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Reading Muscles: Preparation for Standardized Testing in High School Students

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Abstract

This study will be focused around a Language Arts Lab class which has the intention of assisting students who are at-risk of not passing the End of Course Assessment, or ECA. The class is compiled of eighteen students. Many students struggle with standardized testing not because they do not understand the material but rather because they do not have the proper background in testing. Under this assumption, students who do not pass standardized tests are likely struggling because they have rarely been introduced to true-to-situational testing circumstances. This study aims to prove that more frequent exposure to real testing restrictions results in higher standardized test scores.

Introduction

Research Problem:

- Students are not exposed often enough to true testing situations, where their time, voice, and knowledge must all work in tandem in order to achieve a "high" score.

Research Questions:

- How well are schools really preparing students for standardized testing?

- if we recreate actual testing circumstances at a more frequent interval, will this prepare them more for standardized testing and subsequently allow them to test better overall?



Subject Description

- The majority of students are sophomores, with the exception of one junior student and one senior student.
- There are eight female and eleven male students. The objective of the course is to act as a supplement to the students' regular English classes.
- The students are regular-track kids who simply need more focused attention in their Language Arts skills.

Context Description

- On an average week, Monday and Tuesday are dedicated to the class reading a story together and then completing follow-up activities such as character charts, Venn diagrams, and content questions.
- Wednesday is a writing day.
- Thursday is test-prep day and the main day of focus for this research project.
- Friday consists of a more entertaining learning activity, such as literary terms bingo. To promote organizational skills, students are also expected to keep a binder which comes to class daily.

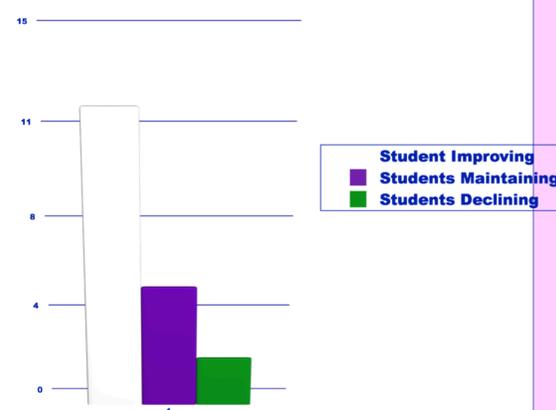
Method

Data Collection:

- A close observation of students is kept in a research journal in order to document visually clear progress made by students. Documented materials range from quizzes to written responses to comprehension checks.

Findings

- Allowing students the opportunity to feel the actual time constraints, as well as other constraints, makes the actual test-taking experience much more comfortable and therefore much easier to do well on for students at the high-school level.

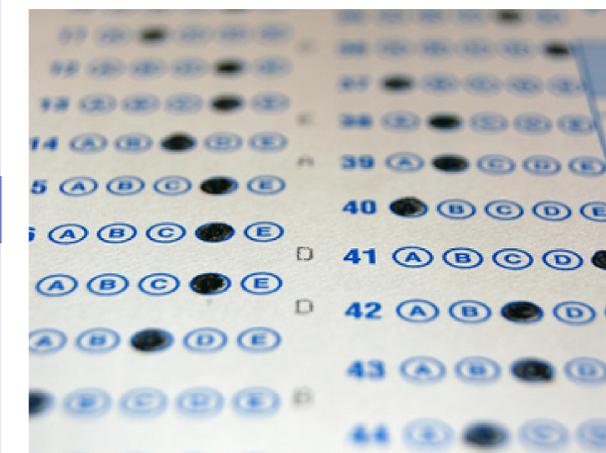


Implications for P – 12 Educators

- Educators should be dedicating more time in the classroom to preparing students for standardized testing situations.
- Much of what was discovered through this study is that the pressure associated with standardized testing is the fact that is truly affecting our students in a poor manner.
- Everything about standardized testing suddenly becomes highly staked for these students, and the anxiety associated with doing well increases.
- Educators should focus on preparing students and lessening anxiety related to these high-stakes tests so that students can concentrate on the actual questions in front of them.

Implications for Educational Field

- The field of education should incorporate strategies into teacher education programs which instruct new educators on how to best prepare their students for high-stakes testing.



- The level of self-esteem issues associated with standardized testing in students who do not do well is extremely prevalent, and it is important that educators focus on standardized testing situations need to involve more adequate and accurate preparation as well as less of a "high-stakes" mentality.

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