is learning how to teach to the test. Although impossible to determine beforehand what a newly administered test will actually measure, work with previously used tests helps teacher candidates learn about the types of test items that are used so that they learn techniques for instructing about such tests. Patrick McCabe (2003) talks about enhancing students' self-efficacy for high-stakes reading tests. Think about any of the test-preparation courses that students take for admission to college, graduate, and professional schools. Recently, a young man shared with me his experiences with a testing- preparation course for the Law School Admissions Test. This course has the students take actual tests with the same type of testing conditions. Students receive scores and then proceed to review test items, practice the same kinds of test items, and retake tests. They do this for a three-month period until the day of the test. This is a high-stakes test. Do I get to go to law school? If so, to which law schools will I have a chance to get accepted as a result of my test score? In other words, how will my life be affected by this test?

We are preparing teacher candidates to work with similar high-stakes testing situations, where their students' scores determine what could happen to the students and to them. It is especially challenging in low-performing schools with low-performing students. (And, ironically, that is where newly certified teachers are placed the most.) We need to advise teacher candidates to treat high-stakes tests as truly serious business. I actually see it as survival of the testwise for teachers. It is similar to what many of us as individuals do before we go to our physician for our

annual checkup: go on a diet and monitor the intake of specific types of foods. Or, what we do when we are getting ready to sell our house or have our in-laws for a visit: clean and organize the house with uncharacteristic attention. There are times in our lives when external pressure motivates us to perform differently.

Given the pressure with testing, teacher candidates should begin to learn how to develop lesson plans that reflect curricular goals and include test-preparation strategies and state standards. Some of the test-preparation strategies suggested by McCabe (2003) include: using test-like material to help students receive feedback that they possess the skills needed to be successful with the test; familiarizing students with the test format; modeling test taking so that students can listen to a respected person respond to test questions; and simulating testing conditions.

Knowledge of test-preparation strategies requires knowledge of the high-stakes tests and how they measure state standards and the school- or district-based reading curriculum. This type of information should be included in our syllabi so that teacher candidates see connections between the theories, research, and practices we espouse, and state-based expectations. For many of us involved in the pursuit of some type of national accreditation, this adds yet another layer of material to include. Already we need to demonstrate how our syllabi address national standards that focus on outcomes for teacher candidates. We now need to include K-12 student outcomes to show connections between what we teach and what K-12 students achieve, and the importance of the relationship between the candidates' teaching and students' achievement.

Adapt Professional Development Models to Teacher Education Programs

Unquestionably, professional development for practicing teachers provides a forum for assessing their needs in relation to their instructional contexts. Cooter (2003) talks about a capacity-building model for teacher development. He refers to the work of Bloom (1956) and Vygotsky (1962) to reinforce the notion that whether we are children learning basic literacy skills or teachers becoming proficient in a new instructional methodology, the learning curve is both predictable and constant. Distributed learning over time is critical for building capacity. We need time to learn new things, and we also need practice under the guidance of a more knowledgeable coach.

In a similar vein, the Learning First Alliance, in its publication of *Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide* (2000), recommends the following for teachers: (1) understand the theory and rationale for the new content and instruction; (2) observe a model in action; (3) practice the new behavior in a safe context; and (4) try out the behavior with peer support in the classroom (Hammond, 2003). Thus, for professional development to be truly effective, teachers need to practice what they learn and have peer support in the context in which they practice it. Professional development academies for teachers, especially those who teach in

urban districts, have appeared in state after state to help practicing teachers assist with reading development in eligible schools. Literacy coaches have emerged as critical for working with teachers in need of assistance.

The professional development opportunities used with practicing teachers also apply to teacher candidates, who need to know before they are eligible for certification what to expect in a high-stakes testing environment. Given the high attrition rate of beginning teachers, mostly because of poor working conditions in impoverished areas (Ingersoll, 1998), teacher candidates should learn about theories and methodologies, observe them in action, practice them in different contexts, and experiment with support from mentors. Particularly important is the role teacher educators play as literacy mentors in classroom contexts, where we help teacher candidates develop their skills and reflect on their abilities over time. We need to be with our teacher candidates regularly and frequently and, as coaches, help them make connections between instruction and testing, articulate what we see with their practices, and excel at supporting them and nudging them to reflect on their own teaching in relation to K-12 students' performance (Dole, 2004). The more we do to prepare teacher candidates from the outset for their responsibilities with testing, the less likely they will feel the need to leave teaching out of frustration.

Help Teacher Candidates Model the Networking Behaviors of Practicing Teachers

As part of their assigned or voluntary field work in classrooms, teacher candidates should observe practicing teachers closely to see the way they tap into resources to help them in their classrooms. The networks that practicing teachers form—whether through their parents, the community, or neighboring universities—serve to expand teachers' capabilities with instruction and assessment at no additional cost to them or their schools. Although these services are voluntary and somewhat less dependable than paid assistance, they nevertheless are an under-publicized resource that provides help with individual tutoring and small-group work. Practicing teachers who have come to depend on their networks for help have created systems with back-up plans that are especially helpful with individual and small-group reading activities.

Network with parents: Eileen Harkins has her students' parents come in to work with small groups as she tests her students individually with running records and retellings. Another teacher in the same building has parents work with her reading groups on a regular basis to help with oral and silent reading, worksheets, computer activities, reading-related projects, and teacher-made games.

Network with colleagues: Joyce Wells (2002), principal of an urban elementary school in Chester Upland School District in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, explains how she networked with other teachers to create an innovative, school-wide test-preparation program that is integrated into the core curriculum. She celebrates achievement with honors programs, VIP socials with certificates, and special pins.

Network with colleges and universities: Just as schools are essential resources to colleges and universities, colleges and universities are significant resources for schools. Professors interested in doing work in schools can serve as inspiring resources to classroom teachers. As Barbara Walker (2003) from Oklahoma State University is studying her theory of instruction for struggling readers, she also is helping the teacher with two struggling readers in the back of a second-grade classroom. Rita Bean (2004) from the University of Pittsburgh describes a professional development initiative that she brought to several school districts with high-poverty, low-achieving students to help their K-3 teachers improve the way in which they instructed in reading.

A faculty colleague, Nancy Ziomek, had her undergraduate teacher candidates work with third- and fifth-grade students in a Professional Development School on sample standardized-test passages, with comprehension strategies such as mental imaging, slowing down, changing reading rate and rereading. As Ziomek's teacher candidates experienced small-group reading instruction to satisfy a field placement requirement, the third- and fifth-grade teachers were receiving additional help for their students with test-taking strategies.

The America Reads Challenge is another good example of a way to bring the university to the classroom. University work-study students tutor children who are at risk of failure in reading, often helping to produce significant reading gains (Speigel, 2002; Wasik, 1998a, b). Another way to engage the university is through summer reading camps or reading clinics to support students. Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania, has a summer reading camp that is very popular in its region. Teachers refer struggling readers to the camp because they know that their students will have four weeks of additional support during the summer months.

As teacher candidates work in classrooms, they learn from practicing teachers ways in which additional help is tapped and used most effectively. Teacher candidates can use these opportunities to reflect on their own development, and think about what they can expect from others once they are fully employed as teachers.

Help Teacher Candidates Understand the Need To Use Documentation To Protect Themselves

Equipped with knowledge and skills that have been developed over time in both university and elementary classrooms, teacher candidates still need to learn how to address criticisms that stem from students' possibly disappointing performance on high-stakes testing. Again, teacher candidates' observations of practicing teachers' documentation practices help them see what they do for their students and themselves.

I return to Eileen Harkins who, during the first two weeks of the school year, informally assesses students' abilities. During one of my visits to her classroom in the beginning of the school year, Harkins already could identify who could write a complete sentence, who could read from a language experience story, who understood how to ask a question, who could spell certain words, who could answer

questions from a book she read aloud, and who could provide additional information about the contents of an informational text that she read aloud. She already knew to which desks to go to assist. She also knew which students needed assistance from the reading specialist.

Frequent documentation of students' needs and skills in relation to instructional demands provides data about students' rate and level of growth. Harkins is pleased that her school district now has mandated that all teachers assess periodically each student's reading abilities through running records and retellings. This assessment system documents students' reading behaviors at the beginning of the school year and their rate of progress throughout the year. When the superintendent asks for reasons why certain children are not achieving as expected, there is documentation of the students' capabilities over time.

Teacher candidates should come to understand the need to document at all times. When school districts do not have sound assessment systems in place, even newly certified teachers should know how to keep periodic and dated records of students' performance, possibly in an individual or a school-wide database. New teachers should know to communicate this information about students' performance to colleague teachers and the principal so that the principal is aware of the degree of academic diversity within a classroom that is shared, in turn, with the superintendent so that he or she knows what to generally expect on the high-stakes tests for each class.

In addition to documenting what students are doing, teacher candidates should come to appreciate the need to document their own progress. Given that the research is clear that "teachers—not the instructional method or the materials—are crucial to promoting student learning" (International Reading Association, 2003, p. 1), teachers need to demonstrate ways in which they are highly qualified or perhaps even exemplary. Artifacts of work, observations, portfolios, or packets of communication to the parent community help to document their achievements. It is difficult to challenge an exemplary teacher, even in the face of disappointing scores on a high-stakes test. The Eileen Harkins of the world, while exemplary in every way and able to get the most from children, do not always generate the high scores demanded for every child.

Conclusion

Whether we like it or not, high-stakes testing and accountability have become permanent fixtures in K-12 education. For those of us responsible for preparing the next generation of teachers, we need to provide them with the cognitive, practical, and psychological tools needed to embrace testing and accountability as necessary parts of their jobs. Chances are that if they feel confident with what they know and can do, they will be more willing to fight the good fight in determining, working toward, and communicating what they can realistically expect their students to accomplish with such tests.

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