

Self-Esteem and Test Scores

Life Skills U™

On Demand Education™

July 22, 2004

Abstract

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) there is a new urgency and concern about test scores because of the requirements of the legislation; namely that test scores are now the primary measurement of student achievement and of the performance of each school, district and state. This has intensified the debate on what affects test scores, specifically what will drive them up to meet the requirements of the law. It is the purpose and intent of this paper to:

- Briefly describe the requirements of NCLB
- Illustrate the relationship between test scores and the various factors that have been shown to affect them and in particular self-esteem
- Reveal that considerable research and debate has produced varying conclusions regarding the relationship of self-esteem to test scores.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) there is a new urgency and concern about test scores because of the requirements of the legislation; namely that test scores are now the primary measurement of student achievement and of the performance of each school, district and state. This has intensified the debate on what affects test scores, specifically what will drive them up to meet the requirements of the law. It is the purpose and intent of this paper to:

- Briefly describe the requirements of NCLB
- Illustrate the relationship between test scores and the various factors that have been shown to affect them and in particular self-esteem
- Reveal that considerable research and debate has produced varying conclusions regarding the relationship of self-esteem to test scores. To this day there is not a clear consensus as to what the relationship is and that this ambiguity can be attributed to two central factors:
 - The lack of a consistent definition of what self-esteem is.
 - The lack of understanding of what causes self-esteem and its relationship to the individual.
- Describe a workable, sensible and valid definition of self-esteem that has been substantiated by measurable results and the real experiences of people.
- Propose that Self-esteem is part of an integrated system of cause and effect.

NCLB

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has made test scores an important consideration and area of focus for those involved in public education. All Title I schools now face considerable challenges in the form of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals that require 100% proficiency rates at all Title I schools by 2014. Under the AYP criteria adopted by the California State Board of Education (which can be found at <http://www.sdcs.k12.ca.us/AYP/subgroups.html>) all California school districts, schools, and "numerically significant student subgroups" within districts and schools must meet the following annual objectives:

- Growth in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards in English / language arts and mathematics
- Student testing participation rate of at least 95%
- Growth on the Academic Performance Index (API).
- Growth in the high school graduation rate

The ultimate goal of NCLB is 100 % of students meeting proficient or advanced ratings on standardized tests developed by all states receiving Title I funding, which is to say all 50 states, by the year 2014.

While all schools, including charter and alternative, must meet AYP requirements, those schools with Title I funding who do not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject area will enter Program Improvement (PI). Once in Program Improvement, a school must offer students the choice to transfer to another non PI in the same district with the PI school funding the transportation. Increasing sanctions ranging from offering supplemental services to restructuring and state takeover are implemented each additional year if the school does not come out of PI by meeting AYP for two consecutive years. The potential for Title I schools to lose students and associated funding is significant. Thus, to maintain current funding levels it is imperative for high schools to raise applicable test scores to meet NCLB requirements.

Regardless of the validity of using test scores as a measurement for student learning and achievement as well as school performance; the NCLB requirements of standardized testing, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and the consequences of Program Improvement (PI) are the realities educators have to deal with. The result is that test scores have become a major focal point for those involved in public education. The issue, wrongly or rightly, becomes that of how to drive test scores higher to meet the requirements of the law.

The No Child Left Behind Act presents considerable challenges to High Schools as they attempt to implement the provisions of the law. The following information is an excerpt from "[Left Out and Left Behind: NCLB and the American High School](http://www.all4ed.org/publications/NCLB/NCLB.pdf)", <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/NCLB/NCLB.pdf> written by Scott Joftus and Brenda Maddox-Dolan of the Alliance for Excellent Education:

- Approximately 800 High Schools have already been identified as "in need of improvement" with many of these failing to graduate a majority of their students.
- Schools currently receiving Title 1 funds are facing the same sanctions as Elementary and Secondary schools.
- According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 3 out of 4 states have cut education spending between 2001 and 2003.
- Current Federal funding is \$6 billion short of the amount authorized when the bill was signed into law.
- There are approximately 6 million students who are at the greatest risk of dropping out.
- The national average of eighth grade students graduating 5 years later is approximately 69% while percentages for urban area schools are considerably lower.
- Many states agencies are determining that it will be impossible to meet the requirements without significant changes in the law.

An article on the “Education Minnesota” web site
http://www.educationminnesota.org/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=10125 states:

“More than 80 percent of Minnesota’s elementary schools will fail to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act by 2014 – even if math and reading scores improve significantly in intervening years”, the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor said in a [report](#) released Feb. 26, 2004.

The report also predicts that many school districts will bear significant new costs in future years for student assessments, sanctions for low-performing schools and other compliance measures – costs that may exceed new federal NCLB revenue.

What has worked in the past? Considerable research has been done and even more opinion has been expressed, both positive and negative, regarding the factors that have an impact on test scores.

Funding

While many are concerned that education budgets are undergoing cuts due to fiscal crisis at the state and federal level, there are others who say that enough money, in excess of \$300 billion since 1965, has been thrown at education to prove that money alone does not solve the problems. An excerpt from "The Desktop Reference"
<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/reference.doc>

The United States Department of Education’s NCLB web site states:

“Federal policy has had a significant impact on America’s schools and children ever since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was enacted in 1965. Yet, despite hundreds of programs and just under 200 billion dollars invested during the last generation, American students still lag behind many of their fellow foreign students and the academic achievement gap in this country between rich and poor, white and minority students, remains wide. Indeed, President Bush expressed concern that ‘too many of our neediest children are being left behind.’” (par 4)

Teacher Quality

Much has been said about teacher quality and how it relates to the expectations on student and school performance. In an article posted at
http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=110&subsecID=135&contentID=737
 Stephanie Soler writes:

“In the spring of 1998, 1800 prospective teachers in Massachusetts took the first ever Massachusetts Teacher Test, a high school level test of skills. Despite the fact that Massachusetts is home to some of the best teacher education programs in the country-- including those at Harvard University, Boston College, and Boston University— 59 percent of the teachers failed. Thirty percent failed a basic reading and writing test, and

failure rates on subject matter tests ranged from 18 percent in physical education to 63 percent in mathematics. Spelling errors included "integraty," "serching," "corupt," and "messures." Similarly, last year only 202 out of 758 teaching applicants in a suburban New York district passed a reading comprehension test drawn from the state's high school Regents English exam. If teachers cannot pass high school level tests, how can we expect their students to do it?"

There is also the issue of teacher commitment as reflected in their unwillingness to settle for sub-standard performance by their students. In an excerpt taken from <http://teachmath.net/index.html?home=DidUKnow.html>, 'A Program For Raising The Level Of Student Achievement In Secondary School Mathematics', submitted by Frank Allen (1996), it was stated that:

"The teacher with high standards is no longer regarded as a taskmaster whose demands are to be evaded, but rather as ... *a coach or mentor whose advice and expertise help students to achieve a goal they care about*. Moreover, they are released from the pressure now exerted by students, administrators and parents to *grade on the curve*, lower standards and inflate grades. This pressure is fast becoming intolerable and it is destroying education in America."

He further goes on to say:

"When standards are held firm and the student is required to adjust to them, we have a process that can be accurately described as *education*. In recent years we have seen a distressing reversal of this process. Students don't listen very well? Adjust by downgrading oral exposition by the teacher, and, perhaps resort to cooperative learning. Students don't like the curriculum? Change the curriculum, perhaps by emphasis on *practical* applications in an effort to recapture student interest. Students don't do well on standardized tests? Try to discredit these tests by proclaiming that they are not and cannot be valid measures of student achievement. This stultifying process where changes take place in the system rather than in the student is education turned on its head. It is destroying education in America, and it must be stopped."

NCLB addresses the issues related to quantitative qualifications through the following requirements for all secondary school teachers that with the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, all secondary school teachers:

- Must have full state certification or have passed the state teacher licensing examination and hold a license to teach in the state
- Neither certification nor licensure requirements can be waived on emergency, temporary, or provisional basis
- Must hold at least a bachelor's degree and have demonstrated a high level of competency in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches by

- Passing a rigorous state academic subject test in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches; or
 - Successfully completing, in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches, an academic major, a graduate degree, coursework equivalent to an academic major or advanced certification or credentialing.
 - Or if hired before the 2002 – 2003 school year
- Must hold at least a bachelor’s degree and have either met the applicable standard for a new teacher, which includes an option to test or demonstrated competence in all academic subjects that he or she teaches based on a high objective and uniform state standard of evaluation by the 2005 – 2006 school year

Class Size

Two different studies in New Hampshire produced opposite results. In an article entitled "Smaller Classes Score Higher", <http://www.unh.edu/nhcpps/classsize2003.pdf> , a paper released in September 2003 by Douglas Hall & Beth Morton revealed that:

"smaller class sizes for 3rd graders resulted in an average higher test score of 4 to 9 points than 3rd graders in larger classes."

A previous study released in June 2002 in an article entitled “Third Grade Revisited: Test Scores Unrelated to Class Size,” by Douglas E. Hall from <http://www.unh.edu/nhcpps/classsize2000.pdf> reported that:

"3rd grade class sizes were reduced between 1997 and 2000 and that the scores, on average, from the students in the smaller classes were no better than those in the larger classes."

Family / Economic / Social Circumstances

The same New Hampshire study, referenced above, “[Smaller Classes Score Higher](#)” also reported that:

"Students in the wealthiest districts scored 7 to 15 points higher on standardized tests than did their counterparts in the poorest districts."

A study by the Rand Corporation, entitled, "Improving Student Achievement" <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR924> indicates that demographic factors such as family income and parental education levels accounted for the majority of the variances in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test results from 1990 through 1996.

Creativity

According to a Montana School Board Association Bulletin Excerpt entitled "Research Music and Policy Debates" <http://www.grps.k12.mi.us/~music/whymusic/ResearchPolicy.html> by Joan Schmidt, Director, states:

“Statistics indicate that students who participate in music earn higher grades and score better on standardized tests. But no one has been sure what that means: Do the brighter students gravitate toward music, or does music make the students brighter?”

It continues to state:

“Now there is powerful evidence of a cause-and-effect link between music instruction and intelligence. In a study conducted by psychologist Frances Rauscher of the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh and physicist Gordon Shaw of the University of California at Irvine, preschool children were divided into four groups. One group received private piano keyboard lessons while another received private lessons on a computer. The remaining two groups served as controls, receiving neither piano nor computer instruction. According to a report published in the February 1997 issue of *Neurological Research*, the children who had received piano keyboard instruction scored thirty-four percent higher than the others on tests designed to measure spatial-temporal reasoning. Because these functions are critical components in the understanding of subjects like mathematics, science and engineering, this body of research has significant implications for public education policy. Ironically, at a time when education research indicates the need to move in one direction, political pressures dictate another. Recent public concerns about basic skills in reading and mathematics have led some school districts to narrow their curriculum, eliminating ostensibly 34 peripheral subjects like music, in an effort to improve scores on standardized tests.”

Self-esteem

Does higher self-esteem mean higher test scores? Although the answer seems to be an intuitive “Yes”, the research has yet to prove a direct cause and effect relationship. Some say that self-esteem has no effect on test scores or academic achievement, in "**The Truth about Self-Esteem**" <http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/tase.htm> , Alfie Kohn states:

"Altruism aside, the idea that people who regard themselves favorably ought to be able to learn and work more effectively seems not so much a plausible hypothesis, as a matter of plain common sense. Someone with high self-esteem would presumably expect to do well, thereby setting into motion an "auspicious circle" -- as distinguished from the vicious one that traps individuals who are consumed by self-doubt. Theorists and therapists, to say nothing of teachers and parents, have been saying as much for decades. Alas, the empirical evidence once again offers meager support for what seems intuitively indisputable. The problem does not stem from the relatively few studies that have found

no significant correlation -- or even a negative correlation -- between self-esteem and academic achievement. These results are exceptional; most research has indeed confirmed a positive association. The problem, rather, is that the qualifications to that association turn out to be more significant than the association itself. First, as with social behavior, the size of the relationship is simply not very impressive. In a careful review of 128 studies on this topic, two Australian researchers, B. C. Hansford and J. A. Hattie, found that the average correlation was in the range of .21 to .26, which means that differences in self-esteem can account for only about 4 to 7 percent of variation in academic performance, or vice versa. Second, those same reviewers reported that the correlation was even lower in studies published more recently; in studies conducted with larger, representative national samples of students; and in studies that used standardized indicators of performance (as opposed to even less reliable measures such as grades. The implication is that the better the research, the less significant the connection it will find between self-esteem and achievement. Third, virtually all researchers seem to agree that, in order to find any meaningful relationship to academic achievement, it is necessary to look at a specific area like academic self-esteem or even self-esteem regarding the ability to succeed at a particular subject. After all, "one can hardly expect an individual's general sense of self (e.g., 'I am a pretty good person') to have very much to do with his or her success on a mathematics test."

Kohn further goes on to state that:

"Other researchers have echoed this conclusion: a large study of high school students found "no significant causal relation," a review of the literature turned up "overwhelmingly negative evidence for a causal connection," and an even more recent review concurred that there is "little if any evidence that children's academic performance is causally determined by their global self-concept."

Others say self-esteem does have an impact on academic achievement but the research results and opinions vary as to its significance. In an article posted on the National Association for Self-esteem (NASE) web site at <http://www.self-esteem-nase.org/whatisselfesteem.shtml>

Robert Reasoner writes:

"A close relationship has been documented between low self-esteem and such problems as violence, alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, school dropouts, teenage pregnancy, suicide, and low academic achievement. However, it has been difficult to isolate it as a primary cause using traditional experimental research methods, for it is usually only one of several contributing factors."

In a booklet titled "Self-Esteem and Youth: What Research as to Say about It" <http://www.self-esteem-international.org/content/5-research.htm>, Reasoner writes:

"There is general agreement that there is a close relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. However, there is considerable disagreement as to the specific nature of this relationship. It has been argued that students have to do well in school in

order to have positive self-esteem or self-concept; another position is that a positive self-esteem is a necessary prerequisite for doing well in school. However, the debate about which comes first--a positive self-concept or academic achievement--is more academic than practical. The most important thing is to appreciate the interaction and the reciprocal dynamics between self-concept and achievement. They are mutually reinforcing. While there may be little justification for embarking on a program to raise the level of self-esteem with the intent of raising academic achievement, there are many other justifications for raising self-esteem of students. It has been my experience that self-esteem programs can be implemented in schools without sacrificing academic excellence and no school has reported a decline in academic achievement while focusing on self-esteem.”

Holly (1987) compiled a summary of some 50 studies and indicated that most supported the idea that self-esteem was more likely the result than the cause of academic achievement. He did acknowledge that a certain level of self-esteem is required in order for a student to achieve academic success and that self-esteem and achievement go hand in hand. They feed each other.

Covington (1989) reported that as the level of self-esteem increases, so do achievement scores; as self-esteem decreases, achievement scores decline. Furthermore, he concluded that self-esteem can be modified through direct instruction and that such instruction can lead to achievement gains. Specifically, students’ perceived efficacy to achieve, combined with personal goal setting, has been found to have a major impact on academic achievement.

Conrath (1986) states that the best way for a child to sustain a sense of confidence is to acquire and demonstrate competence. He found that self-confidence will emerge with success in skill development and learning. Thus, the key point is to help students set meaningful and realistic goals.

Before we go any further, it might be more productive to ask a related question. What exactly is self-esteem? Let’s go back to Reasoner’s article:

“One of the difficulties in trying to reach agreement on the nature of self-esteem is due to the fact that it has been approached from several different perspectives. Some have seen it as a psychodynamic, developmental process; others have approached it from the perspective of the cognitive-behaviorist in terms of various coping strategies; others have viewed it from the position of a social psychologist in terms of attitudes, while others have focused on the experiential dimensions of self-esteem as a humanistic psychologist. Since self-esteem has both psychological and sociological dimensions, this has made it difficult to come up with a comprehensive definition, and rarely have both dimensions been taken into consideration together in conducting research studies.

There is, however, general agreement that the term self-esteem includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. It is cognitive as one consciously thinks about oneself

as one considers the discrepancy between one's ideal self, the person one wishes to be, and the perceived self or the realistic appraisal of how one sees oneself.

The affective element refers to the feelings or emotions that one has when considering that discrepancy. The behavioral aspects of self-esteem are manifested in such behaviors as assertiveness, resilience, being decisive and respectful of others. Thus, self-esteem is difficult to define because of these multiple dimensions.

In addition, although self-esteem is generally stable, it can fluctuate from time to time, a phenomenon, which is referred to as global versus situational self-esteem, and which can make measuring or researching self-esteem very difficult. It is important that the significance of self-esteem not be lost in the confusion over what it means.

He goes on to define what self-esteem is NOT:

“Some have referred to self-esteem as merely “feeling good” or having positive feelings about oneself. Others have gone so far as to equate self-esteem with egotism, arrogance, conceit, narcissism, a sense of superiority, a trait leading to violence. Such characteristics cannot be attributed to authentic, healthy self-esteem, because they are actually defensive reactions to the lack of authentic self-esteem, which is sometimes referred to as “pseudo self-esteem.”

After navigating these various aspects we come to a place where a clear definition will get us moving forward again. Reasoner goes on to reference the definition of self-esteem, as adopted by the NASE, to be:

“The experience of being capable of meeting life's challenges and being worthy of happiness.”

He goes on to state that:

“This concept of self-esteem is founded on the premise that it is strongly connected to a sense of competence and worthiness and the relationship between the two as one lives life. The worthiness component of self-esteem is often misunderstood as simply feeling good about oneself, when it actually is tied to whether or not a person lives up to certain fundamental human values, such as finding meanings that foster human growth and making commitments to them in a way that leads to a sense of integrity and satisfaction. A sense of competence is having the conviction that one is generally capable of producing desired results, having confidence in the efficacy of our mind and our ability to think, as well as to make appropriate choices and decisions. Worthiness might be considered the psychological aspect of self-esteem, while competence might be considered the behavioral or sociological aspect of self-esteem. Self-esteem stems from the experience of living consciously and might be viewed as a person's overall judgment of himself or herself pertaining to self-competence and self-worth based on reality.”

Reasoner continues to state that:

“The value of this definition is that it is useful in making the distinction between authentic or healthy self-esteem and pseudo or unhealthy self-esteem. A sense of personal worth without competence is just as limiting as competence without worthiness. A strong sense of worthiness prevents competence from becoming arrogance by keeping the individual focused on basic values, and competence prevents worthiness from becoming narcissism by requiring good feelings to be earned, not given.”

Reasoner moves on to describe what it is that actually builds and brings about real self-esteem as defined in his writing above:

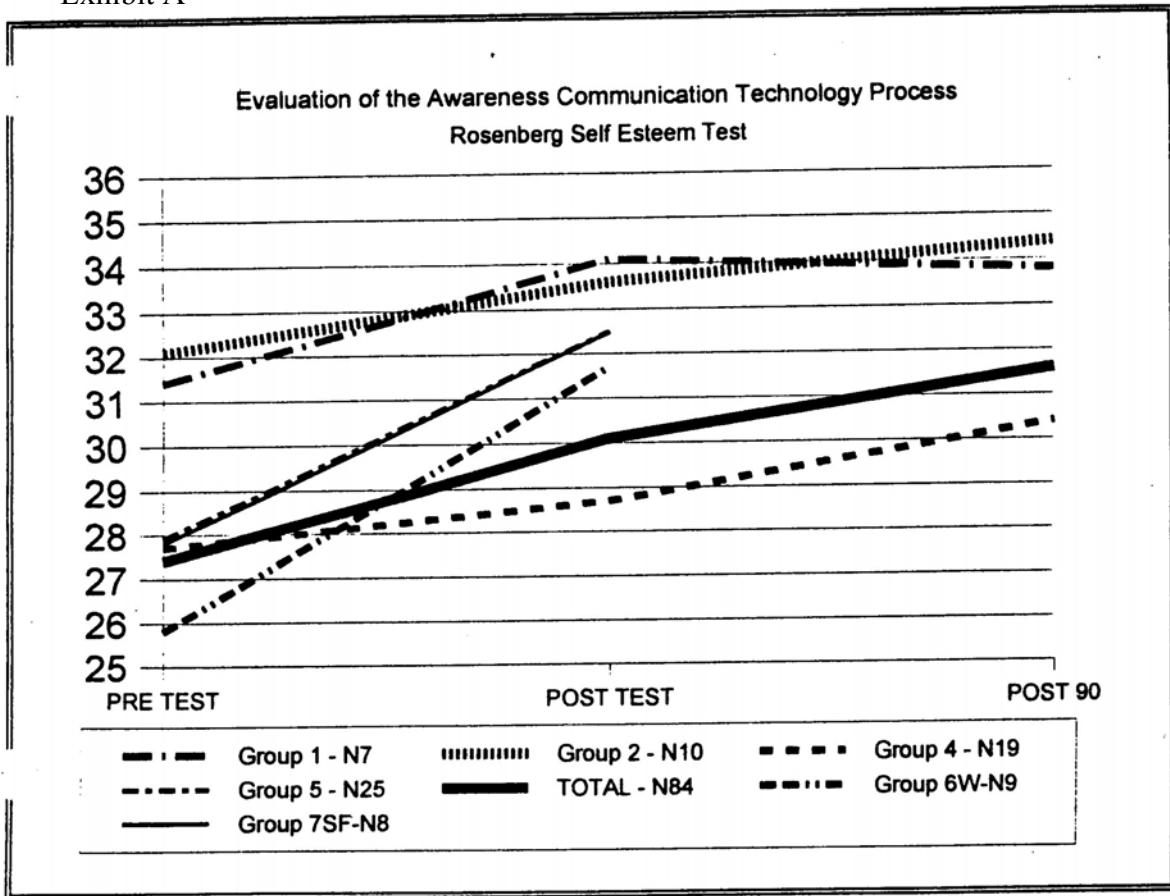
“Most feel that it is critical that any efforts to build self-esteem be grounded in reality. It cannot be attained by merely reciting boosters or affirmations, and one cannot give others authentic self-esteem. To do so is likely to result in an inflated sense of worth. Most feel that a sense of competence is strengthened through realistic and accurate self-appraisal, meaningful accomplishments, overcoming adversities, bouncing back from failures, and adopting such practices such as assuming self-responsibility and maintaining integrity which engender ones sense of competence and self-worth.”

Richard Jorgensen, CEO and founder of Awareness Communication Technology, describes self-esteem as more than simply a cause or an effect but instead a cause **and** effect **process** by adding an understanding of the elements of self-esteem and how they relate to each other.

First, during childhood and adolescence, self-esteem is the effect of the outside world. The individual takes on what they are told by others about themselves as true. This externally driven self-concept or esteem then becomes one component of the cause, driving perceptions, attitudes, thoughts, feelings and ultimately decisions, behaviors, (positive or negative) and the subsequent results which then feed back into the process. Self-esteem is cyclical in nature with effect feeding and becoming part of the cause.

A 1995 study done in San Diego, California, of homeless and otherwise marginalized men and battered women whose self-esteem was at a life time low, proved that an educational process that approached self-esteem as a cause and effect system could have a significant, positive and lasting effect. The results of the study (see Exhibit A) show that a process of education that includes raising awareness, partnering / mentoring relationships (based on emotional equality and common goals), and experiences of shared achievements and success is workable, economical and effective. Facilitating the feedback of positive experiences serves to resolve and convert low, “effects” based, self-esteem into positive, “causal” self-esteem which then starts a positive self-esteem cycle rather than continuing a negative one.

Exhibit A



April 2, 1995

The positive change in total mean difference of 4.21 is greater than one standard deviation of 4.00. This is a statistically significant effect. The December 20, 1994 TMD was 3.92 and the standard deviation was 3.69.

The calculated T (-) value of -9.86 is significant at the <.05 level. This clearly shows with 95% (or greater) assurance that the 4.21 change in total mean difference is not due to chance.

One can assume the alternate hypothesis is in effect which states that the change in total mean difference is due to the A.C.T. intervention with the population under study, all things equal. The December 20, 1994 CTV was -8.49.

Data evaluation conducted by:

Beto Escamilla, Ph.D.
 Data Analyst LHFHC
 San Diego, California

Evaluation conducted for:

Awareness Communication Technology
 P.O. Box 6069
 San Diego, California 92166

As shown by the information contained in this study, true self-esteem is the result of successful relationships that revolve around meaningful and shared goals and accomplishments. However, many times the required “base” or minimum amount of the real self-esteem required to hold an idea of meaningful goals or to approach (let alone initiate and maintain) the reciprocal and dynamic relationships that support mutual success is sorely lacking. What then? How does an individual move past the limits of a self-esteem trapped in the effect stage as described above? How can an individual recognize and move through the false self-esteem so clearly described by Robert Reasoner and others? How do we instill in teachers, the courage, dedication and passion needed to engage students as contributors and participants in the educational experience?

Once again Richard Jorgensen states,

“If a student has positive self-esteem our current educational system causes the student to seek out what the student doesn’t know. When the student has low self-esteem our educational system testing process causes the student to want to give up because they believe they cannot do it or they believe they are just not capable. Our testing system becomes detrimental to our learning process. The nature of our testing system creates the illusion of the identity of the student. It causes a false inflated ego or the illusion of a false deflated ego in terms of the identity of the person rather than their knowledge level. We cannot change who we really are “Our Identity.” We can only change with what we do with our identity. Our identity is the basis for our self-esteem.

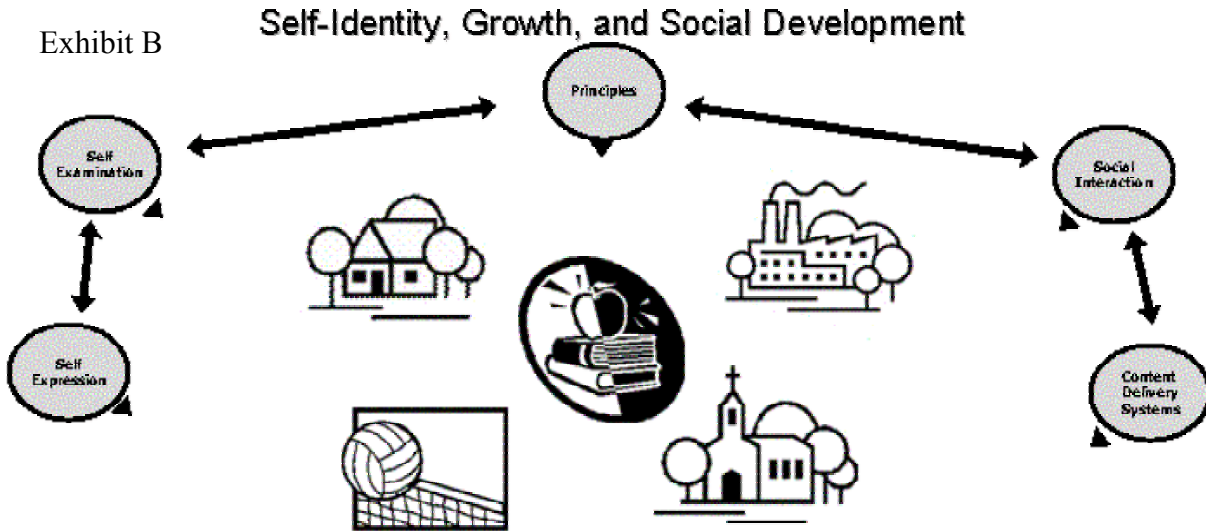
Challenging of Testing

The question remains not if we should test but how we should test. Unless the testing process can both identify what the student knows and reinforces it, and identify what the student doesn’t know and teach them, the teaching process can only result in the demise of the identity of an individual by creating a false inflated ego or false deflated ego and the destruction of positive true self-esteem as Robert Reasoner expressed. Without a process that first raises awareness and then carries it upward to fruition through resolution, real self-esteem and the growth, stability and assets it provides for the individual and the community is a lost dream.

Putting It All Together

We have heard the arguments, we have sensed the ambiguities, and probably still remain lost as to where to go, what to do, and how to go about it. Now lets revamp what we have been given and present an approach that will provide real and lasting change to bring about a real and lasting solution to all the things that are close and dear to our hearts.

According to Richard Jorgensen founder and CEO of Life Skills U there are five premises in which to attain a definition of Self-Identity, Growth and Social Development to be implemented into a life process.

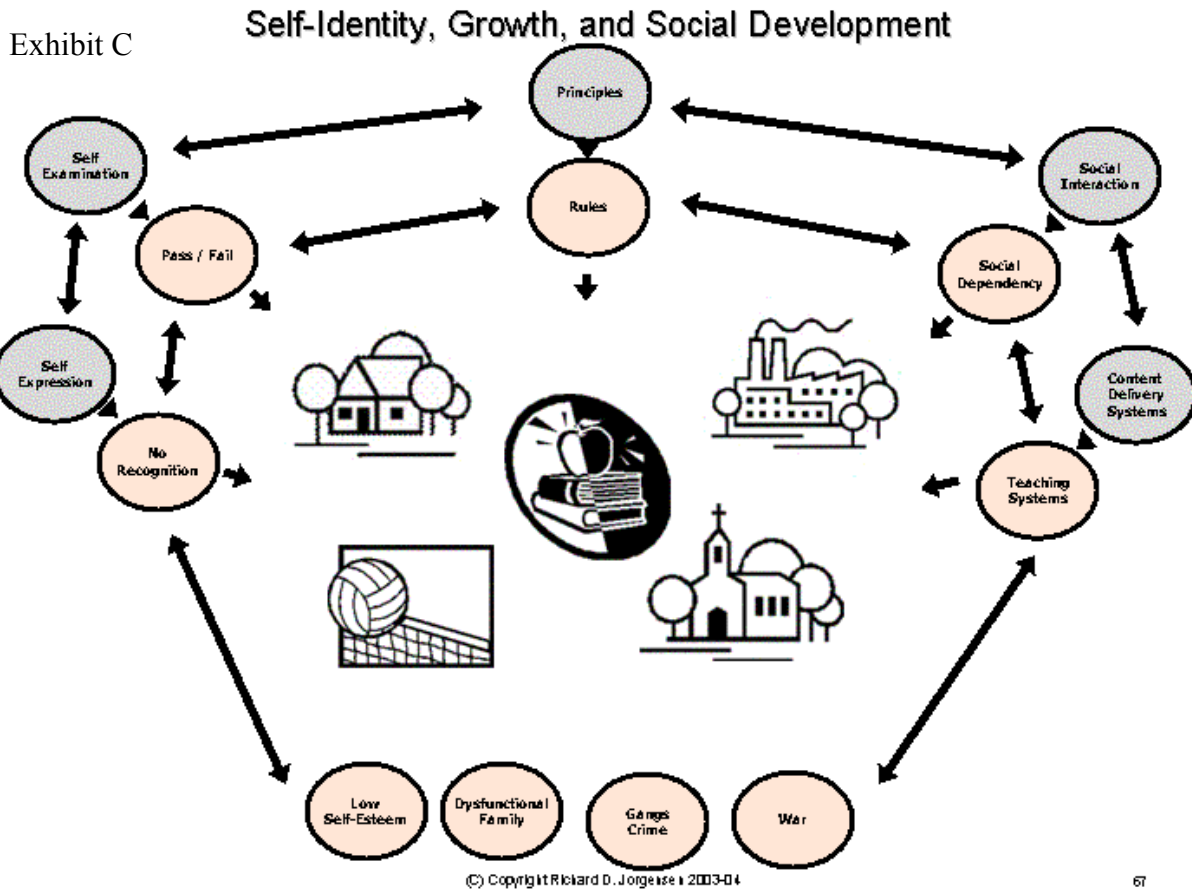


The elements of Self-Identity, Growth, and Social Development for the implementation of a life process as displayed in Exhibit B are:

1. Principles, which allow all individuals to take ownership of life processes that can be applied to their own personal value systems while applying them to the laws of cause and effect.
2. Social Interaction, based upon emotional equality that allows for a fully functional and conducive environment for the manifestation, existence and multiplication of all individuals to achieve the highest and best good.
3. Content Delivery System, that promotes information in an environment that is non-confrontational and non-judging, and influences a healthy and positive learning experience for all individuals.
4. Self-examination, to assist us in determining whether or not our viewpoint and actions have been appropriate and applicable in our daily life process.
5. Self-expression, which allows us to establish an environment where we can express ourselves and experience ourselves based on what we have learned.

These five premises are the gauges by which we can test ourselves and each other to determine whether or not we are functioning as healthy, mature adults within our society.

Based upon these premises, let us take a brief inventory of what we have established for ourselves in this world by looking at the big picture. According to Exhibit C:



67

Individual personal growth of low Self-Esteem, 'Based on appearance and feelings'

The kind of environment that exists is all based upon appearance and feelings. For example, money, material, status, keeping up with the Joneses... seems to be the premises that we live by as individuals. When it comes to dealing with our feelings, if your not feeling good then something must be wrong, so if we feel depressed, take a pill etc... anything that will suppress the feeling. We grow up and live our lives based upon these stimuli that our society sets upon us.

Families, 'Based upon emotional dysfunction and chemical dependencies'

We have families, for the most part, that are emotionally dysfunctional, and chemically dependent. In other words we grow up physically and raise families yet we really have not been able to do much in the area of emotional maturity. Many life situations have interrupted our emotional maturation process. In a society by which we value or are taught to value how we feel, how we look, what our status is to be accepted etc... has caused much discontent and lack of fulfillment. Living our lives based on appearances and feeling has done very little to support true self-esteem. Our focus on security, material, wealth, fame, status, instant gratification to please how we feel with no regard to consequences just expands to a larger scale on the family level.

Communities, 'Based upon defense and protection'

Based upon the foundation of what has been brought about from the individual and family level have now expanded this pattern of life into our communities. As Richard Jorgensen (2003), expresses in his courseware entitled 'Creating A Team Culture',

“The adult child continues to perceive and react to relations coming from judgment of self and others, dissatisfaction with self and others devaluation of self and others.”

According to an article at <http://www.eqj.org/values.htm>

“If you teach with reason, respect, empathy and compassion, these are what your children will grow up to value and to teach. But if you teach with power, punishment, force, fear and authority, these too will be passed on to your children's children.”

Thus we have communities based upon defense and protection. We no longer have a sense of community belonging. We have built a society and community whereby we have instilled fear and distrust. Our children cannot play unattended because of fear of abduction. Homes have 6-foot walls built around their yards and alarm systems have to be installed for our homes, and cars. Our sense of community and social structure continually brings us further in dismay as we watch how gangs and violence escalate into our neighborhoods and school systems.

World, 'Based on War'

Ultimately we have designed for our selves a world where solution to world peace is war. A world of terror, a world where nation fights nation where war becomes the answer to resolve many issues that arise, and we wonder how we got there.

This is the world that we have etched out for ourselves. It is based upon this picture of life that we have established our own identity, growth and social development. This is the culture by which we ride upon, contrary to the five premises by which Richard Jorgensen has depicted. As a result of this we have put something else in its place, as referenced still by Exhibit C:

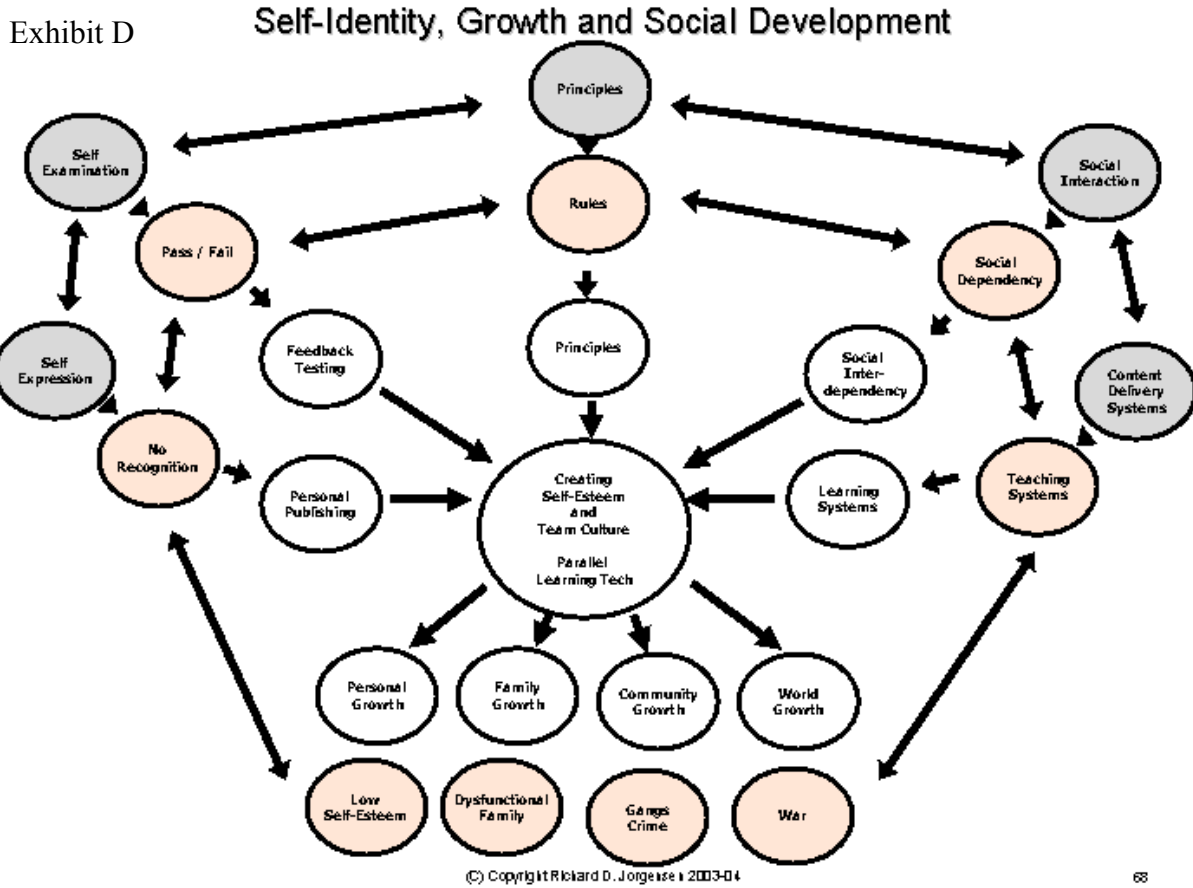
1. Instead of Principles, which allow all individuals to take ownership of life processes that can be applied to their own personal value systems while applying them to the laws of cause and effect... we have the creation of a rule-based society based upon emotional inequality that fits only within an agenda carried out with static rules for life situations and circumstances without any regard to change.
2. Instead of a Social Interaction, based upon emotional equality that allows for a fully functional and conducive environment for the manifestation, existence and multiplication of all individuals to achieve the highest and best good, we have in its place, social dependencies based upon emotional inequality and fear, based on what other people think. We have people short of true self-identity living in a world whereby they depend on the acceptance from others. We live in an environment where we have loss of respect

for ourselves and loss of respect from others. We interact with expectations. As a result relationships are far from healthy and functional.

3. Instead of Content delivery systems, that promote information in an environment that is non-confrontational and non-judging, whereby promoting a positive learning experience, we have teaching systems that focus on what there is to teach with little concern for the learning modalities of other individuals, and as a result leads to negative experiences for many individuals involved. The end result is that the learning responsibility or lack of, ultimately falls upon the teacher and not the student. It is important to stress that how one is taught is as important as what is taught.
4. Instead of Self-examination, to assist us in determining whether or not our viewpoint and actions have been appropriate and applicable for us in our daily life process, we have in its place testing systems that caters only to passing or failing. Our testing systems are limited to defining right or wrong, while focus is based upon what a person does not know without any correlation, rather than engaging in what you do know and incorporating it with what one did not know. Our educational school systems and our corporate work place training grounds are designed to give us only 'what to think' and not 'how to think' and as a result it leads us with limited avenues to explore the fullness of our entire being. It is important to stress that how we think is as important as what we think.
5. Instead of Self-expression, which allows us to express and experience ourselves based on what we have learned, we have in its place the elements that cater mainly to the suppression of self-expression. Why is this so? This is because the society that we have built for ourselves is based upon emotional inequality. In other words we perceive ourselves as either less than or greater than others. When we perceive ourselves as less than someone, we hinder our true capacity to get in touch with that true self that we are. When we perceive ourselves as greater than others we render the inferior person helpless, and as a result suppress the expression of others resulting in passive resistance, while the superior one reacts aggressively hostile. In this type of world there is no recognition of others. Ultimately, nobody grows and our social development remains hindered.

So we have a world that is rule-based, socially dependent, based upon entitlement and what other people think, a society which controls what information will be assimilated, a society in which tests and judges what the person learned, which ultimately suppresses self-expression. Thus, what we have is the self-manifestation of a world based upon false self-identity based on appearance and feelings, families based upon emotional dysfunction and chemical dependencies, communities based upon defense and protection and a world of war. These are the premises by which our society stands upon. As you can see, Exhibit C depicts a perpetual loop whereby one world feeds the other. The bottom line is that we have been digging ourselves deeper into a hole. Based upon what we have built for ourselves we are trying to resolve the issues that began from the very foundation in which it rests upon...the culture. What we have going on here is the attempt to resolve problems from within the problem. You cannot solve a problem from within the problem no more than you can get pristine water that is mixed with dirty water. It will always be infected.

Thus the many institutionalized causes that have been established in the name of hope, to eradicate the chaos, are falling apart because they come from within the culture by which the problems came from. This will not correct the problem because it feeds upon that which caused the problem at its earliest inception. The solution is to work from the inside out. Let us look at Exhibit D to take a look at a different approach.



The problem has to be attacked by the root. As Richard Jorgensen (2003) expresses, Culture is the shared perceptions, attitudes, thinking and behavior that people adapt to within organizations. Culture is the environment- the soil, in which relationship patterns are supported and grow.

What Life Skills U™ does is take the premises by which define an emotionally mature and healthy human being which provide the elements of Self-Identity, Growth, and Social Development for implementing a life process and through those defined premises offer:

1. A principled base program, which allow all individuals to take ownership of life processes that can be applied to their own personal value systems while applying them to the laws of cause and effect...The Life Skills U™ programs are taught from a vibrant life process perspective while embracing the principles for all future situations that can be used and integrated into one's own life process.

2. Social interaction, based upon emotional equality that allows for a fully functional and conducive environment for the manifestation, existence and multiplication of all individuals to achieve the highest and best good. Life Skills U™ works from the inside out and is greatly aware of the effect the environment plays upon social interaction. As a result Life Skills U™ has incorporated facilitation, study groups, and a knowledge base library that is conducive to creating and expanding an environment based on the personal interaction of emotional equality. By establishing a base of emotional equality the interaction of positive change occurs. When developing a culture-environment that is based on social interdependence and emotional equality we thereby destroy the perception of inequality, which is one of the greatest destroyers of relationships. The common cultures we desperately need to create in our world today are those in which individuality and differences are supported.
3. A content delivery system, that promotes information in an environment that is non-confrontational and non-judging, whereby promoting a positive learning experience. As a result Life Skills U™, uses Parallel Learning Technology™ that addresses the needs of the students and the learning methods of all individuals providing a pleasant and positive learning experience whereby responsibility for learning rests upon the student and concurrently allows the instructor to go beyond teaching and fulfills the role of a guide and mentor without personal entanglements. How you teach is as important as what you teach.
4. Self-examination that assists us in seeing whether or not we were able to learn what we were taught will enhance an individual's learning method in a non-disclosing and non-confrontational learning approach. For example the Feedback Testing™ at Life Skills U™ is designed as part of the whole learning process to present the individual with the fullness of the concepts of that being learned. Enhancing the ability to understand, and to what depth, while at the same time allowing you to see what you did not understand. From this feedback the individual can then begin to accept the information at that moment of readiness whereby enabling you to put the various pieces into a large picture of cause and effect.
5. Self-Expression that assists others to express and experience what you have learned, allows the aspects of true self-identity to emerge. A world based upon emotional inequality has hindered many individuals and our society resulting in a lost self-identity, which ultimately leads to a low self-esteem. However, as a foundation for learning and to expand upon ones own self-expression, Life Skills U has designed a personal publishing system by which one is able to take published work or personal projects into a complete learning system. The individual then can teach and carry their message using the Parallel Learning Technology™ principles. The point is the individual not only develops their message but they can carry their message enhancing self-expression, and recognition.

So what we have then is a process that can work from the inside out. We have a complete learning system process that will allow us to create true-self-esteem or true-concept as Robert Reasoner has pointed out, con-current with a new culture stemming from the approach of the

Parallel Learning Technology™ and based upon the five premises by which defines an emotionally mature, healthy functioning individual which thus, establishes a principled based program of cause and effect, social interaction based upon social interdependency of equality, content delivery system that is non-confrontational and non judging that provides a positive learning environment, self-examination that assists us in seeing whether or not we were able to learn what we were taught, and self-expression that assists others to express and experience what you have learned.

At Life Skills U™, we use On Demand Education™ consisting of Parallel Learning Technology™, Feedback Testing™, A Knowledge Base, and Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) that is supported along with an On Demand Help Desk, all of which delivers a principle based content material called Stop ‘n Start™.

When we put all these factors into action we will then see the manifestation and development of individuals, families, communities and a world working together forming a culture and environment that fosters a new way of thinking, a new way of learning and a new way of living.

Summary

Increasingly higher scores on standardized tests as a measurement of student achievement and school effectiveness coupled with decreasing resources available to devote to reaching the stated goal of NCLB has brought considerable pressure to bear on everyone involved in the public education system. Considerable resources, research and breadth of ideas and approaches have been attempted to drive real learning as well as test results.

Several factors have been shown to contribute to higher test scores and all appear to have a significant role in the process. It has been the focus of this paper to discuss the factor of self-esteem, its relationship to and impact on test scores.

While self-esteem is not everything when it comes to test scores, it is critical and will become more critical as the requirements for AYP under NCLB increase every year. It has been the opinion of Life Skills U™ that self-esteem is only part of the solution to a more effective education and the raising of test scores. Without a foundation of a true self-identity which works to assist the discovery and reality of who you are (True-Identity and a foundation for Self-Esteem), and who you are not (False-Ego or False Self-Esteem), it is next to impossible to establish an environment conducive to new thinking, new learning and new living.

What is needed is an approach, tool or paradigm that will bring all the required five premises together so that students and individuals alike not only learn, but also are able to demonstrate their achievements. Such a tool and process has been identified, proven to be effective and readily available for those who are ready to look just outside the box.

References:

California State Board of Education, 'Adequate Yearly Progress' Retrieved July 5, 2004 from <http://www.sdc.s.k12.ca.us/AYP/subgroups.html>

Alliance for Excellent Education, Scott Jofus and Brenda Maddox-Dolan Retrieved July 5th, 2004 from <<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/NCLB/NCLB.pdf>>

"The Desktop Reference" retrieved July 5, 2004 from <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/reference.doc>

"Education Minnesota" retrieved July 5, 2004 from http://www.educationminnesota.org/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=10125

Stephanie, S (1999), 'Teacher Quality Is Number One' retrieved July 10th, 2004 from http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=110&subsecID=135&contentID=737

Schmidt, J (1998), "Research Music and Policy Debates" retrieved July 7th, 2004 from <http://www.grps.k12.mi.us/~music/whymusic/ResearchPolicy.html>

Kohn, A (1994) "The Truth about Self-Esteem" retrieved July 8th, 2004 from <http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/tase.htm>

Reasoner, R (1990)'Self-Esteem and Youth, What Research has to say about it' retrieved July 10th, 2004 from <http://www.self-esteem-international.org/content/5-research.htm>,

Jorgensen, R D (2003), Creating a Culture Responsive to Change, [software] Stop 'n Start™ Courseware in Parallel Learning Technology™, delivered from Life Skills U™ www.lifeskillsu.org or e-mail www.information@lifeskillsu.org