High-Stakes: Standardized Testing, Teacher’s Work and Urban Schools in the US and Canada

Arlo Kempf
November 19, 2014
Square PEG, ROUND HOLE.

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Today

• Overview of Testing in the US and Canada
• Overview of the *Teachers and Testing Project*
• Select US and Canadian qualitative and quantitate findings
• The “high stakes” of standardized testing
• Resistance and alternatives
• Discussion

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Frequency of Standardized Testing: US

- Pre K-12
- Common Core State Standards Initiative (in 46 states)
- Up to 30 per student annually, with an average of approximately 10-15 per student per year (excluding SATs & other optional exams)

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### Frequency: Canada by province and territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>Social sciences &amp; humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>4, 7, 10, 11</td>
<td>4, 7, 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>6, 9, 12</td>
<td>6, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11</td>
<td>5, 8, 10</td>
<td>7, 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>3, 6, 10</td>
<td>3, 6, 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 10 literacy test required for graduation. Grade 9 testing comprises 0-15% of final grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>4, 6, 11</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>2, 4, 7, 9</td>
<td>3, 5, 8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Literacy test required in grades 11 or 12 if unsuccessful in grade 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>3, 6, 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 12 testing comprises 30% of final grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>3, 6</td>
<td>3, 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>3, 6, 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>BC’s system is used for testing in grades 10–12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>3, 6, 9, 12</td>
<td>6, 9, 12</td>
<td>6, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3, 12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Alberta’s system is used for all testing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Time and Money

**Canada**
- In Ontario, in standardized testing years, test taking & preparation uses approximately 10% of classroom time.
  (No clear picture for the rest of the country)
- $40-$60 per student annually

**US**
- Test taking & preparation uses approximately 10-30% of classroom time.
- 1.7 billion annually, $27 per student

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In comparison

• The US not only uses more standardized tests, but uses standardized tests more, than most national and subnational (such as provincial and territorial) jurisdictions

• With the US at the high end spectrum as far as testing, Canada places roughly in the middle as far as number of standardized tests, as well as the use of these tests.

• Finland, Singapore, Japan, OECD/PISA

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ST and Improved Education Outcomes: Central Arguments

1. ST offers an objective measure of student achievement, ability and knowledge in a given area or areas
2. ST provides a level playing field which supports traditionally marginalized students (challenging racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, classism and other forms of discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping)
3. ST provides accountability to the public

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## Ontario Context – Confidence in the EQAO Era

### Table 1.5 Amount of Confidence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great deal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a lot</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None at all</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Count</strong></td>
<td><strong>1016</strong></td>
<td><strong>284</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 1.6 Confidence in Schools Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Arlo Kempf, 2015
Era of Standardization

National averages of 15-year-old students learning outcomes in mathematics 2000-2009

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ID</th>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
<th>S AF 1.2</th>
<th>S AF 1.5</th>
<th>S MG 1.3</th>
<th>S MG 2.1</th>
<th>S NS 1.2</th>
<th>S NS 1.5</th>
<th>S NS 2.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>701F109</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301F061</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601F055</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201M023</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301M012</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>701M044</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>501F083</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>301M007</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>401F090</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>701F017</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>501F049</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>001F087</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801F023</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2701F053</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2401M063</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0701F042</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801F013</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2201M054</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0701F034</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>2301F085</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Teachers and Testing Project*

• Mixed-method study (2011-2014)

• Qualitative: 6 case Studies, 6 focus groups (N=101)

• Quantitative: Survey Instrument (electronic delivery to 100,000+ teachers in California, Illinois, Ontario and New York)

*Supported by a Banting Post-Doctoral Fellowship, from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

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Select Qualitative Findings on the Effects of Standardized Testing on Teaching

(Toronto and Los Angeles)

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On teacher practice...

- Instruction and evaluation strategies

- Attention to the breadth and depth required by curricula

- Ability to support learners with diverse strengths and challenges

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Teacher Practice (cont.)

- Ability to engage in exploratory or student led teaching, lesson design, evaluation or resource use

- Time: approximately 10-30% which is similar to that found in other research

- Critical approaches marginalized

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On work and professional life...

• School choice
• Professional pressure
• Test-focused professional learning
• Increasingly prevented from doing the work they entered teaching to do

• *US teachers* report increasingly negative relationship with general public

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Select Quantitative Findings

• Illinois, Chicago Teachers Union

• Ontario, l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens
Illinois and Ontario Teachers - Preliminary Quantitative Findings:

- Comparative Convergences

- Comparative Divergences

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Convergences: Teachers’ Work, Professional Life and Public Opinion

- 79% of CTU teachers & 57% of AEFO teachers believe “standardized testing diminishes or significantly diminishes teaching as a profession.”

- 7% of CTU teachers & 6% of AEFO teachers believe “standardized tests allow the public to better understand schools' program strengths and weaknesses.”

- 89% of CTU teachers & 78% of AEFO teachers disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “standardized tests accurately reflect my abilities as a teacher.”

- 80% of CTU teachers & 62% of AEFO teachers feel standardized testing makes their work less fulfilling or much less fulfilling.

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Convergences: Professional Practice & Student Learning

- 66% of CTU teachers & 68% of AEFO teachers feel “standardized testing makes the use diverse assessment and instructional approaches (such as differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences) more difficult or much more difficult.”

- 88% of CTU teachers and 89% of AEFO teachers report that standardized testing prevents them from using “professional judgment, pedagogical and content knowledge gained in teachers college and/or other learning contexts.”

- 50% of CTU teachers & 44% of AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement “at my school, the results of standardized testing are used to develop or improve instruction.”

- 43% of CTU teachers & 35% of AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement “at my school, the results of standardized testing are used to develop or improve student learning.”

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Convergences:
Professional Practice & Student Learning (cont.)

• 86% of CTU teachers & 68% of AEFO teachers disagree or strongly disagree that “the results of standardized testing are used effectively to improve teacher practice.”

• 61% of CTU teachers & 77% of AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement “as a result of standardized testing, I cover a narrower range of topics than I would otherwise.”

• 12% of CTU teachers & 10% of AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree “standardized testing enables schools to better meet the academic needs of students and to improve student learning.”

• 8% of CTU teachers & 5% of AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree that “standardized tests offer an accurate reflection of students' academic ability.”

• 81% of CTU teachers & 75% of AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement “I exercise professional knowledge and judgment freely and widely.”

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Divergences:

Teachers’ Work, Professional Life and Public Opinion

- 38% of CTU teachers & 60% of AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement “the public values the work I do as a teacher.”

Professional Practice/Student Learning

- 61% of CTU teachers & 37% of AEFO teachers believe that “as a result of standardized testing, students learn less or much than they would otherwise.”
- **AEFO teachers agree or strongly agree at a greater rate, that they have significant input into community building, assessment, school improvement, curriculum implementation and cultural transmission.**

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WHICH BUBBLE should OUR KIDS BE ASKED TO FILL IN?
Redefinition: Frames for Understanding ‘High Stakes’ Standardized Testing

• Most tests are not make or break in either context (outliers in this sense)

• High stakes testing as a governing principle not linked to the outcomes of one or more specific tests but to lived, daily school culture

• Increasingly, standardized testing *socially constructs* teachers’ work, professional life and learning

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High Stakes (cont.)

• In a Vygotskian conception, tests and test-teaching are powerful artefacts mediating teaching and learning

• Testing is a technology, a tool, which mediates teaching and learning (and which is mediated by its place within the daily life of education)

• Feenberg (1991) suggests a critical approach, in which technology is ambivalent and contested, with the politics of its development just as significant as that of its application. This equivocality can inform our understanding of standardized testing

• On this view, testing (as technology) is not a destiny but a scene of struggle

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I am working...
for fairness
better schools
my amazing
Kindergartners

Let's give
another
standardized
TEST!

said NO
teacher EVER.
Resistance and Alternatives

Resistance

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Administration/Schools
- Jurisdictions

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Alternatives

- Random sampling, as suggested by many teacher associations/organizations (OECD/PISA, pan-Canadian evaluation)

- Support (time, resources and PD) for teacher observation, reflection and performance based assessment of student learning

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Closing consideration

1) The goal of holistic standardized measurement (to include currently untested areas) takes for granted some degree of standardization as inevitable, without offering a rationale for why it need be so...
	his ignores (among other things) international data that tells us the world can continue turning, and that indeed education can thrive in a non-standardized schooling culture.

2) Study best understood in larger context of neoliberal education reform which is profoundly impacting teacher practice

3) More to come

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Comments & Questions...

References: