

Position 1: Standardized assessments can be used to compare students at the local, state, and national level and lead to improved learning for students.	
What are some facts that support this position?	What are some facts that counter this position?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having set standards puts all teachers and students on the same page. It is a goal that everyone should reach and it informs a teacher where they should be in their curriculum.” (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 16) • Measuring what and how well students learn is an important building block in the process of strengthening our nation’s schools. (American Psychological Association, 2001) • Tests when used properly are among the most sound and objective ways to measure students performance. (American Psychological Association, 2001) • Without tests, low-performing students and schools could remain invisible and therefore not get the extra resources or remedial help that they need. (American Psychological Association, 2001) • Implementing high-stakes test as part of an effort to strengthen accountability for schools, teachers, and students. Since January 2002, (NCLB) Act has influenced state and local education agencies to develop accountability plans with high-stakes tests being included in the plan. (Braun, 2004) • Most promising aspect of testing is that teachers have been able to use these results to improve their instruction. (Wideman, 2002) - Increase efficiency in school’s performance to benefit in “environment of school choice (e.g., school districts with open enrollment), information about school performance can help parent-student school shoppers to make a better-informed selection” (Phelps, 2002) - Test are absolutely essential for the future of American education. (Mehrens, 1998) • Assessments play a pivotal role in standards-led reform, by: communicating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments create a competition between schools and provide an unfair assessment of both students and teachers. • Tests have been used to compare teachers more than compare students (Jones & Egly, 2004) • Lack of a better accountability scheme - Used in place of “a clear set of appropriate and objective criteria, enabling both students and outsiders to know what counts and what is essential” (p. 42 Wiggins) • Testing is an extremely valuable part of educational assessment, but it is only a part of the formula for quality learning.(American Psychological Association, 2001) • A potential problem with the current increased emphasis on testing is not necessarily the test, per se, but the instances when tests have unintended and potentially negative consequences for individual students, groups of students, or the education system itself. (American Psychological Association, 2001) • Linn (2000) and Mehrens (1998)- It is doubtful that high-stakes testing will have a generally salutary effect on the quality of student learning. (Braun, 2004) • Greatest weakness is that testing only samples a restricted range of student knowledge and skills. (Volante, 2005) • “Accountability has become synonymous with standardized testing in many Western countries.” (Volante, 2005) • Test-driven educational system creates unhealthy competition between schools. This competition has led to inappropriate preparation strategies. (Volante, 2005) • Give students and schools one chance to show success - these snapshots of success “have unintended and potentially negative

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<p>goals, providing targets, and shaping the performance of educators and students. (Mehrens, 1998)</p>	<p>consequences for individual students, groups of students, or the educational system more broadly” (American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single test can only provide a “snapshot” of student achievement and may not accurately reflect an entire year’s worth of student progress and achievement. (American Psychological Association, 2001) • Classifying a student based on his or her performance at one point is analogous to a doctor diagnosing a patient with high blood pressure based on one reading. (Volante, 2005)
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<p>Position 2: Teachers can use standardized assessment results to focus instruction on mathematical standards and improve student learning.</p>	
<p>What are some facts that support this position?</p>	<p>What are some facts that counter this position?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High stakes testing has been the motivation that some teachers needed to change the way in which they were teaching (Jones & Egly, 2004) • Positive aspects of this more focused instruction is intentional and a good part of testing. (Pedulla, 2003) • Testing has helped school systems align curriculum between grade levels, has helped educators identify curricular weaknesses, and has made educators more conscious of educational outcomes (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 3) • Used to determine the effectiveness of a educational programs - informs teachers, schools and school systems of their curricular and instructional strengths and weaknesses. (Phelps, 2002) • Lead to better alignment of curriculum with instruction - identified by teachers and administrators (Phelps, 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are not using backwards design, but are forced to teach to the test due to the high stakes (Jones & Egly, 2004) • Teachers have organized their instruction around illustrative items that were the same as, or look like, actual test items, which can cause test score pollution by giving some students an unfair advantage over those who did not have this type of instruction (Jones & Egly, 2004) • Schools are not improving academics, they are improving test taking strategies. This will affect student understanding/learning negatively.(Jones & Egly, 2004) • There are some real potential problems ...Basically the test does drive the curriculum. (Pedulla et al., 2003) • Teachers are pressured to change their instructional approaches based on a single measure. (Volante, 2005) • Teachers have dropped material in their curriculum that is not tested so that they could focus on the areas that were tested (Jones & Egly, 2004) • The curriculum is rushed because of need to

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	<p>get through everything that is on the test to be ready for the assessment at the end of the school year (Jones & Egly, 2004)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Assessment alters the teaching rhythm in the classroom negatively.” (Remesal, 2010) • As stakes increase, the curriculum will narrow to resemble the content on the assessment (Pedulla et al., 2003) • Preparing for tests by coaching or gearing instruction toward the test can yield scores that do not agree with one another. (Pedulla et al., 2003) • Seven in ten teachers in the four high-stakes categories reported that their state-mandated testing program has required them to deliver instruction that runs counter to their own ideas of good practice. (Pedulla et al., 2003)
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Position 3: Standardized assessments can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of students.	
What are some facts that support this position?	What are some facts that counter this position?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests should not only provide teachers with individual feedback on students’ knowledge, but also hold schools and school districts accountable on student performances (Kulm, 2013, p. 4) • “Teachers have also reported that they learn more about their students, their own teaching, and other teachers’ methods from high-stakes external tests.” (Phelps, 2002) • 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. (APA, 2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...assessment should be a daily follow up, continuously observing what a child does. I can’t teach without follow up. So, I always must depart from where they are, so, I am always evaluating, otherwise I couldn’t go on.” (Remesal, 2010) • Huge educational gaps are formed because we are teaching the curriculum necessary for the assessment rather than what a student should know for the real world. (Jones & Egly, 2004) • Standardized testing, as well as most classroom tests, are designed to be low level and content heavy and intended to be quickly scored which may not correctly identify strengths and weaknesses (Jones & Egly, 2004) • A test that has been validated only for diagnosing strengths and weakness of individual students should not be used to evaluate the educational quality of a school, but it is happening now! (APA, 2001)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching a narrow curriculum that is often associated with higher standardized test targets is likely to alienate a large portion of students whose academic strengths lie outside of commonly tested subjects (Volante, 2005) • The focus in teaching has shifted from teaching to meet the individual needs of each child to forcing each child to perform for the test. (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 13) • “A substantial change in assessment is needed in order to meet the diverse educational needs of the students.” (Remesal, 2010) • ”I do not believe the test is always scored so that it shows student growth and achievement.” (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 13) • An overwhelming proportion of teachers, approximately 95% in each type of testing program, maintained that the state test does not accurately measure what students who are acquiring English as a second language (ESL) know and can do. (Pedulla et al., 2003)
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Position 4: Standardized assessment results are an objective way for the media, politicians and school districts to compare schools and teachers.	
What are some facts that support this position?	What are some facts that counter this position?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having set standards puts all teachers and students on the same page. It is a goal that everyone should reach and it informs a teacher where they should be in their curriculum.” (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 16) • Tests when used properly are among the most sound and objective ways to measure students performance. (APA: 2001) • Testing is a means to free the teacher from the role of “judge” and better help the student improve on “external” assessment challenges (to both the teacher and students). Conflict in role of teacher being the “coach” and the “judge” and since 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of student test scores frustrates teachers because they feel it does not accurately represent what students know. This causes pressure for teachers to have students perform better and many teachers end up leaving the profession altogether. (Jones & Egly, 2004) • 20.9% of respondents said it was unfair to compare students and listed reasons such as students come from different backgrounds and that some students do not perform well on standardized tests. (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 11) • One school is pitted against another because

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<p>teachers would rather be the “coach” they promote students to the next level even when they are not ready. Results in feelings of defeat, give up and drop out. (Phelps, 2002)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phelps on whether or not standardized testing is the only trustworthy measure of student achievement - can we afford to not use them when “External standardized tests may be the only reliable source of information on education performance not controlled by groups with an incentive to corrupt or suppress it.” (Phelps, 2002) 	<p>of the grading of schools from high-stakes testing (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roughly 85% of teachers across stakes levels felt that score differences from year to year reflect changes in the characteristics of students rather than in school effectiveness. (Pedulla et al., 2003) • External factors such as the media's reporting of test results may also influence teachers' opinions of the value of the state test. In general, teachers viewed test-related media coverage negatively (see Table 13). For example, roughly 90% at each stakes level disagreed that "the media coverage of state-mandated test results accurately depicts the quality of education in my state." Almost 9 out of 10 teachers, across all types of testing programs indicated that media coverage of state-mandated testing issues has been unfair to teachers. (Pedulla et al., 2003, p. 53)
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<p>Position 5: Assessments have driven teachers to spend a great amount of time to prepare for the test while decreasing student motivation and teacher morale.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time has been taken away from instruction because teachers are spending more time preparing students for the high-stakes test. Students are learning test taking strategies when they need to be learning the actual curriculum. (Jones & Egly, 2004) • Some states publish “technical assistance papers” on their website stating that teachers should be given a certain amount of practice so that they will be familiar with the format of the test questions and the materials that will be used with the statewide assessment (Jones & Egly, 2004, p. 17) • Test preparation time often comes at the expense of non-tested disciplines. (Volante, 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers who participate in assessment development, administration and scoring “Overwhelmingly, they assert that the experience helps them as instructors. After struggling, along with other teachers and testing experts, to design and score assessments fairly, they understand better how their students might misunderstand concepts and how they might better explain the concepts. Moreover, they can much more efficiently align their own instructional program with state standards after undergoing a deep immersion into the state standards.” (Phelps, 2002) • Tests are now used for retention and graduation decisions, which should deter this type of behavior (Jones & Egly, 2004, p.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most standardized testing regimes do not provide teachers with professional development related to the testing process or precise feedback on the performance of their students which had led to the lack of utilization of test results. (Volante, 2005)• Unrealistic targets and standards do little to mobilize and motivate teachers. These high targets undermine the credibility of the target setting exercise, decreasing rather than increasing teachers' efforts to improve. (Volante, 2005)• Assessments have become so commonplace that students do not make their best attempt when taking the state assessment. (Kulm, 2013)• When students and teachers are "graded" on the test scores, the pass rate is unmotivating. Many students drop out when they are in high school because they cannot pass the state test (when perhaps they are improving from previous years). (Jones & Egly, 2004)• Not only is teacher morale and efficacy affected negatively by testing, students also show an increase in stress and anxiety. (Pedulla et al., 2003)• Students who feel like they have to pass a test in order to succeed may end up dropping out of high school instead. (Pedulla et al., 2003)• Teachers believe that standardized tests cause stress, frustration, burnout, fatigue, physical illness, misbehavior and fighting and psychological distress. (Mehrens, 1998)• Some students develop feeling of inadequacy due to test results and as a result are less motivated. (Mehrens, 1998)	<p>13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students' motivation to perform well and pay attention more - results in accumulation of more knowledge• "Motivational effects are manifest when rewards or punishments are provided (or imposed upon) students, teachers, administrators, schools, districts, programs, service providers, politicians, or even parents" (Phelps, 2002)• "Students have also reported in some surveys feelings of genuine achievement and accomplishment when they pass important, meaningful tests." (Phelps, 2002)• "Assessment is a motivational element, in order to increase student effort." (Remesal, 2010)• With appropriate incentives external or self-directed, assessments can motivate students to learn better, teachers to teach better and schools to be more educationally effective. (Linn, 1997)
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Summary and Recommendation:

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Proponents for high-stakes standardized testing believe that assessments are among the most sound and objective way to measure students' performance. They also believe that testing is absolutely essential for the future of American education and by testing, information about student performance and the educational system will be provided for interested parties.

Opponents of high-stakes standardized testing believe that assessments are neither fair nor objective and that testing promotes a narrowed curriculum; therefore undermining America's ability to produce innovators and critical thinkers. They also believe that standardized testing disregards individual student progress by solely focusing on student pass rates. However, Volante (2005) advises that when *designed* and *administered effectively*, standardized tests can offer important benefits to students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

- For students, these measures can provide an external assessment of their knowledge and skills and this may motivate them to work harder in school.
- For teachers, standardized test scores can be used to help identify area of strength and weakness within the curriculum which prompts change.
- For administrators and policy makers, the test results can provide evidence to judge the quality of their school programs and policies which in turn will help to determine areas of need.

In reviewing the information shared in the review of literature and public documents and in alignment with Volante's cautionary stance, in order to reap the benefits of standardized testing we must promote the following:

- Educate the media, politicians and the public on the testing process and the use of assessment results.
- Provided set standards which unify teachers and students on a measurable goal of the designed test.
- Provide the teachers important information on students' *academic growth* evident through testing.
- Provide for teachers and administrators professional development related to the testing process.
- Provide for teachers and administrators professional development on the effective utilization of tests results.
- Reduce students' stress brought on by test preparation and testing by promoting growth over pass/fail results.

Phelps (2002) offers the perspective,

“In order to fully appreciate the benefits of assessment, one must imagine a society without standardized testing. What would happen to grade inflation if there were no standardized test scores to which one could compare the grades? How much effort would students, teachers, and administrators make to improve achievement if there were no standardized tests with which to check their progress?”

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Once these steps identified above are in place the full effect of all the benefits mentioned by Volante (2005) will be recognized by students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

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