

Fall 2007

In This Issue

- Test, Assess, and Retest
- A Different Approach to Accountability
- Featured Article
- Did you know...?
- Featured Quote
- Tech Lesson of the Week
- Useful Links
- Educational Humor

Featured Article

["Why are Some Schools Helping More Students Reach Higher Standards than Other Schools?"](#)

Authors: Mike Hudson and Jean Rutherford

Did you know...?

Statistics are based on Education Week's 50 State Report Card about school districts grading systems for standards and accountability.

- Each state's grade for "standards and accountability" is based on several elements.
- 15 percent of the grade is based on whether or not the state adopted a set of standards for accountability.
- 25 percent of the grade is based on whether or not those standards are clear and specific.
- 2 percent of the grade is based on whether or not the state participates in the National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- 28 percent of the grade is based on assessments.

Test, Assess, and Retest:

Do Assessments Shed Light on Achievement Problems and How to Fix Them?



The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a continued assessment and a national representation of what U.S. students know and what they can do in various subject areas. The question is, do teacher and student assessments shed light on achievement problems and how to fix them? Rick Stiggins, founder of the Educational Testing Service's Assessment

Training Institute, in Portland, Oregon, reflects on what he feels are the most problematic assessment myths.

Myth 1: The path to school improvement is paved with standardized tests. We have developed large scale testing programs in America to compare schools across the nation since the 1960s, but that doesn't mean that the information reaches the decision makers who determine the effectiveness of schools—the students. There is not reference to day-to-day classroom assessments for students and teachers, which represents 99.9 percent of the assessments in a student's school life.

Myth 2: School and community leaders know how to use assessments to improve schools. "Over the decades, very few educational leaders have been trained to understand what standardized tests measure, how they relate to the local curriculum, what the scores mean, how to use them, or, indeed, whether better instruction can influence scores," said Stiggins.

Myth 3: Teachers are trained to assess productively. Teachers could spend a quarter of their time assessing students. If it is not done accurately or the results used effectively, it becomes a waste of time. A majority of teachers have not been given the proper training and resources to assess productively.

Myth 4: Adult decisions drive school effectiveness. Yes, it is true that adults are the main decision makers in school districts—but student influence over learning success

- 30 percent of the grade is based on accountability.

Reference: Education Week's Annual Quality Counts Report—50 State Report Card on Education.

Featured Quote

"Education is the key to unlocking the golden door to freedom."

George Washington Carver

Tech Lesson of the Week:

[Podcasting and the News:](#) Students listen to a news podcast and use a graphic organizer to record what they learn.

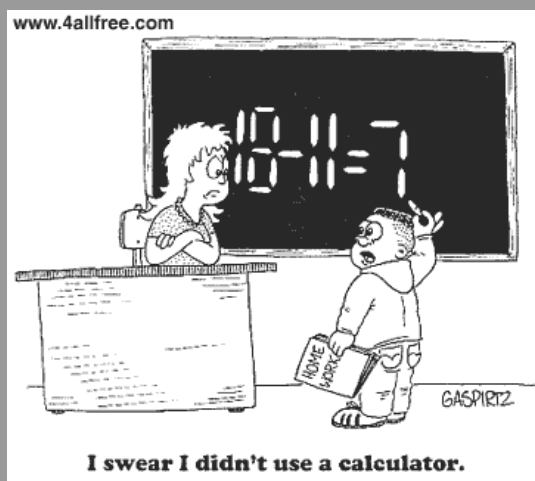
Useful Links

[Inform • Inspire • Improve](#)
National Center for Educational Accountability

[Making the High School Diploma Count](#)
Achieve, Inc. helps states raise academic standards and achievements.

[The National Library of Education](#)
The world's largest federally funded library devoted solely to education.

[Educational Research Newsletter](#)
Stay informed with all the latest research news through easy to read articles published monthly.



Cartoon by Oliver Gaspritz.

is far greater than that of an adult. There is not one reference to students anywhere in our assessment history as being instructional decision makers. Students ultimately decide whether or not learning assessments encourage their learning, or dishearten their efforts.

Myth 5: Grades and test scores maximize student motivation and learning. Some educators think that by giving students unsatisfactory grades they will work harder. But, this is only true for students who felt in control of their success. The end result could become a fear of failing—an intimidation that minimizes learning potential. It is important for school districts to develop an assessment for learning that will have a positive impact on achievement.

"As we look into the future, we must balance annual, interim or benchmark, and classroom assessments. We must build a long-missing foundation of assessment literacy at all levels of the system, so that we know how to assess accurately and use results productively," concludes Stiggins.

Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. has experience conducting surveys for school districts. Through surveys we can provide information that can help school districts implement better assessment procedures. When used as a benchmark, surveys can offer objective evaluations on how effective assessments have been in accomplishing their goals.

Reference: Stiggins, Rick. "Five Assessment Myths and Their Consequences." Education Week. October (2007).

Connecting with the Community:

The Importance of Market Research



Education is ongoing. There will always be new innovative practices to learn, technology to keep up with, and new standards developed. It can be challenging for educational leaders to stay up-to-date with all the newest trends and stay informed with what the parents and the community are thinking. Market research, focus groups, surveys, and strategic planning can help school districts understand the expectations the parents and the community have, and how to better serve those needs.

Market research can help educational leaders to strengthen communication strategies and develop goals in an ever-changing educational environment. Parents and the community are an important part of the equation—it is important that educational leaders understand their needs.

Telephone surveys are a statistically reliable way to determine what the attitudes of the parents and the

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community are, and what issues are important. In an article titled, "Market Research in Public Education," by Michael Gross helps reiterate the importance of conducting surveys in an educational institution. "Quantitative surveys permit educational leaders to see the distribution of public support on critical issues and determine, in a meaningful way, how effective their efforts are at swaying public opinion. Quantitative surveys provide concrete means for measuring progress (or lack of it)," said Gross.

Educational research often includes focus groups.

- Focus groups can discover ways that parents and the community think and speak about education.
- They allow researchers to ask questions to find out why people think the way they do about particular issues facing the district, how they are perceived in the community, and what people want to see change.
- Focus groups are a very credible source for public opinion when conducted accurately.

To stay in tune with what the parents and community needs are; market research should be done periodically. Educational leaders can use the knowledge they acquire from market research to identify areas they need to improve and set a benchmark for goals set in the future. Knowledge is a powerful resource for improving public perceptions, understanding issues that face school districts, and developing key communication messages.



Market research can be time consuming for organizations. School districts often will hire outside parties to help them gather research, conduct focus groups and surveys, and develop a direction for strategic planning. Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. provides information and services, which will allow school district's to plan and make informed decisions based on benchmarking data about the

performance, preferences, and priorities of the parents and the community.

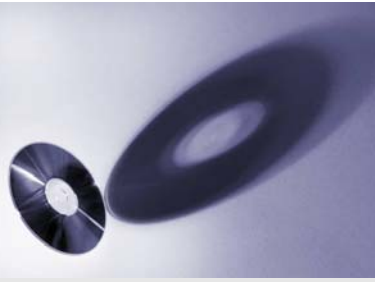
Reference: Gross, Michael A. "Market Research in Public Education." School Administrator. March 2004.

We want your feedback!

Send us a quick e-mail with comments or questions about the e-newsletter.

E-mail: Michelle Sears at msears@perspec.com

Did you receive the Educational CD-ROM?



We have developed a resource for school districts that outlines the services Perspectives Consulting Group, Inc. offers. If you are interested in receiving the CD-ROM, please e-mail Michelle at msears@perspec.com and we will be happy to send it to you and anyone else in your

district who might be interested.

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