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Student attitudes and feelings about standardized tests and parent observations of behavior during testing : a survey of third grade students and their parents

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Candace Ann Iseminger for the Master of Science in Education: Curriculum and Instruction presented July 23, 1992.

Title: Student Attitudes and Feelings About Standardized Tests and Parent Observations of Behavior During Testing: A Survey of Third Grade Students and Their Parents.

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:



Amy M. Driscoll, Chair



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This study was a descriptive study of student attitudes toward standardized tests and parent observations of behaviors

during the testing process. A total of 87 third gradestudents and their parents were surveyed. The students were predominately white and middle class. The school settings consisted of parochial elementary schools.

The students were surveyed on how they felt about taking a standardized test and what they experienced during the testing process. The student survey consisted of 10 closed and 6 open ended questions. Parents were surveyed on their child's behavior during testing and what their child expressed at home about the test. The parent survey consisted of 7 open ended questions. The study sought descriptions of how students felt about taking a standardized test and explored whether the feelings are displayed at home.

From this study it can be concluded that students vary in their feelings about taking standardized tests. It can also be concluded that students' displayed home behavior was consistent with expressed feelings. A further conclusion is that the students' home behavior did not change during the testing process. It can also be concluded that many students and parents were not aware of the grading process of the test and the future use of the scores received.

Implications can be drawn for teachers that include adjusting the test schedule to fit the students' comfort/stress level, and explaining the purpose of the test and the testing process to both students and parents. It is also important for teachers to consider the common practice of

reporting test scores and the appropriate use of the test scores. Implications for parents include looking at ways of reducing stress through examining diet, exercise, and sleep patterns of their children, and the parent's availability for discussing the test. Implications can also be addressed to test publishers, which include revision of procedures and the time limitations placed on students, as well as reevaluating if the testing process is needed at all.

An area not examined in this study is how students' feelings about taking a standardized test change over a period of years. Future research could address how students' feel about a taking a standardized test with a span of several years between surveys.

STUDENT ATTITUDES AND FEELINGS ABOUT STANDARDIZED TESTS
AND PARENT OBSERVATIONS OF BEHAVIOR DURING TESTING:
A SURVEY OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS

by

CANDACE ANN ISEMINER

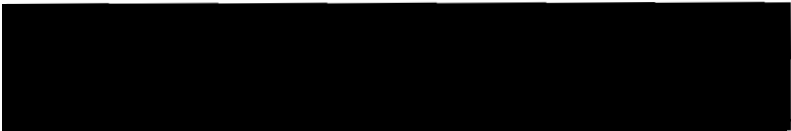
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
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Portland State University
1992

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Candace Ann Iseminger presented July 23, 1992.



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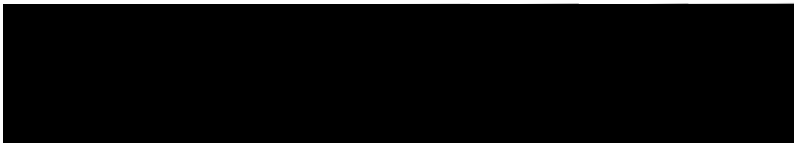


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose.....	1
Rationale.....	2
METHODOLOGY.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Sample.....	7
Context.....	8
Procedures.....	9
Limitations.....	10
Analysis.....	12
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	13
Introduction.....	13
Student Responses on Survey.....	13
Student Responses to Closed Questions	
Student Responses to Open-ended Questions	
Parent Responses on Survey.....	27
Comparison of Student and Parent Surveys.....	38
Comparison of Individual Student/Parent Responses	
Comparison of Student/Parent Responses Overall	
STUDY CONCLUSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS.....	45

STUDY IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION.....48

 Introduction.....48

 For Teacher Professionals.....48

 For Parents.....52

 For Test Publishers.....53

SUMMARY.....55

REFERENCES CITED.....57

APPENDIX.....59

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I	Student Responses to Survey Questions 1-10.....	18
II	Student Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 11.....	20
III	Student Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 12.....	21
IV	Student Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 13.....	23
V	Student Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 14.....	24
VI	Student Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 15.....	25
VII	Student Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 16.....	27
VIII	Parent Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 1.....	29
IX	Parent Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 2.....	30
X	Parent Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 3.....	31
XI	Parent Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 4.....	32

XII	Parent Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 5.....	34
XIII	Parent Responses Categorized by Themes for Question 6.....	35
XIV	Individual Student/Parent Responses Comparison	40
XV	Parent Responses to Changes in Behavior and Changes that Occurred.....	41

INTRODUCTION

The practice of assessing learning through standardized tests has a long and questionable tradition. This study responds to the significant question, "What effect does the testing process have on students." The description of this study, "Student Attitudes Toward Standardized Tests and Parent Observations of Behavior During Testing: A Survey of Third Grade Students and Their Parents," begins with the rationale for conducting the investigation. Following the introduction is the methodology which describes the actual study and procedures followed. The results are presented with attention to three categories of findings: the student survey responses, the parent survey responses, and a comparison of the student and parent responses. This comparison is to determine if the testing process affects home behavior. Subsequent to the results are study conclusions. The conclusions entail implications for teaching professionals, parents and test publishers. A summary concludes the report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis was to conduct a descriptive study of student attitudes toward standardized tests and of parent observations of student behaviors during testing. The study used a survey of student attitudes and self perceptions

related to taking a standardized test. The study also included a survey of parents for descriptions of their observations of student responses and reactions to taking a standardized test. From the data obtained, a comparison of student and parent responses was conducted.

RATIONALE

The intent of this study was to explore and examine students' feelings about taking a standardized test and to investigate how those feelings are displayed at home to determine if the testing process affects home behavior. There is a paucity of research literature describing how elementary students feel about standardized tests. There is even less literature documenting how their feelings influence home behavior. Much has been written on parents' and teachers' concerns about standardized tests and test usage in schools. Anastasi and Geisinger (1980) administered guided inventories to teachers and parents. Parent responses about how the test-taking experiences affected their own child ranged from "quite harmful," through "no effect," to "quite helpful." Parents were also questioned on what the school or teacher could have done to inform them better about their child's test performance. Three thematic categories appeared. Most parents recommended increased feedback from the schools to the parents about the test and test scores. Some asked for explanations about the purpose of the test and its

implications for the child, and some suggested that parents be given the test results without having to request them.

In the literature, parents have described the effect of the test-taking experience on their children. However, the students themselves have not been questioned. Hardy (1982) and Alley, Barnwell, Dickey, Kelley, Leifest, & Hartman (1982) have written on usage of standardized test scores in the school setting and parent's concern and interest in those test scores. Hardy addressed the parents' right to know how standardized tests are used in schools. He encouraged the parents to be concerned about the accuracy of test scores and the placement of students strictly by test scores without the consideration of other available data. Hardy also stated that parents feel tests are important in assessing the quality of education their child is receiving. Finally, Hardy stressed that tests are important to parents because the tests help parents assess their children's abilities and levels of achievement. The work of Alley et al., is a reflection of six parents and their concerns about testing. These parents reflected that they needed information about what types of tests are given to their children, understanding of what the tests measure, and ideas about how tests can be used constructively. Although Alley did not describe the purpose for administering these tests, the parents expressed a concern that their children were judged on their test scores, not their overall ability and performance. They also addressed

the need to be careful with the tests and recommended that they be used appropriately. Parent and teacher concerns are addressed in literature, yet student concerns are seldom addressed, and have not been examined in the context of parent responses.

Within the research literature on student attitudes toward standardized tests are significant studies with implications for this thesis. Karmos and Karmos (1980) conducted a study using a series of attitudinal questions attached to the achievement test for students in grades six through nine. Their intent was to measure students' attitudes toward the achievement test and how those attitudes affected performance on the test. Their findings revealed that while students felt achievement tests were important, student attitudes had very little relationship to test performance.

Another study, the largest survey of students and their attitudes toward standardized tests, was conducted by Beck and Stetz (1980). In their survey, students in grades K-12 and their teachers were asked their opinions about taking the test with the use of a rating. The responses were then compared to the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) predictions of what those opinions would be. Results indicated that 72% of the students had one of two degrees of positive attitudes toward standardized tests. Study conclusions indicated student feelings about taking a test,

but did not examine whether behavior at home reflected documented student feelings.

Fleege (1990) studied the stress level of Kindergarten students during the process of taking a standardized test and how it affected exhibited behavior. The objective was to discover if there were observable changes in children's behavior during the testing process as compared with their behavior before and after testing. The study showed that more stress-related behaviors were evident during the testing period than before or after. Interviews with the children after the test was over indicated that the children felt uncomfortable and pressured to perform during the administration of the test. The study also showed that, in schools where the test received more emphasis from the principal, the students exhibited more stress-related behavior. Fleege observed school behavior and how testing affected that behavior. Home behavior as reported by parents was studied but not examined in relationship to how students expressed feelings toward the test. This study proposed to extend the information gained by Fleege by conducting such an investigation.

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between student descriptions of their feelings toward standardized tests and parent descriptions of home behaviors during testing. This study explored whether students' descriptions of feelings are reflected in home behavior. This

research provided information to teachers on student feelings toward standardized tests. This information will be useful to the decision-making process involved in test selection, test usage, and in the assessment practice in general. Based on this information, teachers will be able to adjust the administration of tests to best suit students' needs, that is, by adjusting how many tests are administered each day. Teachers will also receive information on behaviors displayed at home. This information will allow teachers to discern what kind of guidance to provide parents and students.

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The students did not appear to have any aversion to completing the survey. The teachers were also very cooperative and helpful in allowing the researcher into their classrooms. They were a valuable asset in guaranteeing the return of the parent surveys. This methodological description will include information about the sample, procedures, and analysis.

SAMPLE

The population for this study consisted of students from 8 third grade classrooms located in 7 schools. The researcher previously taught in this school district. The sample was predominately white and middle class. Approximately 87 students and their parents were surveyed. The geographic area of the survey was approximately a one hundred mile radius in Eastern Washington and a small portion of Northeastern Oregon. The school settings were limited to parochial elementary schools.

CONTEXT

This was the first year that the majority of the students in this school district have taken a standardized test. The test administered was the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The test included 14 different timed sections. The time limit for each section varied from 25 to 45 minutes with a break of a few minutes following each section. At the beginning of each section the students completed one or two warm-up questions. The school district allowed 4 school days for the test to be administered. The tests were usually administered for 2 to 3 hours a day. The teachers had the option of how the testing was distributed throughout the day, but did not have the option of abstaining from the testing.

The purpose of administering the test was to track student growth. The results were used to determine student progress, and to plan the academic structure for each student. The teachers used the scores to diagnose and prescribe for individual students.

The parents were given the scores to see their child's strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas of growth. This information was given at a parent/teacher conference after the testing had been administered, scored, and returned to the school.

Each teacher decided what was told to the students in his/her classroom about the purpose and use of the test. Generally the teachers told the students that the test would

measure areas in which he/she has strengths or weaknesses. The students could also be told that the scores appear in the cumulative folders for a permanent record to show the student's growth over a period of years.

PROCEDURES

The survey was administered to the students by the investigator with the classroom teacher present. The students completed the survey in the presence of the investigator. The parent survey was sent home the same day students filled out their surveys. A consent form explaining the survey was sent prior to the survey (see appendix). The help of the teachers was enlisted to guarantee return of the parent surveys.

The student survey consisted of 16 questions, created by the researcher, designed to reveal the student's feelings. The survey is located in the appendix. The majority of the questions were answered on a 3-point rating scale of agreement using a range of happy to sad smiley faces. A happy face indicated agreement, a straight smile indicated a neutral response, and a sad face designated disagreement. Each of the 3 faces were also accompanied by a written word describing the choice. The use of a fixed response with a rating scale allowed for easy scoring (Lyons, 1970). Previous studies of lower elementary school classrooms have demonstrated that students of this age are able to respond to a rating scale (Peterson, Driscoll, & Stevens, 1990; Driscoll, Peterson,

Crow, & Larsen, 1985). The remaining questions were open-ended, short answer responses. These questions allowed the students to reflect and describe their individual feelings.

The parent survey (see appendix) consisted of 7 open-ended, short-answer questions, created by the researcher. The questions were designed to correspond with the student questions. The parents described their child's home behavior and attitudes during testing such as, no change was noticed, or my child was more tired than usual.

The use of open-ended questions allowed students and parents to state precisely how they felt (Lyons, 1970) about the testing process. The questions also provided an opportunity for respondents to include sentiments or information not anticipated by the researcher.

Student and parent surveys were assigned numbers for reference use. The number on the student survey matched the number on his/her parent survey. This procedure facilitated comparison of the student's view of his/her reactions to a standardized test with his/her parent's observations while maintaining anonymity.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to consider when interpreting the results of data obtained from the surveys. For the majority of the students, this was their first time to take a standardized test. The school system, which was a

private, parochial system, does not administer standardized tests until the third grade. Some students were in the process of taking a standardized test for the second time during the school year as part of a pilot program for a new standardized test.

It must also be considered that several months had passed between the actual test taking and the time of the survey. The students were shown one of the testing booklets to remind them about the test.

Using one grade level was also a limitation. This restricted the researcher from getting a cross-section of students.

It is important to keep in mind that self-reported data can be restricting. Data could have been affected by the students disposition.

As was mentioned earlier, the students were predominantly white and middle class. Having the same socioeconomic background could result in similar scores.

The geographic area also was a limitation to the study. The area consisted of approximately a one hundred mile radius, located in rural, Eastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon.

A final consideration is that the teachers of the students were educated primarily in colleges with similar teaching philosophies. The teachers thus exhibit similar teaching philosophies and styles in the classrooms.

ANALYSIS

The analysis of data proceeded in a two-step sequence. The first procedure was an analysis of student surveys. Responses to the scale questions were computed by percentages according to the rating on each question. A descriptive summary accompanied the analysis. The open-ended questions were summarized in thematic categories. The thematic categories were identified through the process of re-readings and the use of colored highlight markers to categorize the predominate themes. A tally of the responses was made and the percentage was then calculated from that tally. This process of evaluation and categorization is consistent with the analysis recommended for qualitative research as described by Bogdan and Bilken (1982). The second procedure was an analysis of parent surveys. The data from parent surveys were also summarized in thematic categories. Following the analysis of parent surveys, comparisons of the categories obtained from parent and student surveys were conducted. This indicated how parent and student surveys compared or contrasted; that is, whether there was agreement or a difference between how students feel about taking tests and how they behaved at home during test taking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The students' responses toward the standardized test are presented first. This interpretation includes two parts. First are presented descriptive narratives of student responses to the questions on the rating scale (see Table I). Second, thematic categorization of student responses to the open-ended questions are presented. The analysis of the parents' surveys succeeds the student response analysis. The parent analysis is done by thematic categorization. Lastly, student and parent surveys are compared and contrasted using the thematic categories for references. This comparison is done in two sections: first, comparison of individual student/parent responses, and second, an overall comparison of student/parent responses.

STUDENT RESPONSES ON SURVEY

Student Responses to Closed Questions

Question 1: "I enjoyed taking the test." The percentage of students that enjoyed the test was slightly more than the percentage that did not enjoy the test. It is notable that more students enjoyed the test than those who did not. When students in grades K-4 were asked by Beck and Stetz (1980) how

they felt toward a standardized test 72% responded with one of two degrees of agreement and 19% with some degree of disagreement. The feeling of enjoyment expressed by some of the students may be attributed to the fact that it was their first experience taking a standardized test, and therefore was a novelty experience. Other possibilities include the change of pace and a break in regular school work as the source of enjoyment, or because of the length of time between the test and survey the students did not accurately remember how they felt.

Question 2: "I got scared when I took the test." It is notable that 51% did not feel scared when they took the test. It would not be uncommon for students to be scared when taking a standardized test for the first time; however because so many students were not scared, several factors could be the reason. The students' responses could be attributed to the fact that teachers did an adequate job of calming fears prior to the testing process, that students were not willing to express their feelings, or that students may have forgotten how they felt because of the length of time between the test and the survey. There is also the possibility that the students did not know the use of the test. The responses on question number two do not contradict question one, but support what was expressed by the students who enjoyed the test on question one.

Question 3: "I could think clearly when I took the test." The majority of the students agreed that they were able to think clearly when they took the test. The students' responses on this question continue to support question two in that students were not scared during the testing process. Why the students could think clearly could be attributed to the conditions under which the test was administered. Teachers may have attempted to keep distractions to a minimum, such as lighting, ventilation, and visitors. Not being scared could also have contributed to being able to think clearly.

Question 4: "I tried to stay home so I wouldn't have to take the test." The students responded that they could think clearly and were not scared. This is further indication of their comfort level with the testing process as expressed in the previous questions. A strong majority of 79% responded that they did not try to stay home. This can be ascribed to several factors such as their family upbringing, the positive way the test was presented, or the type of school environment of which the students were a part.

Question 5: "I understood how to take the test." A continued strong majority felt they understood how to take the test. This supports the findings in the previous questions that the students were comfortable with the testing experience. This may be attributed to the fact that the teacher explained the testing process and had the students complete sample questions prior to the actual testing. This

test knowledge could alleviate some test anxiety as most of the students responded in question two that they did not feel scared and in question three that they could think clearly.

Question 6: "At the end of each test I felt good about myself." This result was very encouraging to the researcher. The student ratings indicated good self-concepts. The responses indicated that the test did not lower the self esteem of 68% of the students. The student responses did indicate that 11% of the students did not feel good about themselves at the end of the test. The lowered self-concept could be attributed to the fact that these students may not have been happy with their performance on the test, or they may have felt too pressured by the timed factor of the test. There is also the possibility that the time lapse between test administration and this study contributed to the responses to this question. The students may have forgotten how they felt.

Question 7: "The test results will help me to do better in school." The students' responses indicated that overall they felt that the test would help them do better in school. These responses could be attributed to a situation in which students are accustomed to regular teacher tests which help them see areas in need of improvement and show ways to improve. Students may have felt that the standardized test would do the same.

Question 8: "I talked to my parents about how I felt about the test." Student responses indicated that a majority

of students did not talk to their parents about the test. The students' responses indicated that they viewed the testing experience as positive. The students may have felt that the testing experience was not a concern and therefore did not feel a need to talk to their parents.

Question 9: "My parents talked to me about the test." A slightly larger number of parents (44%) did not talk to their children about the test at home, but the percentages of 44% who did not and 39% who did are not significantly different. This may be attributed to the idea that many parents today are too busy to talk to their children, but it was encouraging to the researcher that some parents (39%) did take the time to talk to their children. Approximately the same number of students talked to their parents as parents talked to students.

Question 10: "Taking the test didn't upset me in any way." The student responses continue to support the ratings given on questions 1 and 2. The student reactions indicated that they were comfortable enough with the testing process that it did not upset them. These responses also support the student answers to questions 3 and 6. The student responses indicated that taking the test did not affect their thinking ability or how they felt about themselves.

TABLE I
STUDENT RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS 1-10

Question	Agree No. (%)	No Feelings No. (%)	Disagree No. (%)	No Answer No. (%)	Total No. (%)
1: I enjoyed taking the test.	35(40)	24(29)	27(31)		87(100)
2: I got scared when I took the test.	17(20)	24(28)	45(51)	1(1)	87(100)
3: I could think clearly when I took the test.	48(55)	23(27)	16(18)		87(100)
4: I tried to stay home so I wouldn't have to take the test.	13(15)	5(6)	69(79)		87(100)
5: I understood how to take the test.	67(77)	14(16)	6(7)		87(100)
6: At the end of each test I felt good about myself.	59(68)	18(21)	10(11)		87(100)
7: The test results will help me to do better in school.	55(63)	22(26)	9(10)	1(1)	87(100)
8: I talked to my parents about how I felt about the test.	29(33)	20(23)	38(44)		87(100)
9: My parents talked to me about the test.	34(39)	15(17)	38(44)		87(100)
10: Taking the test didn't upset me in any way.	44(50)	25(29)	18(21)		87(100)

Student Responses to Open-ended Questions

Thematic categories were identified through the process of re-readings and the use of colored highlight markers to categorize the predominate themes. A tally of the responses was made and the percentage was then calculated from that tally. This process of evaluation and categorization is consistent with the analysis recommended for qualitative

research as described by Bogdan and Bilken (1982). The calculations for this section are based on the 87 student surveys, that is, 100% equals 87 surveys.

Question 11: Four themes appeared in student responses to the question, "Did you enjoy the test? Why or why not?" The first theme was enjoyment (see Table II). Some of the expressions of this quality were, "Fun," "Fun and tested my knowledge," and "Fun and easy." This quality of fun was expressed by 18% of the students. The second theme was that of easy. Expressions of this quality included, "Easy," "Easy and fun," and "All work had to do and was easy." The quality of easy was expressed by 10% of the students. Difficult appears as the next quality, with expressions of both ends of a range of difficulty. This was expressed by 7% of the students. The expressions were, "Hard," and "Boring and hard." The final quality was that of lack of interest. Student responses included, "Boring," "Boring to fill in dots," and "Boring, but better than other work." This acknowledgment of boredom was expressed by 7% of the students.

The percentages of the above open-ended question showed some variance from the percentages on question 1. In response to this question 57% indicated that they enjoyed the test and 32% that they did not. The percentages on question one were 40% enjoyed, and 31% did not enjoy the test. Students who had no feelings on question 1, when given a chance to express themselves, found they did either enjoy or not enjoy the test

TABLE II
STUDENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 11

Fun	18%
Easy	10%
Yes(no theme)	29%
Total: Yes	57%
Boring	7%
Hard	7%
No(no theme)	18%
Total: No	32%
Sort of/OK	9%
No answer	2%
TOTAL	100%

to some degree. The short answers ranged from hating tests to saying the tests were fun and easy. The majority of students who enjoyed the test remarked that they thought the test was fun. Others felt it was easy and enjoyed the challenge. The majority of those who did not enjoy the test felt that it was hard or boring.

Question 12: Three themes appeared in the student responses to the question, "What did you learn from the test?" The first theme described a lack of learning(see Table III). Of the students who responded, 36% wrote that they learned "Nothing," "Not much," and "Not much, already knew all of it." The second and third themes referred to curriculum areas, Math and Language Arts, and had the same number of responses. Some of the responses for the quality of Math were, "Math," and "Big Math." Expressions for Language Arts included, "To read

better," and "Punctuation." Reference to Math and Language Arts was expressed by 8% of the students.

TABLE III
STUDENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 12

Nothing	36%
Something	31%
(no theme)	
Don't remember	10%
Math	8%
Language Arts	8%
No answer	7%
<hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

Among the students responding to this question, 47% felt that they had learned something. These responses ranged from ambiguous responses of "Some stuff" to responses of, "Doing great in school," "That I can do anything," and "Tests can sometimes be fun." Students also felt that they learned something in a specific subject area. Student responses included 10% who did not remember if they learned anything. Six students or 7% did not put a response. This could indicate that these students felt they did not learn anything and no response was necessary. The responses indicated that students had positive feelings toward the test as a learning experience. This supports the responses given on previous questions.

Question 13: Four themes appeared in student responses to the questions, "Did you talk to your parents about the test? What did you talk about?" The student responses indicated

that 52% did not talk to their parents and 39% did (see Table IV). The first theme of the students who did talk to their parents dealt with grades or scores from the test. Some of the expressions of this quality were, "I wondered if I would have to do it over if I did bad," "How good I did," and "How good I did and what I needed to work on." This quality of being graded was expressed by 10% of the students. The second theme was that of describing the tests as fun/easy. The expressions included, "How easy it was," and "Had fun taking the test." The quality of fun/easy was expressed by 7% of the students. The third and fourth qualities had the same number of student responses. These were the qualities of length of test and discussions of how they felt. The quality of length included an expression of, "How long would the test last." The quality of how they felt included expressions of "That I was nervous," and "How I felt." These qualities of length and how they felt were expressed by 5% of the students.

The student responses indicated that 39% of the students talked to their parents. This figure varies slightly from the figures on question 8. On question 8, 33% said they talked to their parents. This variation may indicate that when students are given the opportunity to express themselves in an open-ended question, they may remember more or will express themselves more thoroughly. The responses for this question range greatly from talking about feelings during the test to asking parents how long the test would last. Many of the

TABLE IV
STUDENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 13

Total: No	52%
Graded	10%
Fun/easy	7%
Long	5%
Feelings	5%
Yes(no theme)	12%
Total: Yes	39%
Don't remember	8%
No answer	1%
<hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

responses dealt with the students' fears of not doing well or having to re-take the test. These responses indicated that, when given the opportunity, students will express their fears and concerns.

Question 14: Two themes appeared in student responses to the question, "Did you talk to your parents about your feelings?" The first theme was good/happy (see Table V). Some of the expressions of this quality were, "Happy," "Good," and "Great." This quality of happiness was expressed by 11% of the students who talked to their parents about their feelings. The second theme was fear. Expressions of this quality included, "Afraid," "Worried," and "Scared." The quality of fear was expressed by 5% of the students who talked to their parents.

The student responses indicated that 54% did not talk to their parents about their feelings. The replies indicated

TABLE V
STUDENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 14

Total: No	54%
Good/happy	11%
Scared	5%
Yes(no theme)	25%
Total: Yes	41%
Don't remember	4%
No answer	1%
<hr style="border-top: 3px double #000;"/>	
TOTAL	100%

that 41% did talk to their parents about their feelings, and 4% could not remember. The predominant negative feeling was fear. Joy was the dominant positive feeling. Students talked to their parents for different reasons. Some students expressed their feelings to their parents when their feelings were positive, some when their feelings were negative. These responses depend greatly on the parent/child relationship.

Question 15: Three themes appeared in the student responses to the question, "What do you think teachers do with the test?" The first was the theme of the teacher grades/corrects the test (see Table VI). Some of the responses under this theme were, "Grade them and give to parents," "Grade them and see what I have problems with," and "Grade them and put grade in book." This quality of grading was expressed by 38% of the students. The second theme was send the test off somewhere. Expressions of this quality included, "Send them to the company for them to check it,"

"Give them to the people that made them," and "Send them to people, run them through a machine and see if the dots are in the right place." The quality of sending the test off was expressed by 9% of the students. The third theme was computer grading. Some of the expressions of this quality were, "Put it in a machine that corrects it," and "Send them to a special computer." This quality of computer grading was expressed by 9% of the students.

TABLE VI
STUDENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 15

Teacher grades	38%
Don't know	21%
No theme	16%
Sends off	9%
Computer grades	9%
No answer	7%
<hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

Most students were not aware that the test was not graded by the teacher. The majority of the students viewed the test like a regular teacher-made test. This may be attributed to the students' lack of contact with standardized tests. They viewed the test like any other test. Students assumed a grade would be given and they could see how they did. No other uses of their scores were realized. The student responses also indicated that 21% did not know what the teacher did with the test.

Question 16: Three themes appeared in the student responses to the question, "Please explain in a short paragraph how you felt about taking the test." The first theme was happy/good (see Table VII). Some of the expressions of this quality were, "Good and confident," "Very fine, it was OK," and "Happy because I was going to learn more." This quality of happiness/goodness was expressed by 25% of the students. The second theme was being scared or nervous. Some of the expressions of this quality included, "Scared, thought would get a bad grade," "Scared at first because wanted to get it right, when first saw test I wished never had seen it," and "Scared at first, but then got used to it." This quality of being scared/nervous was expressed by 12% of the students. The third theme was fun. Expressions of this quality included, "Fun and easy," "Liked very much was easy," and "Fun, learned a lot, hope I get to do it again." The quality of fun was expressed by 10% of the students.

The students' responses indicated that 43% of the students had positive feelings toward the test. Student responses indicated that 31% reported negative feelings. The positive feelings revolved around feeling good and having fun. The negative feelings centered on being nervous. Students continued to have mixed feelings about the test. These figures show that some students did not enjoy the test. This

TABLE VII
STUDENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 16

Good/happy	25%	
Fun	10%	
Pos.(no theme)	8%	
Total: Pos.	43%	
Scared/nervous	12%	
Neg.(no theme)	19%	
Total: Neg.	31%	
Mixed feelings	18%	
No answer	6%	
No feelings	1%	
Don't remember	1%	
<hr style="border-top: 3px double #000;"/>		
TOTAL	100%	

dislike did not seem to impede their thinking ability or their concept of self-worth as the responses from questions 3 and 6 point to.

PARENT RESPONSES ON SURVEY

Questions on the parent survey were developed so that they were parallel to the questions on the student survey. The questions were designed to probe for the same feelings and related behaviors that the student survey measured. The parent survey was distributed on the same day the students filled out their survey. Because of lost surveys, the parent survey was redistributed by some teachers. The percentage of parent surveys that were returned to the researcher was 55%. Thematic categories continued to be used for the analysis of the parent surveys. The percentages listed in this section

will be based on the 48 returned parent surveys, that is, 100% equals the 48 returned surveys.

Question 1: Three themes appeared in the parent responses to the question, "Did your child express any positive or negative feelings about taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills?" The first was the theme of nervousness (see Table VIII). Some expressions of this quality were, "Anxiety, didn't want to do poorly," "Apprehension about getting good grades," and "Nervousness." This quality of nervousness was expressed by 10% of the parents. The second theme was bored/fatigue. Expressions of this quality included, "Tired of filling out tests all day," "Boring, took too much time," and "Boring, took too long." The quality of boredom/fatigue was expressed by 8% of the parents. The third theme was tedious/frustration. Some expressions of this quality were, "Discouraged, frustrated," "Long, frustrated, not allowed to use the restroom," and "Frustration." This quality of tediousness/frustration was expressed by 8% of the parents.

The majority of parents responded that their children expressed some type of feelings about the standardized test to them. Of the feelings expressed the most (42%) were negative. The most prevalent feeling was that of being nervous and anxious. Children expressed that the tests took too long and were tiring. The student responses seemed to indicate that most children expressed their negative feelings at home as opposed to positive feelings. This may be attributed to the

TABLE VIII
PARENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 1

Total: No	38%
Don't remember	8%
Nervous	10%
Bored	8%
Frustrated	8%
Neg.(no theme)	16%
Total: Neg.	42%
Pos.(no theme)	6%
Total: Pos.	6%
Mixed feelings	4%
No feelings	2%
Total: Yes	54%
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TOTAL	100%

fact that they were comfortable expressing their negative feelings at home, or that parents primarily remembered the negative expressions over the positive expressions.

Question 2: Only one theme appeared in the parent's responses to the question, "Did your child's behavior change in any way during the testing process?" This theme was fatigue (see Table IX). Some expressions of this quality were, "Tired and cranky," and "Needed more sleep at night." This quality of fatigue was expressed by 19% of the parents.

The majority of parent responses (61%) indicated that their child's behavior did not change in any way during the testing process. The parents who stated that their child's behavior changed felt that their child was more tired than usual. This matches with the parent responses that the tests

TABLE IX
PARENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 2

No	61%
Tired	19%
Yes(no theme)	10%
Total: Yes	29%
Don't remember	6%
No answer	4%
<hr style="border-top: 3px double #000;"/>	
TOTAL	100%

were long and tiring as conveyed in question one.

Question 3: Three themes appeared in the parent responses to the questions, "Did you or your child bring up the subject of the test and talk about it? If yes, who brought the subject up? What did you talk about?" The first theme was how the student was doing (see Table X). Some of the expressions of this quality were, "Checked on how was doing each day," and "Asked how child was holding up, assured wouldn't last forever," and asked "How are you doing." This quality of inquiry of how the student was doing was expressed by 35% of the parents. The second and third themes were expressed by the same number of parents. These themes were expressed by the student to the parent and reflected the student's feelings. The themes were boring/tedious and the difficulty of filling in the circles on the answer sheet. Expressions of these two qualities included, "Hard to fill in the dots," "Boring and interferes with recess," and "Tedious

and boring." These two qualities were expressed by 6% of the parents.

TABLE X
PARENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 3

How doing	35%
Bored	6%
Marking dots	6%
Yes(no theme)	37%
Total: Yes	84%
Total: No	8%
Don't remember	8%
<hr style="border-top: 3px double #000;"/>	
TOTAL	100%

The parent responses indicated that 84% of them talked to their child about the test. The majority of parents talked to their child to get a feel for how the tests were going and how the student felt they were doing. The majority of the parents (55%) responded that their child brought up the subject of the test. This is contradictory to the student responses on question 8 of the student survey where 33% reported that they talked to their parents. This may be attributed to the fact that the parents remembered better than the students, or that parents feel pressured to say that they indeed do talk to their children.

Question 4: Three themes were evident in the parent responses to the questions, "Did your child talk to you about their feelings toward the test? If yes, what feelings did they talk about?" The first theme was fatigue (see Table XI).

Examples of responses that included this theme were, "Became more tired as the week progressed," "Stressed and wearied by the testing," and "Anxiousness and tiredness." This quality of fatigue was expressed by 13% of the parents who responded that their child talked about his/her feelings with them. The second theme was the length of the test. Some of the expressions of this quality were, "Test was long," "Took too long, want to do other things," and "Took too much time." Length of test was expressed by 8% of the parents who responded that their child talked with them. The third theme was boredom. Expression of this quality included, "Boring and interfered with recess," and "Bored, worried, didn't do well." This quality of boredom was expressed by 6% of the parents.

TABLE XI

PARENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 4

Tired	13%
Long	8%
Boredom	6%
Yes (no theme)	27%
Total: Yes	54%
Total: No	34%
Don't remember	6%
No answer	6%
<hr/> <hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

This question was very similar to question number one on the parent survey. A majority of parents said that their child talked about their feelings toward the test. The main feeling that was discussed continued to be related to fatigue

and how hard the test was. The parents also continued to relate that the students felt the test-taking process was too long. The fatigue and boredom of the students could be attributed to the length of the test. The boredom could also be attributed to the repetitiveness of the testing process.

Question 5: Three themes became evident when the parents were asked the question, "If possible please tell what kind of things your child said about the test." The first theme was the length of the test (see Table XII). Some of the expressions parents responded with included, "Took too much time," "Sitting for so long," and "Long, scary, fun to do something different." This quality of length was expressed by 21% of the parents. The second theme was the difficulty of the test. Expressions included, "Too hard," "Hard," and "English section was difficult." The quality of difficulty/hardness was expressed by 17% of the parents. The third apparent quality was not enough time to finish. Some of the expressions of this quality included, "Disappointed didn't get as far as other students," "Didn't give enough time to finish," and "Regretted not finished when time was up." The quality of not enough time was expressed by 15% of the parents.

This question was designed to elicit specific responses from parents. Because parents answered questions 1 and 4 with detailed answers, their answers for question 5 repeated themes previously described. The parents continued to describe their

TABLE XII
 PARENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
 FOR QUESTION 5

Long	21%
Hard	17%
Short time	15%
No theme	23%
No answer	24%
<hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

children as tired and feeling that the test was too long. Many also stated that their child was upset because he/she was not able to finish the test and the child stated that he/she would do badly because of not finishing. How the students felt about not finishing could be attributed to the fact that the students had not had a previous experience with a standardized test. As shown on question 15 of the student surveys, students viewed the test as a normal teacher-made test. On a teacher-made test if one does not finish, the grade is affected. The students may not have been aware that this does not hold true for standardized tests.

Question 6: Four themes appeared in parent responses to the question "What do you think the teacher does with the test?" The first theme was, use the test to help the students in some way (see Table XIII). Some of the expressions of this quality were, "Gets an idea what each student needs help with," "Uses to see strong and weak points of student and curriculum," and "Studies to determine each child's strengths and weaknesses." Using the test to assist students in some

way was expressed by 27% of the parents. The second theme was that the parents didn't know what the teacher did with the test. Expressions of this quality included, "Not sure," and "Don't know." This quality of not knowing was expressed by 21% of the parents. The third theme was that the teacher sent the test off somewhere. This quality included expressions such as, "Turns it in to the testing organization for scoring," "Sends it in to someone/somewhere," and "Mails it to be graded and compared nationally." This quality of sending the test off was expressed by 19% of the parents. The fourth theme was that the test would be filed in the student's file. Some expressions of this quality were, "Files them away and shows them to parents at conferences," "Saves them and puts scores in file," and "Keeps in student file for future use." The quality of keeping the scores on file was expressed by 15% of the parents.

TABLE XIII

PARENT RESPONSES CATEGORIZED BY THEMES
FOR QUESTION 6

Help student	27%
Don't know	21%
Send off	19%
File	15%
Evaluation	10%
No theme	4%
No answer	4%
<hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

Several parent responses indicated that they believe teachers would use the results from the test to help the

students in weak areas. Other parents stated the test was sent off somewhere. Many parents expressed that the scores would be filed and referred to at parent/teacher conferences.

A number did not know what was done with the tests. Many parents expressed that the tests were used in some sort of evaluation process. What varied was what the parents thought was being evaluated, that is, students, teacher, class, or school.

Question 7: Several parents responded to the question, "Please describe any other reactions your child had toward taking the test that you haven't already discussed. Please also note anything else you feel is important about your child's reactions to taking the test." Parent responses were not categorized for this question. The responses display diversity and potential for recommendations so they are included as written.

Fifteen parents wrote additional responses. Several are included to provide specificity to the descriptive data of this study. Those parents who felt that the tests were in some way a negative experience for their child recommended that less focus before and during the testing process might reduce the stress on students. Others stated that, after the results were known, their child's self-esteem was hindered because of the scores they received. The drop in student self-esteem as expressed by the parents may be attributed to the secrecy at the time of the scores, the emphasis placed by

the teacher on the scores, or the response of the parents to the scores.

While many of the students were not upset by the test, it is important to consider those that were. The parents who wrote additional responses were obviously concerned enough to take the time to write about their concerns. In respect, attention needs to be paid to those concerns. It is important to not ignore them.

He was stressed the morning of the test. He expressed concern and a sense of dread. Slightly anxious about the final outcome of the test and what it all meant.

She seems to believe she is "bad" in math now, since she scored lower in that section on the test. She never believed that about herself before.

My children feel very competitive with their percentage scores between each other, and in the case of my 5th grader between classmates.

Basically he just gave up; it was invalid. He can't function with such regimentation. He gets A's and B's with some reduction in his work load.

I believe tests like this at this age are irrelevant and encourage frustration and make the child feel stupid irregardless of how they do.

I don't think she had any long-term effects. Possibly it could be because she is a good student and knows she is doing well in school.

My child was sick for most of the tests. Everyday she was sick would say, 'Well, at least I don't have to take the tests.' Upon returning she was told she would make up the tests in the library. Everyday she would tell me she hadn't had it yet, when would they start? Finally, I got involved about a week later, and was told it had been decided that since she had missed more than one, she would not make them up. I feel that this showed poor communication and lack of understanding of how stressful tests are on an 8 year old.

Terrible reaction when the test was over. Taking wasn't so hard, but the results were so unfair for a child that is a good student to suddenly see that they are extremely low in areas that normally they excel in. These tests are unfair; they are comparing every one against everyone, not evaluating a child for what they can do. Just for what some graph says they should do. They don't do much for the morale of a child. Each teacher has to explain before they show you test results, that these tests are not accurate and your child is much better than these show. What good is that? These go on their permanent record. They are used to show a child's learning abilities and knowledge of work, but these are not accurate.

Another factor to consider that a parent mentioned is the effect peer pressure exerts on students regarding attitudes toward tests. Some students may have been influenced in their attitudes and feelings prior to the test by peers or siblings.

COMPARISON OF STUDENT AND PARENT SURVEYS

This comparison contains two sections. First a comparison of individual student and parent responses is presented. Several of the questions were designed to probe for a relationship between students' feelings and observed behavior at home. This section looks at the answers given on related questions to see how they compare or contrast. Because not all student surveys could be matched with the actual parent survey for that student due to lost and replaced parent surveys, survey pairs were available for 51% of the sample. From this 51%, a random sampling was selected for analysis. The random sampling consisted of 29 pairs of student/parent surveys. This is 33% of the total surveys

administered and 66% of the total matched pairs of student/parent surveys. All figures for this section will be based on the 29 pairs examined, that is, 100% equals the 29 pairs.

Following the individual comparison is an overall comparison of student and parent responses. Although the intent of this study was to probe the relationship between individual student responses and reported home behavior, the overall sample was also studied for the same relationship.

Comparison of Individual Student/Parent Responses

Of the student/parent responses examined, 79% of the pairs showed agreement between student and parent responses, 18% showed a lack of agreement between student and parent responses, and 3% did not provide enough information for a comparison (see Table XIV). Two themes appeared in the pairs that showed agreement. The first theme was that of enjoying the test. Student expressions included, "It made me feel smart," "It was fun," and "It was fun and easy." Parent expressions were, "When I asked him how his testing was going he would say it was easy," "No change in behavior, thought the test was easy and interesting," and "No change, taking the test didn't seem to bother him." The quality of enjoying the test in some aspect was expressed by 41% of the pairs. The second theme was that of dislike for the test. The student expressions for this quality included, "I didn't enjoy the test because I was worried that I would do bad," "I didn't

enjoy them because they were hard," and "It made me nervous." Parent expressions of home behavior/responses included, "Negative in the sense she wanted to know why she couldn't know her scores," "Discouraged, frustrated," and "She felt test was hard and long." Some form of dislike for the test was expressed by 31% of the students/parents.

TABLE XIV

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT/PARENT RESPONSES COMPARISON

Enjoy	41%	
Dislike	31%	
No theme	7%	
Total in agreement		79%
Enjoy vs. dislike	18%	
Total in disagreement		18%
Not enough information	3%	
<hr/> <hr/>		
TOTAL		100%

Of the pairs analyzed, 18% showed a lack of agreement between the student and parent responses. Within these pairs with disagreement, a theme emerged in which the students expressed some form of enjoyment of the test, while the parents expressed that the students displayed some form of negative response to the test. Student expressions included, "It was easy," "It was fun," and "Enjoyed the test and it will help me in later years." Parent responses included, "Didn't like," "Made him nervous, was long," and "Student felt was long, hard and was nervous." This theme of positive feedback

from students and negative feedback from parents is consistent among all the surveys with disagreement.

Another area analyzed on the parent surveys was if student behavior changed at home during the testing process (see Table XV). Students were not asked if they thought their own behavior changed during the testing process. Of the surveys examined 76% of the parents stated that their child's behavior did not change, and 24% expressed that their child's behavior did change. Of those parents indicating that they did observe a change of behavior, the majority of changes referred to stress caused by the testing experience. The stress related behaviors included frustration, headaches, fatigue, crankiness, and nervousness. These parent observations are consistent with the observations made by Fleege (1990) of behaviors exhibited during the testing period.

TABLE XV

PARENT RESPONSES TO CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR
AND CHANGES THAT OCCURRED

No change	76%
Stress related	21%
No theme	3%
Total: Changes	24%
<hr/> <hr/>	
TOTAL	100%

The sampling of pairs described consisted of one-third of the total surveys. The sample was selected randomly. Within the sampling, 79% of the student and parent responses were

consistent. The students' stated feelings and their behavior/expressions at home were consistent as indicated by the responses to the survey. Of the feelings stated, a majority of students expressed positive feelings toward the testing experience. The predominant positive feeling was happiness/enjoyment. The negative feelings indicated that the test was long and boring. The majority of parents (76%) did not see a change in student behavior. Of those parents that indicated a change of behavior, most of the changes referred to stress caused by the testing experience.

Comparison of Student/Parent Responses Overall

The questions that were designed to establish a relationship between student and parent surveys focused on how the students felt toward the test. In this section the total number of parent surveys returned are compared to the total number of student surveys. When the students were asked about their feelings related to the test, there was a relatively even mixture of positive and negative answers. Positive feelings made up 43% of the students' responses and negative feelings, 31% of the students' responses (see student question 16). The positive feelings described feeling happy and good, and indicated that the test was fun. Negative feelings described feeling nervous, frustrated, and bored. Questions 11, 14, and 16 on the student survey probed the student feelings.

Parent responses indicated that students expressed primarily negative feelings at home. Of the parents that responded, 42% indicated that their child expressed negative feelings at home. Of the feelings expressed, 6% were positive (see parent question 1). The negative feelings expressed included, "Nervousness," "Boredom," "Tiredness," and "Frustration." The negative feelings that students expressed to their parents are consistent with the negative feelings students stated on the surveys. These responses included, "Boring," "Scared", and "Nervous." The negative feelings students expressed toward the test on the survey were consistent with their negative feelings expressed at home as stated by their parents.

It is interesting to note that more parents stated that there was communication between parent and child about the test than student responses to the same question indicated. Thirty-three percent of the students indicated on the rating scale that they talked to their parents about the test, while 55% (see parent question 3) of the parents expressed that the students brought up the subject of the test in conversations at home. When students were asked in an open-ended question how many talked to their parents, 39% indicated that they talked to their parents (see student question 13).

Both parents and students were asked what teachers did with the test. Parents are more aware than students that the teachers send the test to be graded by an outside

organization. Students view the test like teacher-made tests, assuming that it will be graded and recorded like other tests they have taken. Parents felt that teachers would use the tests to help students with their weak areas. Students did not indicate knowledge of any future use of the test scores. There were a number of parents (21%) and students (21%) that did not know what the teachers did with the tests (see parent question 6 and student question 15).

Overall, students had mixed feelings toward the standardized test, a few more students enjoyed the test than did not. On the parent survey, negative feelings of the students toward the test tended to be expressed by parents. This could be attributed to the fact that not all parents returned the survey. Another consideration could be that those parents who saw a negative reaction by their child were more concerned about returning the survey. Also to be taken into consideration is that students at the time of the test may have expressed negative feelings at home, but over time did not remember the negative feelings about the test, or students tend to express negative feelings at home more readily than positive feelings.

STUDY CONCLUSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

From this study it can be concluded that students vary in their feelings about taking standardized tests. The study focused primarily on student attitudes and feelings about taking a standardized test. The student responses indicated that students differ in their feelings about taking a standardized test. While some students enjoyed the test, others did not. Of the students surveyed, 57% indicated that they enjoyed the test, as opposed to those students (32%) who did not enjoy the test (see student question 11).

It can also be concluded that the displayed home behavior of students was consistent with expressed feelings. If the student did not enjoy the test, he/she tended to express that dislike at home. It was notable that students who did not enjoy the test tended to display those feelings at home more than those who did enjoy the test. The students who enjoyed the test appeared to be at a comfort level that did not lend itself to expression through "out of the ordinary" behaviors at home. Parents described observations of more negative feelings in their children than positive feelings.

A further conclusion is that the students' home behavior did not change during the testing process. The study showed that a majority of parents did not notice any significant change in behavior of the students at home. Most parents who

noticed a change in their child's behavior stated that their child tended to be more tired than usual or demonstrated a behavior brought on by stress.

Another facet of this study dealt with the administration and grading aspect of the testing process. It can be concluded that many students (21%) were not aware of the grading process of the test. Many did not know how the test was graded or the potential use of the scores. This lack of awareness was also true for the parents. A number of parents (21%) did not know what was done with the test after the students completed it. Many of the parents (27%) felt the test would be used to help the students in their areas of weakness.

Other observations can also be made from the study. The parents saw more changes in behavior than the students did in themselves. The students were mixed in their feelings about the test and the learning process it provided. Some felt they learned something, others did not. One of the most encouraging results is that the students' self esteem did not seem to be greatly affected by taking the test. Students indicated that they were not scared, could think clearly, and felt good about themselves at the end of each test. While many did not enjoy the test, the testing process did not lower the self-concept of most children, as indicated by their responses to the survey.

While this is not a representative cross-section of schools, it begins to show how students feel toward standardized tests and how those feelings are displayed and observed by parents. It would be appropriate to follow up this study with a large sample of public school students.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

Implications for teacher professionals, parents and test publishers can be drawn from this study. The following sections describe ways that teachers, parents, and test publishers may be able to make the testing process and education as a whole more meaningful for the students. Some of the implications may already be implemented in some classrooms and families; in that case, the implications can serve as a reference guide.

FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONALS

Teachers have long been aware that students do not like tests. What many educators may not realize is that some students may enjoy or feel positively about the tests or certain aspects of the testing process. In this study many students thought the test was fun and liked the challenge and change of pace. Although students stated that they enjoyed the test, they also described the process as long and tiring. Often, teachers are more concerned with completing the tests and with the level of student scores, than adjusting current practices to students' needs and reactions. Teachers and administrators need to consider revision of the testing

process. One possible change is the adjusting of a test schedule so that fewer tests are given each day. Rather than allowing one week for testing, two or three could be utilized. In relation to schedules, students mentioned that recesses were missed during the testing. Students value recesses and look forward to them. By missing recesses, the students' schedule was disrupted and more confusing. It might be beneficial for teachers to look at planning the tests around recess, or other regular routines, and adjust to the students' need of continuity and security.

There is a general learning principle that if students understand the objectives of what they are expected to do they will perform better on those tasks (Fisher, Filby, Marliave, Cahen, Dishaw, Moore, & Berliner, 1978). If students know why they are taking the tests they will be more apt to look positively at the experience as a learning one. The students need more understanding about the test and what it will show.

Some students were frustrated with the test and testing process. This frustration could be alleviated by explaining the complete testing process to the students. This explanation could include explaining the complete process at the beginning of the testing and reminding students of the process as testing takes place. During the explanation about the test it is a good idea to explain how the grading process works. Students indicated that they worried about not finishing sections of the test. By explaining the grading

process, some of the fear and stress of not finishing could be alleviated. It is important to thoroughly explain everything to the students.

The whole schooling experience needs to be looked at when administering a standardized test. This study has emphasized the enjoyment aspect of the testing process. This aspect can have an effect on the total schooling aspect of the student. A positive or negative experience during a standardized test could influence a student's attitude about learning and school in general.

Parents should also be made aware of the testing process. Often it is assumed that parents understand the testing process. This study demonstrated that 11% of the parents did not know the grading process of the test. If the complete process was never explained to parents, they may not be aware of it. Parents need to understand the need for the test and how it can affect their child's school experience. The parents need to know what the test results will be used for and why.

Another area that needs to be considered is communicating the appropriate purpose of the testing to the parents. There is much media attention placed on the scores, which is often in the form of ranking schools to determine which school is best or worst. It is important for teachers to communicate to the parents the appropriate use of test scores, some being to determine if the curriculum is meeting the students' needs and

to aid teachers in adjusting their teaching practices. This communication of the appropriate purpose to parents should be of prime concern if teachers are to reveal the true purpose of testing.

This study also raises questions about the common procedures for reporting test scores to parents and students. The scores can become a source of pressure on the parents or students to perform. The reporting of scores can also limit what parents see as the purpose of the test. The reporting of scores can narrow the focus of the parents' understanding of what testing is all about. The reporting of the test scores can also become a stress to the students. A student who felt he/she was a good student can suddenly be made to feel inferior. This was illustrated in the parents' written comments on question 7 of the parent survey.

Standardized tests will continue to be an area of controversy. Unless there is a great shift in the way society and education thinks, teachers will be administering standardized tests for years to come. Since teachers will not be able to do away with the testing process, what needs to be addressed is that process. We must listen to what students and parents are saying and adjust administration procedures to fit students' needs. By meeting students' needs we will begin to truly educate during the testing process.

FOR PARENTS

Parents are naturally concerned about their children and, during the testing process, it is a natural reaction for that concern to increase. Parents may not be aware of how stressful the test can be. Most parents know if their children are enjoying the test or not, by the student's feedback at home, but may not be aware of how much the test is affecting their children. During the testing process it might be beneficial for parents to pay extra attention to their child's nutrition. Nutritional food and regular, balanced meals will benefit the students and help reduce the stress level.

Parents may also want to monitor their child's exercise level during testing. Exercise is another way to reduce stress. Family walks in the afternoon or evening will allow families a time to talk about the day as well as reduce their stress level.

The most important recommendation would be for parents to talk to their children about the test. Children can become more comfortable with the testing process just by having an opportunity to express themselves in a supportive environment. We must allow children to express whatever feelings they may be experiencing. At times, the feelings may come out in anger or frustration. Just getting things out in the open can help alleviate some of the anxiety or stress children may be

feeling. Above all, we must show children that they are loved and cared for no matter what they are feeling.

FOR TEST PUBLISHERS

Students have expressed that they have difficulty filling in the little squares or circles. Teachers stress to students that they need to be careful not to go outside the circle or their answer may be computed wrongly. This concentration on filling in the circle "just right" takes away from the students' concentration on the test questions. It might do well for test makers to develop an easier marking system.

Students stated that not being able to finish the test was upsetting to them. Perhaps test makers need to re-evaluate the number of questions that students are expected to attempt to answer within the time limit, or make provision for flexibility in time limits. It is understood that the timing aspect is important for the standardization process, but perhaps some adjustments could be made.

In addition to considering format, style and the amount of testing, real revision needs to examine the type of knowledge the testing is looking at. The question whether or not the test is developmentally appropriate needs to be asked. Is the whole child taken into consideration during the development of the test? With the beginning of more appropriate procedures for evaluation, such as portfolios and teacher observation, the testing process itself needs to be

re-evaluated. Part of this re-evaluation needs to consider if the test are truly needed, or if they have become a habit or crutch for administrators.

This study showed that the testing process is stressful for some students. In today's high-paced society with the other stresses on students, the testing community may need to alleviate stress rather than contribute to it.

SUMMARY

This study was a descriptive study of student attitudes toward standardized tests and parent observations of behaviors during the testing process. A total of 87 third grade students and their parents were surveyed. The students were predominately white and middle class. The school settings consisted of parochial elementary schools.

The students were surveyed on how they felt about taking a standardized test and what they experienced during the testing process. The student survey consisted of 10 closed and 6 open-ended questions. Parents were surveyed on their child's behavior during testing and what their child expressed at home about the test. The parent survey consisted of 7 open-ended questions. The study sought descriptions of how students felt about taking a standardized test and explored whether the feelings are displayed at home.

From this study it can be concluded that students vary in their feelings about taking standardized tests. It can also be concluded that students' displayed home behavior was consistent with expressed feelings. A further conclusion is that the students' home behavior did not change during the testing process. It can also be concluded that many students and parents were not aware of the grading process of the test and the future use of the scores received.

Implications can be drawn for teachers that include adjusting the test schedule to fit the students' comfort/stress level, and explaining the purpose of the test and the testing process to both students and parents. It is also important for teachers to consider the common practice of reporting test scores and the appropriate use of the test scores. Implications for parents include looking at ways of reducing stress through examining diet, exercise, and sleep patterns of their children, and the parent's availability for discussing the test. Implications can also be addressed to test publishers, which include revision of procedures and the time limitations placed on students, as well as reevaluating if the testing process is needed at all.

An area not examined in this study is how students' feelings about taking a standardized test change over a period of years. Future research could address how students feel about a taking a standardized test with a span of several years between surveys.

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APPENDIX

PERMISSION SLIP AND SURVEYS

Dear Parents,

My name is Candace Iseminger and I am currently working on my Master's thesis in Early Childhood Education at Portland State University. My thesis is concerned with finding out how children feel about taking a standardized test and whether or not parents notice any differences in their child's behavior when he/she takes a standardized test.

This year your child took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. This is considered to be a standardized test. I would like to give your child a survey to find out what reactions he/she had to the test. I would also like to send a survey home to you to find out if you noticed any changes in your child's behavior during the testing process. Both surveys will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Please note that the information obtained from the survey will be anonymous and for my use only. Both your survey and your child's will be assigned a number for reference use. At no time will I know how a particular child or parent responded. The number on your survey will be the same as the number on your child's survey. This is so that I can determine if your child's view of his/her reactions to taking a standardized test is the same as what you observed.

Please sign the attached permission slip and return it to your child's teacher if you agree to your child taking part in the survey. If you have any questions regarding the survey please feel free to contact me. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Thank you,

Candace Iseminger
5816 Morningside Drive
Yakima, WA 98901
(509) 248-9396


_____ has my permission to take part in the survey evaluating his/her reaction to taking a standardized tests. I also agree to respond to a survey evaluating my child's reaction to the test.


Parent/Legal Guardian


Date































STUDENT SURVEY ON STANDARDIZED TESTS

Please put an X on the face that best describes your feelings.

Disagree.....

No feelings.....

Agree.....

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1. I enjoyed taking the test..... |  |  |  |
| 2. I got scared when I took the test..... |  |  |  |
| 3. I could think clearly when I took the test..... |  |  |  |
| 4. I tried to stay home so I wouldn't have to take the test.... |  |  |  |
| 5. I understood how to take the test..... |  |  |  |
| 6. At the end of each test I felt good about myself..... |  |  |  |
| 7. The test results will help me to do better in school..... |  |  |  |
| 8. I talked to my parents about how I felt about the test..... |  |  |  |
| 9. My parents talked to me about the test..... |  |  |  |
| 10. Taking the test didn't upset me in any way..... |  |  |  |

PARENTS SURVEY ON STANDARDIZED TESTS

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

1. Did your child express any positive or negative feelings about taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills? If yes, explain those feelings.

2. Did your child's behavior change in any way during the testing process? If yes, explain those changes.

3. Did you or your child bring up the subject of the test and talk about it? If yes, who brought the subject up? What did you talk about? Why?

4. Did your child talk to you about their feelings toward the test? If yes, what feelings did they talk about?

5. If possible please tell what kind of things your child said about the test.

6. What do you think the teacher does with the test?

7. Please describe any other reactions your child had toward taking the test that you haven't already discussed. Please also note anything else you feel is important about your child's reactions to taking the test.