

Teachers' Views on High-stakes Testing:

Implications for the Classroom

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Executive Summary

There is an appealing logic associated with current models of test-based accountability: the interplay among content standards, state tests, and accountability is a powerful tool to improve the quality of schools. However, when high-stakes consequences are attached to test results for schools, teachers, and students, unexpected consequences may outweigh the intended benefits. To explore the policy impact of Florida's state testing and accountability program on classroom practices, teachers, and students as perceived by educators, this brief presents the results of a national survey in which the responses of Florida teachers are compared with those of practitioners in other states using high-stakes exams. The findings reveal that, compared to their counterparts in other high-stakes states, teachers in Florida perceived a more pronounced impact of the state test.

Recommendations

1. Florida should undertake a long-term evaluation and monitoring program to assess the impact of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and

the A+ Accountability program. This evaluation and monitoring program should be conducted by an external organization or research institution. Its purpose is to determine if the state testing program is achieving its intended goals. The evaluation should also examine the unexpected consequences of the FCAT and A+ Accountability program on the educational process and on key stakeholders.

2. Florida testing policy should adhere to the recognized professional standards regarding test development and to the appropriate use of test results as described in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, published jointly by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.
3. Florida policy makers should not make highly consequential decisions about students (such as deciding whether a student is promoted to the next grade or is awarded a high school diploma) by means of test scores alone. Given the evidence pointing to weaknesses in the testing system, it is important to use other sources of information in conjunction with state tests.

The foregoing is a summary of a policy brief in the report *Reform Florida* (Education Policy Research Unit, April 2004). The complete policy brief is available on the Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) website at:

<http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/EPRU/documents/EPSSL-0401-104-EPRU.doc>

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