

Position Statement on the Ethical Use of High-Stakes Tests in Educational Settings

The Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation (CREATE) encourages the ethical use of program, personnel, and student evaluations as articulated by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation.†

Furthermore, CREATE strongly supports the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & the National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999); and CREATE endorses the following statement related to the ethical use of high stakes tests in educational settings:*

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, created by the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education, present a number of principles that are designed to promote fairness in testing and avoid unintended consequences. They include:

Any decision about a student's continued education, such as retention, tracking, or graduation, should not be based on the results of a single test, but should include other relevant and valid information.

When test results substantially contribute to decisions made about student promotion or graduation, there should be evidence that the test addresses only the specific or generalized content and skills that students have had an opportunity to learn. For tests that will determine a student's eligibility for promotion to the next grade or for high school graduation, students should be granted, if needed, multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of materials through equivalent testing procedures.

When a school district, state, or some other authority mandates a test, the ways in which the test results are intended to be used should be clearly described. It is also the responsibility of those who mandate the test to monitor its impact, particularly on racial and ethnic-minority students or students of lower socioeconomic status, and to identify and minimize potential negative consequences of such testing.

In some cases, special accommodations for students with limited English proficiency may be necessary to obtain valid test scores. If students with limited English skills are to be tested in English, their test scores should be interpreted in light of their limited English skills. For example, when a student lacks proficiency in the language in which the test is given (students for whom English is a second language for example), the test could become a measure of their ability to communicate in English rather than a measure of other skills.

Likewise, special accommodations may be needed to ensure that test scores are valid for students with disabilities. Not enough is currently known about how particular test modifications may affect the test scores of students with disabilities; more research is needed. As a first step, test developers should include students with disabilities in field testing of pilot tests and document the impact of particular modifications (if any) for test users.

† Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation
(<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/>)

* American Psychological Association (<http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/testing.html>)