

The Assumptions of High-Stakes Accountability: A Challenge to Prevailing Wisdom from an Urban High School

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At present there exists considerable support for high-stakes school accountability systems. Those endorsing such policies believe they offer multiple benefits, the most fundamental being to enhance student achievement. Yet much discussion of school accountability focuses on a single development, test scores. To expand the dialogue surrounding school accountability, this article examines the experience of one urban high school to consider some broader educational questions. These include: Is the State accountability system fair? Will rewarding high performing schools and teachers and sanctioning low performing schools enhance student achievement? Are there readily apparent ways to improve achievement in schools that enroll sizable numbers of low-income students of color? How much do faculty control student performance on standardized exams? And do improved scores on standardized exams reflect improved learning?

Asserting a need to going beyond the surface logic of educational policies to critically assess their underlying assumptions, Thomas Popkewitz (2000) recently wrote:

[T]he governing principles of policy are so much part of the "making sense" of school interventions that the principles of conduct are taken for granted rather than questioned, with debates focusing on the correctness of policies rather than the ways in which the "reason" of policy practices forms particular conditions of life. (p. 19)

At present, there is considerable support for a range of high-stakes school accountability systems, typically involving some form of standardized testing coupled with a corresponding system of rewards and sanctions (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2001; Linn, 2000; Madaus, 1993). In fact, only one state does not require regular standardized exams for students in its schools (L. Shepard, personal communication, May, 2001). Those who endorse such accountability measures believe they offer a variety of benefits. Most fundamentally, they represent a means to enhance student achievement because now the standards are explicit, testing procedures are in place, and students, teachers, and administrators understand the consequence of failing to meet the standards. In addition, proponents see these accountability systems as offering a mechanism to promote greater equity for low-income students of color, to help teachers and administrators identify curricular priorities, and to aid parents in identifying the best schools for their

children, among other possible benefits.

Yet there has been a tendency for all involved to focus on a single outcome of these accountability systems, school test scores. In an effort to go beyond the intuitive appeal of high-stakes accountability this article draws on four years of research (1997-2001) conducted at a low-income urban high school to challenge some popular beliefs regarding school accountability. Specifically, this article examines the following questions: Is the State accountability system fair? Will rewarding high performing schools and teachers and sanctioning low performing schools enhance student achievement? Are there readily apparent ways to improve student achievement in schools that enroll sizable percentages of low-income, non-native-English-speaking students? How much do faculty control student performance on standardized exams? And do improved scores on standardized exams reflect improved learning?

So these questions remain at the forefront of this article I occasionally interweave data and analysis. I do this because I find analyses of these questions more accessible when the data relevant to specific questions are presented while addressing those questions. The article concludes with some policy recommendations linked to these central questions.

Methods

The following description and analysis blends qualitative and quantitative data derived from the applied, ethnographic

research I conducted at Rocky Mountain High School (RMHS; a pseudonym) in the Urban Public School system (UPS; also a pseudonym) from spring 1997 to spring 2001. As both applied and ethnographic, my research has two main goals. The first, the applied dimension to my work, entailed capacity building. That is, I used my research skills to inform school personnel on various educational matters while these persons drew on their understandings of the school and its community to determine a course of action. In this regard I directed a case study of the school's reform efforts, assessed the impact of a newly established reading department, collaborated with action research teams, and documented developments within a pilot "small school" program, among other endeavors.

In conducting this applied research I relied extensively on ethnographic methods. At RMHS I collected three primary sources of data: formal and informal interviews, observations, and archival research. Formal interviews were conducted with 70 students, 35 of 57 faculty, all of the building administrators, and three of four guidance counselors. Observations typically entailed observing classes or school meetings. Archival documents included school newspapers, research reports on RMHS, copies of student work, and memos that detailed dropout and attendance rates and the number of course failures, for example.

To frame developments at Rocky Mountain High in a district context I collected a range of data for all ten UPS high schools, including dropout rates, attendance rates, the percentage of students receiving free and reduced price lunch, and so on. I also draw on research from urban schooling, educational reform, and school accountability to highlight related developments at RMHS.

In selecting data to include in this study I embraced "realist" conceptions of validity (e.g., House, 1991), where data are selected because of their relevance to the issue at hand. As Joseph Maxwell (1992) explained:

[N]ot all possible accounts of some individual, situation, phenomenon, activity, text, institution, or program are equally useful, credible, or legitimate. . . . Validity, in a broad sense, pertains to this relationship between an account and something outside of that account. . . . the phenomena the account is about. . . . whether this something is construed as objective reality, the constructions of actors, or a variety of other possible interpretations. (pp. 282-283)

In this study, validity centered on the degree to which data relate to the questions and issues regarding high-stakes accountability those data should illuminate.

Rocky Mountain High and the Urban Public School System

In 1996 a federal court released UPS schools from a court-ordered desegregation mandate. As a consequence, district demographics changed markedly, as this "return to

neighborhood schools" was accompanied by a shift to greater socioeconomic and racial/ethnic segregation within the district. Consequently, those students with the least social and cultural capital—that being the income, resources, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and social ties that are valued and linked with success and influence in society (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1990; Stanton-Salazar, 1997)—are now concentrated in specific neighborhood schools. And this concentration, in particular the degree of poverty, can severely impact educational opportunity. Gary Orfield and his co-authors (1997) spoke to this matter:

High poverty schools have to devote far more time and resources to family and health crises, security, children who come to school not speaking standard English, seriously disturbed children, children with no educational materials in their homes, and many children with very weak educational preparation. These schools tend to draw less qualified teachers and to hold them for shorter periods of time. They tend to have to invest much more heavily in remediation and much less adequately in advanced and gifted classes and demanding materials. The levels of competition and peer group support for educational achievement are much lower in high poverty schools. Such schools are viewed much more negatively in the community and by the schools and colleges at the next level of education as well as by potential employers. . . . Students attending high poverty schools face a much lower level of competition regardless of their own interests and abilities. (p. 11; see also, U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

In terms of socioeconomic factors, Rocky Mountain was the high school most impacted by the court ruling. Prior to this court decision RMHS enrolled approximately 1,100 students, 45 percent being African American, 45 percent being white, and 10 percent being Latino. Between 30 and 35 percent of the student body qualified for free/reduced price lunch. By the 1999-00 and 2000-01 school years, Rocky Mountain High enrolled roughly a thousand students, 96 percent of whom were students of color, with over 80 percent qualifying for free/reduced price lunch. Incoming freshmen, on average, performed two years below grade level on standardized measures of their reading, writing, and math skills. Relative to the district and State, RMHS enrolled a disproportionate number of limited-English proficient (LEP) students and special education students.

In addition to this demographic shift and as is common nationwide, the State created a set of content standards and implemented a high-stakes testing program for all public schools, the State Student Assessment Program (SSAP). Initiated in 1993, the program will be fully implemented in the 2001-02 school year. At that time, tests will be given in reading, writing, and science for fifth through tenth grade. Grades three and four will take reading and writing, and eighth graders will take a science assessment. All eleventh grade students will take the ACT. Based on a weighted

percentage of students at each proficiency level (advanced, proficient, partially proficient, unsatisfactory, and no-score-reported) schools receive descriptor grades ranging from "excellent" to "unsatisfactory." These weighted scores are standardized and schools in the top eight percent will receive a monetary award. Those scoring in the bottom two percent can apply for two-year grants that will provide them with roughly \$100,000 per year. Twelve million dollars in teacher incentive grants will be available for faculty working in schools that score in the lower 27 percent of State schools. Those consistently scoring poorly may be converted to charter schools. In future years low-scoring schools will receive an "improvement grade" based on the degree their scores increase year-to-year.

Realizing that UPS would be returning to neighborhood schools, the district five years earlier hired a principal committed to restructuring RMHS and working to serve this new population. Since the school would enroll increasing numbers of low-income and LEP students, faculty and administrators sought to create a structure and promote practices that would best serve these students. Much of this work has centered on the philosophy and practices promoted by the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national secondary school reform movement (Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Sizer, 1984, 1992). For instance, ninth grade teachers and students are teamed and an advisory system was created throughout the school. Faculty participated in critical friends groups during which they presented and critiqued one another's work. The school initiated teacher research projects and the entire school developed standards-based performance assessments. A "rites of passage" requirement was adopted for students to progress from tenth to eleventh grade and a "graduation by exhibition" (Sizer, 1992) policy was instituted for all seniors. These were but some of the innovations promoted by the new principal.

The following discussion outlines some assumptions that inform many school accountability systems and draws on research from RMHS to expand our understanding of the complexity of these matters.

Testing Some Assumptions of High-Stakes Accountability

Is the State accountability system fair?

As the State's accountability system includes provisions for rewarding high-performing schools and for sanctioning those deemed unsatisfactory, it seems reasonable and important to ask, "Is the system fair?" To make this judgment I raise a straightforward question: "Do all schools have an equal chance to be rewarded or sanctioned?" Based on various indicators of school performance, including SSAP data, it appears that schools facing conditions of concentrated poverty among their students face greater challenges than others. As the State accountability system makes no provisions for this situation, I believe the schools are treated

unfairly, as they are required to participate in a high-stakes competition they are likely to lose.

To gain a sense for how concentrated poverty can influence educational opportunity, and therefore performance on high-stakes assessment, I grouped the ten UPS secondary schools into two cohorts, one representing the six high schools with the most free/reduced price lunch students (which included RMHS); the other included the four schools with the fewest free/reduced price lunch students. In looking at data for the 1997-98 and 1998-99 academic years, the first two years of the UPS return to neighborhood schools, the first cohort averaged 62.4 percent of its students being registered for free/reduced price lunch. The second cohort averaged half that, with 31.2 percent of its students being registered for free/reduced price lunch.

I then applied this two-cohort lens to various student data sources: the attrition rate (i.e., the degree of student turnover during the school year), student attendance, the dropout rate, the percent of "acceptable" grades (C-minus or better) earned by a school's students, the percent of students taking AP (advanced placement) courses, average scores on Iowa tests, and the percentage of special education students. I also considered whether schools had a program for LEP students. In conceptualizing the relationship among these data sources I viewed the attrition rate as a factor that derives from lower socioeconomic circumstances and which directly influences educational opportunity, as it is more difficult to serve a mobile student population than to work with a stable population. The collective impact of concentrated poverty, including student mobility, then reverberates throughout a school to undermine educational opportunity in many ways. To support this claim, I present the additional indices of student performance noted above (i.e., attendance, dropout rates, etc.), all of which suggest educational opportunity in these two cohorts differed markedly.

Specifically, the six schools with the higher percentage of free/reduced price lunch students had higher rates of student mobility and higher average dropout rates. They had lower average rates of attendance and lower rates of students passing courses with acceptable grades. They had lower Iowa test scores, fewer students enrolled in AP courses, and a greater average percentage of special education students. Five of these six schools were the only UPS schools that offered LEP programs. In contrast, the city's more affluent high schools had lower rates of student mobility and lower dropout rates. They had higher rates of student attendance, higher rates of students passing courses with acceptable grades, and higher Iowa test scores. They also had more students enrolled in AP courses, fewer special education students, and no LEP programs.

A look at elementary and middle school student performance on SSAP during the 1998-99 and 1999-00 school years reveals a similar relationship between concentrated poverty and student achievement as pervades the high school level (Balfanz & Legters, 2001). When correlational analyses were run to assess the impact of school

poverty on achievement, the poverty variable being the percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch and achievement being the percent reaching the SSAP proficient or advanced level, the correlations were significant and negative. For the 1998-99 school year, the correlations between free/reduced lunch and percent proficient and advanced were -.907 for seventh grade reading, -.855 for seventh grade writing, -.862 for fourth grade reading, -.855 for fourth grade writing, and -.838 for third grade reading. In 1999-00, the correlations between free/reduced lunch and percent proficient and advanced were -.817 for eighth grade math, -.864 for eighth grade science, -.883 for seventh grade reading, -.867 for seventh grade writing, -.823 for fourth grade writing, -.846 for fourth grade reading, and -.842 for third grade reading. Thus, the correlations for both years, for all grade levels, and all subject areas were significant at the .01 level, indicating a strong negative relationship between achievement and poverty—the more low-income students, the lower student achievement on SSAP. (I offer no data on the ten high schools because high schools have not yet taken this exam.)

Although the State has not yet instituted formal rewards and sanctions, preliminary analyses of fourth grade SSAP scores from the 1997-98 school year suggest the potential of this accountability system to discriminate against low-income students of color as well. That is, every “unsatisfactory” elementary school (i.e., with over 25 percent of all students scoring in the unsatisfactory range and less than 25 percent scoring proficient or above) enrolled a minority-majority population, the average being 85.5 percent. In contrast, 32 of the 33 highest performing schools (i.e., with 85 percent or higher scoring proficient or above and fewer than four percent in the unsatisfactory category) had a majority white population, with an average of 89.4 percent. If these data were used to reward and sanction State schools, 760 minority students would have attended a school that received a financial reward, while 14,315 minority students would have attended unsatisfactory schools. In contrast, there would be 2,276 white students in unsatisfactory schools and 11,217 in schools that received financial rewards (Eide-Stensrud, 2000).

Given the differences in student achievement outlined between the cohort-of-six and the cohort-of-four, student performance on SSAP during the 1998-99 and 1999-00 school years, and the performance of fourth grade whites and students of color on the 1998 SSAP, it appears those affluent and white are most likely to succeed in this competition. A partial explanation for this trend can be seen in the fact that the cohort-of-six served proportionately more special education students and included the only schools with LEP programs. These populations will certainly lower their SSAP scores. Other factors, such as high mobility rates among low-income students, likely figured in as well. The State therefore may end up supplementing the budgets of its wealthier districts while depriving low-income, minority schools of much needed funds, all on the basis of an exam in which success correlates with race/ethnicity and

socioeconomic status.

Will rewarding high performing schools and teachers and sanctioning low performing schools enhance student achievement?

Part of the logic behind the State’s accountability system seems straightforward. Reward those who succeed and sanction those who are deficient as a way to motivate teachers and schools. Yet for sanctions to work, they must have some impact on the targeted group, in this case teachers. Although some states, such as Kentucky, reward teachers for improved student scores (Kannapel, et al., 2000), in this State rewards accrue to schools, not individual teachers. Thus, especially in large schools, rewards can have little meaning, and thus little motivation, for individual teachers (Olson, 2001). Further, to have the desired impact, rewards must be seen as attainable. At RMHS there was a prevailing sense that the system favored more privileged schools, those that enrolled fewer low-income students, special education students, or LEP students. Alluding to a UPS initiative aimed at improving student attendance, a Rocky Mountain teacher characterized this related policy as unrealistic:

We set a goal for next year to have 90 percent attendance for students. But I did an analysis in my ninth grade classes and to have that happen I’d need to get the kids who never come to school to come. I had a half dozen students who missed 18-or-more classes in one semester [of 45 days]. I don’t see how we will reach that goal.

As the previous discussion revealed, there was some legitimate basis for this teacher’s skepticism. If the present accountability system were enacted in 1998, 96.9 percent of the financial rewards would have gone to more affluent suburban schools that enroll almost all white students.

As for the power of sanctions, those implementing accountability reforms seem to assume that once the deficient performance of a school’s students is identified, either as a source of professional insight or public embarrassment, faculty will work to remedy the situation. Yet such policies may also demoralize faculty (Calvert, et al., 2000) and encourage capable teachers, at least those capable enough to find a job elsewhere, to leave a school rather than endure the frustration and humiliation associated with this public stigma. Commenting on the effects state accountability efforts and related reforms at RMHS had on him, a respected faculty member explained his reasons for leaving RMHS for a school that enrolled a higher-achieving student population: “I went through a spring of unbelievable frustration with all the reform-related work. . . . I just couldn’t be at Rocky Mountain and be this frustrated and angry and upset. It’s just too much. . . . I just couldn’t fight the good fight one more year.” Another teacher offered a perhaps more depressing reaction. Rather than transferring, she considered leaving public education: “I’ll return [to RMHS] next year and see whether I’ll stay with this career. It just demands so much of you. There is time for nothing else in my life if I do all I’m supposed to

do.”

Expressing considerable frustration, a third faculty member offered a general indictment of SSAP:

Teachers are leaving, so we've got a lot of new teachers this year. There's a lot to do on all of our plates and much of it has nothing to do with Rocky Mountain High. We have SSAP, the governor, and the media all criticizing us. I'm sick of being treated like nothing. Everyone in this building is trying but I'm feeling increasingly more beleaguered. People [outside of RMHS] have no clue what we do on a daily basis. I'm not going to take it any more. We have not been a part of [the State's accountability reform] at all. When have the State Board [of Education] members been in a school or taught in a public school classroom? Now our whole livelihood is based on one test and you know how we'll do on that test.

Moreover, the logic of high-stakes accountability ignores resistant faculty with tenure, as they can do largely as they please, since it is often not cost-effective for school districts to remove them from their positions. Thus, low-performing schools may become magnets for inept and/or inexperienced teachers. Although schools will eventually be judged in part by an “improvement index,” by publicizing SSAP scores schools doing poorly may be so stigmatized that, rather than enhancing student achievement, failing schools will become even more socioeconomically segregated and educational opportunity for low-income students will be further undermined (Howe & Eisenhart, 2000). For instance, what parent with adequate resources won't avoid sending her/his child to an unsatisfactory school, even if the school has ostensibly improved? What capable student will choose to attend such a school? And which teachers, besides those young and/or desperate for work, will teach there? All of these factors can impact educational opportunity.

Are there readily apparent ways to improve achievement in schools that enroll sizable percentages of low-income, non-native-English-speaking students?

For William Bennett (1992), Secretary of Education in the Bush Administration, the answer to this question was clear: “Educational reform is not . . . a matter of great complexity but one of will” (p. 71). While fortitude is likely a factor in enacting reform, substantial research documents pervasive resistance to change in many schools as well as the related inability of schools serving high numbers of low-income students and LEP students to effectively meet the needs of these populations (Fine, 1991; Lipman, 1998; Sarason, 1990; Stanton-Salazar, 2001), a trend perhaps most evident in the enduring achievement gap between whites and students of color in the U.S. (Council of the Great City Schools, 2001). Further, scholars continue to debate the relative merits of such reforms as core curriculum (Hirsch, 1988; Tchudi, 1988), bilingual education (Crawford, 1999), and full-inclusion special education models, to note a few

prominent areas of dispute.

These philosophical divisions are often exacerbated in schools, such as RMHS, that serve AP students, college-bound students, LEP students, vocational students, and special education students. As Fred Newmann and his colleagues (1997) found, “[T]he key to effective coordination and organization of [a school's human, technical, and financial] resources is shared commitment and collaboration among staff to achieve a clear purpose for student learning” (p. 47). Yet given these areas of professional dispute as well as the varied expectations held by U.S. society for our schools, creating a “shared commitment and collaboration” among faculty who may legitimately see their work in very different ways represents a real challenge. School reform is not easy, in part because it involves changing beliefs as well as practices (Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Sarason, 1996).

How much do faculty control student performance on standardized exams?

Speaking to this matter, Whitford and Jones (2000) observed, “By making teachers, not students, accountable for student test results, teachers are assumed to be fully in control of their students' learning” (p. 17). In the case of Rocky Mountain High there is an ironic twist to this assumption. Although the State accountability system assumes teachers and administrators can be motivated through punishments and rewards, there are no sanctions for students. The impact of this policy can be gleaned in part by realizing that eleven percent of those scheduled to take the SSAP at RMHS did not take the exam and will consequently receive unsatisfactory grades. It therefore makes no difference what teachers did with these students. The school's overall rating will be hurt by their absence.

In a related vein, considerable research documents the tendency of certain students, especially urban students of color, to resist efforts aimed at getting them to embrace work for which they see no practical value or which they view as oppressive, dismissive of their history, or ultimately disempowering (Fordham, 1996; McDermott, 1987; Solomon, 1992). Rocky Mountain High students, for instance, regularly admitted to putting little effort into district- and state-mandated exams. Moreover, some Mexican American students make extended visits to Mexico to maintain contacts with family and friends, a development that interrupts their education and which classroom teachers can do little but accept. If they are gone during SSAP, they receive a grade of unsatisfactory. Faculty can do little to address these concerns, but within the State testing system, they are held responsible for their students' actions.

Do improved scores on standardized exams reflect improved learning?

When school systems first implement high-stakes assessments they can often point to gains in student achievement to tout the value of their efforts. Yet in some

cases teachers simply “teach to the test” and set aside considerable time for exam preparation (Calvert, et al., 2000; Caulkins, et al., 1998; Whitford & Jones, 2000). There is often a coincident narrowing of curriculum as well as teachers focus on those subjects that will be tested and ignore those that won’t (Kannapel, 2000; Resnick & Resnick, 1992). As Robert Linn (2000) argued: “Both common sense and a great deal of hard evidence indicate that focused teaching to the test encouraged by accountability use of results produces inflated notions of achievement. . .” (p. 7).

At RMHS, when the school could not fit test preparation in with all its other commitments, the school altered one of the more affective-oriented elements of its program, shifting the focus of an advisory program initially geared toward promoting improved student-teacher relations to focus more on test preparation. Yet it may be that attending to affective matters can enhance SSAP performance. For example, Rocky Mountain teamed all ninth grade students and teachers in 2000-01, one goal behind this strategy being to promote greater student engagement with their education by giving them a sense that teachers care about their performance. No students or faculty were teamed in the tenth grade. When SSAP was administered, 94 percent of the ninth grade students took the exam (403 of 431), and most ninth grade teachers said they had encouraged their students to take the exams seriously. In the tenth grade, only 82 percent of the students took the exam (216 of 264). It seems quite likely that ninth grade scores will exceed those in tenth grade simply because students may have felt a greater connection to their school community.

Policy Implications

Since the inception of SSAP, the State commissioner of education and governor have repeatedly portrayed this initiative as a means to address the achievement gap between white students and students of color. They have also said poverty is no excuse for student underachievement. Even so, I believe the SSAP program could widen the achievement gap and intensify conditions of concentrated poverty at certain schools, thereby exacerbating existing inequities. I therefore share a concern voiced by George Madaus (1993), that “by casting the debate over how to address the problems in our schools in terms of a testing solution we divert attention from systemic problems related to delivery systems such as instructional delivery, quality of textbooks, length of the school day and year, teacher training and working conditions, and gross inequalities in in-school and extra-school resources” (p. 23). With these concerns in mind, the following proposals offer a way to modify the SSAP program and promote more equitable and beneficial outcomes. In doing so I emphasize that addressing the impact of concentrated poverty will require serious reform. High-stakes assessment alone is no panacea. Nonetheless, the following proposals focus on high-stakes testing and what can be done to improve this feature of systemic reform.

Provide high-poverty schools with more resources

Since high-poverty schools generally face greater challenges than schools serving more affluent student populations, they should receive additional resources to help off-set the impact of their more challenging population. As presently structured, most school funding formulas, because they are based largely on property taxes, do precisely the opposite. Those schools serving the most capable students receive the most funding. However, rather than simply throwing money at this problem, these funds should be directed toward policies that have proven effective, such as creating smaller school structures (Cotton, 1996; Lee, et al., 1995; Raywid, 1995), lowering class size, and making time for teachers to work collaboratively (Newmann, et al., 1997; Sarason, 1996; Wilson & Daviss, 1994). Further, the impact of this additional funding should be regularly monitored, assessed, and evaluated to ensure schools use these funds appropriately and to identify practices that work best in these schools.

Include students in the reform process

In too many U.S. schools students receive inauthentic, unengaging, and mediocre educations. Learning is commonly a passive experience of little importance or perceived relevance and most students have little power or responsibility for shaping their education. Too often, schools are anonymous, demeaning institutions in which students are easily lost or lose themselves (McQuillan, 1998; Powell, et al., 1985; Sizer, 1984). The degree to which students are excluded from defining or even understanding their educational experience became poignantly clear while a colleague and I did a guest presentation in a RMHS history class in the fall of 1997, the first year UPS returned to neighborhood schools. The class included roughly one-third white, one-third Latino, and one-third African American students. The topic was integration in UPS schools. In talking with students it was clear the majority had little idea why UPS had returned to a policy of neighborhood schools, let alone why students had been bussed in the first place. At best, a few students alluded to “improving race relations.” Most admitted, “I don’t know.”

The creation of SSAP was similar: Students had no voice in deciding whether a testing program should be adopted, creating the test, or assessing its effectiveness. The impact on RMHS students has been mainly confusion and alienation. Many don’t fully understand why this is a concern. Others see the effort as irrelevant. Yet Rocky Mountain students are precisely those likely to challenge the status quo, having little trust in their schools and few enduring relationships with teachers (Fine, 1991; Solomon, 1992).

Of what value is an assessment that students aren’t committed to? If the State wants to gauge achievement through standardized testing, student buy-in is critical, otherwise you create a distorted view of student achievement.

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Footnotes

¹In fact, U. S. public schools are now more segregated than they were when our federal courts first supported school integration (Orfield, et al., 1996; Orfield, et al., 1997).

²For specific figures for these categories, see McQuillan & Englert, forthcoming.

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⁴While these data are based on race/ethnicity, the relationship between race/ethnicity and poverty in public schools is exceptionally strong. The correlation between the percent of African American and Latino enrollments and the percentage of students receiving free lunches is .72, meaning racially segregated schools are likely to be segregated by poverty as well (Orfield, et al., 1997).

⁵For a more detailed discussion of changes that might create more equitable and humane learning environments, see McQuillan, 1997.