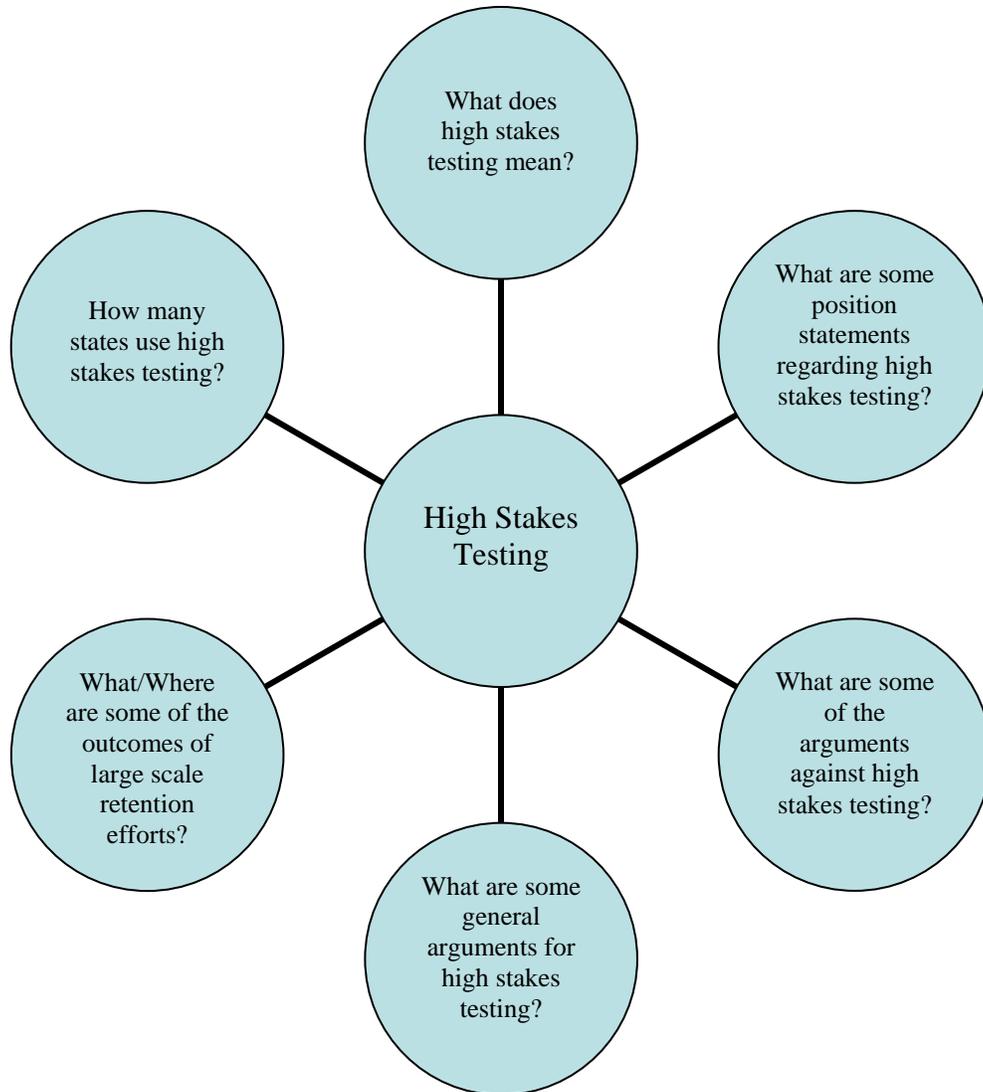


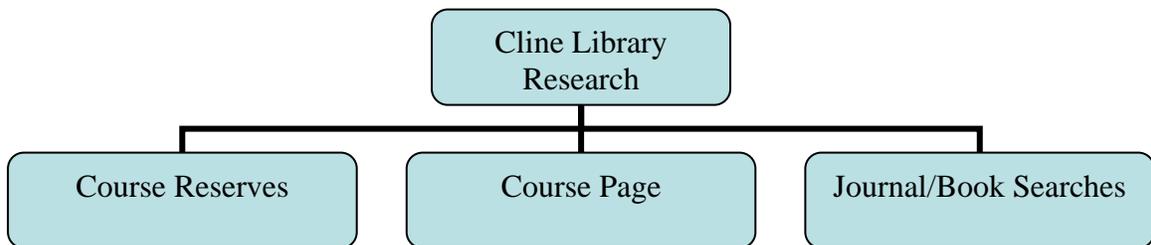
**High Stakes Testing:**

**An Online PBL**

**Pam Schildgen**



## Essential Questions



**After completing this PBL, you will be able to utilize these library resource/research pages.**

## **INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS**

1. Students will participate in online research through Cline Library
2. Students will present a position regarding the issue of high stakes testing in an online discussion and/or PowerPoint presentation.
3. Students will participate in online discussion regarding a professional problem of teachers.
4. Students will evaluate their online PBL experience.

## **SOLUTION ARTIFACTS**

1. Students will produce a reference list of at least ten citations in APA format. These will be citations regarding high stakes testing. This will be sent to the instructor via the assignment drop box.. (5 points)
2. Students will assume a role, research this role and produce a two – three page position and/or PowerPoint Presentation that will be sent to the instructor via the assignment drop box.. (10 points)
3. Students will present their position in an online discussion entitled “Town Meeting” and will post at least three subsequent times in response to the positions of other class members and their assigned roles. (5 points)
4. Students will produce a one page reflection/evaluation of their online PBL experience and send it to the instructor via the assignment drop box. (5 points)

## Solution Artifact Rubrics:

### Citation Rubric

<b>Meets Expectations 4-5 points</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations 2-3 points</b>	<b>Incomplete 0-1 points</b>
Paper includes 10 or more citations, word processed in APA format.	Paper includes 10 word processed but is not in APA format.	Paper is incomplete or is not turned in by the due date parameters.

### Position Paper Rubric

<b>Meets Expectations 4-5 points</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations 2-3 points</b>	<b>Incomplete 0-1 points</b>
Two-three page paper is word processed, double-spaced, in APA format reflecting your role's position or your personal position regarding high stakes testing.	Two-three page paper is not word processed, double-spaced, in APA format reflecting your role's position or your personal position regarding high stakes testing.	Paper is not turned in by the due date parameters.

### Town Meeting Rubric

<b>Meets Expectations 4-5 points</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations 1-3 points</b>	<b>Incomplete 0 points</b>
Initial posting and three subsequent postings are made by the due dates.	Initial posting and three subsequent postings are not made by the due dates.	Initial posting and three subsequent postings are not made.

## **Reflection Paper Rubric**

<b>Meets Expectations 4-5 points</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations 2-3 points</b>	<b>Incomplete 0-1 points</b>
One page paper is a word processed, double-spaced reflection regarding your PBL online experience.	One page paper is not a word processed, double-spaced reflection regarding your PBL online experience.	Paper not turned in by the due date parameters.

### **TASK**

#### **Introduction and Problem Background**

High-stakes tests refer to tests that are used to make important educational decisions about children. Presently in the United States, eighteen states utilize such tests to make promotion and graduation decisions. In fact, large scale grade retention policies based on standardized test scores are currently in effect in Florida, Illinois and Maryland.

The use of a single test score to make these decisions is viewed as controversial by some and is considered a misuse testing. Others feel that such testing ensures that children have mastered material and are ready to move on. Still others believe that such high-stakes tests lead to the narrowing of curriculum and teaching to the test.

The use of tests to promote educational reform is yet another purpose:

The President, politicians from both parties, and many citizens believe that attaching consequences (i.e. high-stakes) to tests is vital to educational reform. Their logic is that by attaching significant penalties and rewards to performance on tests, we can reform an educational system that is not producing satisfactory student achievement. High-stakes tests, they contend, will help to increase academic achievement across America's schools. (Amrein & Beliner, 2002, p.1)

High-stakes testing may be intended to motivate learning and therefore increase student learning. It is a staple of the educational accountability movement. What are the effects of high-stakes testing on academic achievement and student motivation? What do we know about the role and effect of high stakes testing in our schools?

### **Context**

The setting is a large unified school district in the southwest. A well known legislator will be speaking to the community and a few neighboring communities at a joint meeting regarding the use of high-stakes tests for graduation and promotion decisions. Specifically, the legislator is encouraging the use of promotional gates at grades three, eight and ten. That means that students that do not meet a certain pre-determined score will not be allowed to move on to the next grade.

The school district is one of the leading scorers on the test that will be deemed high-stakes. The graduation rate in the district is over ninety percent. However, the neighboring districts service many low income families, migrant families and rural populations.

The joint meeting will be held at the town's convention center. It is anticipated that there will be many people present to discuss this issue. Parents, school board members, educators, and administrators will attend. It is rumored that the ACLU attorney will also be present.

## **Problem**

A panel is being formed by the superintendent to discuss the uses and misuses of test scores to make educational decisions. This panel will be present and will participate in the discussion that the legislator will initiate when he comes to the community meeting.

The use of high-stakes testing is seen as a means to educational reform by many in the district's conservative community. It is an affluent district and the majority of students graduate from high school and subsequently attend college. There is great parental involvement in the schools and for the most part, parents support teachers.

The neighboring communities are rural and their schools service families of much lower SES. Many high school students work to assist their families. Most of the students who graduate do not attend college.

The legislator arrives with a silver tongue and many pie charts. He launches into a discourse regarding the declining educational standards in the state and vows that the use of high stakes testing will bring all students up to par. He publicly states that, "Those students who don't score adequately on the test will not move on." In particular, he is using the *grade equivalency score* (3.2, 5.8, PHS) on a norm referenced test as the measure that "counts" toward promotion or retention. He adds that children who don't

score sufficiently in third, eighth and tenth grades will remain in their present grades until they do.

He ends his speech by stating that “The only way we will improve education is by attaching a consequence to it.....students won’t perform unless they fear they will fail. Furthermore, holding children back will ensure that they will master the material thus promoting success and improving the graduation rate.”

Many parents in the district are in support of this action. The legislator has been a member of the state’s education committee for many years. He is also a member of the community where the meeting will be held.

### **Solution**

The panel will be asked to present the teachers’ perspective on this issue. The panel consists of five members: a first year primary grade teacher, a physical education teacher, a middle school English teacher, a high school math teacher and an intermediate elementary teacher. The task of the panel is to gather information about the uses of high-stakes tests and to provide fodder for this discussion. It is hoped that many sides of this multifaceted issue will be presented.

In addition, parents and a lawyer will also speak at the meeting. The superintendent and the legislator will also be key in the discussion.

## **PROBLEM DOCUMENTS**

The following documents are provided to assist you in examining this topic.

- 1.1 The legislator's letter to the district superintendent.
- 1.2 The response from the superintendent.
- 1.3 The letter from the superintendent to the panel members.

## **COLLABORATION STRATEGIES**

### **Collaboration Preparation:**

First (June 7<sup>th</sup>), a general discussion regarding the problem will ensue in our Module Two discussion area. You will need to look at the big picture. This “problem” includes many issues, not just one. What are these issues?

Second (June 11<sup>th</sup>), you will be assigned a role to play and you will begin to gather information regarding that role. You may tap the course reserves for some more information regarding high stakes testing or, of course, locate your own. It will be important to be able to back up what you say with research citations.

Third, (June 21<sup>st</sup>), you will need to participate in the online Town Meeting. I will have the initial parameters set, which you will be able to view on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Please make initial postings by the 21<sup>st</sup> and have all of your postings (at least three) completed by the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Remember, this is a simulation. We want to treat one another with dignity. The roles we assume may not validate our personal feelings. The strength of this simulation will be our ability to look at many angles and be able to back our arguments.

**Roles:**

*First Year Primary Grade Teacher:* Educated at a state school, this teacher was hired a week before school started this year. S/he is anxious to stay in the district, but is having a rough first year. S/he is currently on an improvement plan due to classroom management issues.

*Physical Education Teacher:* This teacher is a veteran. S/he has been in the district over twenty years and is nearing retirement age. S/he is a life long learner and has invested much time, energy and money into staying abreast with current educational issues.

*Middle School English Teacher:* This teacher has taught between five and seven years. S/he almost left the profession after three years, but felt compelled to stay to try to make a difference. S/he is bilingual and from a family of origin that were first generation immigrants.

*High School Math Teacher:* This teacher is middle aged and has come from the corporate world where s/he served as an accountant for many years. S/he became involved with education after retirement motivated by “what was wrong with schools” in an attempt to “fix it.”

*Intermediate Elementary Teacher:* Motivated by “getting them ready for the real world”, this teacher wants to see higher standards implemented in schools. S/he believes this touchy feely education has ruined our schools.

*Legislator:* Having been involved in educational decisions for many years through legislative work, this legislator believes the best way to approach educational reform is to make demands on districts, schools, administrators, teachers and students. Ultimately, he feels that promotional gates need to be implemented and that social promotion should be outlawed.

*Superintendent:* The superintendent has been at the helm of this district for fifteen years. He is well regarded by the community and has kept the collective community values in the forefront during his tenure.

*ACLU Member:* This attorney has been asked to attend by an anonymous party. S/he has been tipped off that this high stakes policy will greatly affect the minority population of neighboring districts.

*Parent One:* This is the parent of a special needs child. The child has minor learning disabilities, but under the new plan, this will have a major impact.

*Parent Two:* This is the parent of a child identified as academically gifted.

*Parent Three:* This parent is an advocate of back to basics education.

*Parent Four:* This is a parent of a child from a neighboring district. The family is considered financially at the poverty level.

### **Individual Accountability**

You will be assigned roles to play in this exchange. You will need to research in order to fulfill your role. We will utilize the “Town Meeting” discussion area for this simulation. You will be asked to make your initial posting and to post at least three subsequent times.

Please write a two-three page position paper regarding this issue. It can be your personal position or the one that you assume in your role. Please use citations. This needs to be in APA format.

Please write a one page reflection regarding this PBL experience. Send it through the assignment drop box.

### **Group Processing**

Town Meeting parameters will be able to be viewed on June 14th. Please make sure you visit the site on that day. Your individual posting will begin on the 21st. Please be respectful of all posts. This is a simulation and views expressed are related to the roles being played.

## **SCAFFOLDS**

Course reserves include many articles regarding high stakes testing. Our course page has some helpful links. In addition, Cline Library online is available for further research. You may, of course, use your own material, as well.

## **ANNOTATED ACCESS TO EXPERT SOLUTION**

The problem presented is multifaceted. First, the use of one test to make educational decisions is highly contested. Please see, for example, some of the position statements listed on our course page.

<http://www.aera.net/about/policy/stakes.htm>

<http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/testing.html>

[http://www.nctm.org/about/position\\_statements/highstakes.htm](http://www.nctm.org/about/position_statements/highstakes.htm)

[http://www.reading.org/positions/high\\_stakes.html](http://www.reading.org/positions/high_stakes.html)

<http://www.trendigest.info/docs/pshst.htm>

In addition, promotional gates have been used before. In the 1980s, New York implemented them. They are currently being used in Chicago and Florida. Links to information regarding these examples are found on the library course page and the course reserve page. There are also many articles regarding grade retention.

<http://www.read-to-learn.org/>

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/july99/article6.html>

<http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/Rejoindr2.pdf>

<http://tasponline.org/retention.htm>

<http://www.edbriefs.com/usa02-03/09.02.02usa.html>

[http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~hauser/Trends2001\\_03.pdf](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~hauser/Trends2001_03.pdf)

<http://www.ecs.org/html/offsite.asp?document=http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report33.pdf>

Grade retention is an issue that has been researched for almost a century. Jimerson's (1999) meta-analysis regarding retention is located on the course page and there is a link below. Grade retention is more often used in minority populations and special education populations. Please see the course page for links to articles regarding these issues.

[http://www.education.ucsb.edu/jimerson/retention/SPR\\_MetaAnalysis2001.pdf](http://www.education.ucsb.edu/jimerson/retention/SPR_MetaAnalysis2001.pdf)

What does the grade equivalency score really mean on a standardized test? Should this be used as a basis for any educational decision?

<http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/stanford9/stanford9factsheet.asp>

<http://assess.nelson.com/a-gloss.html>

<http://seamonkey.ed.asu.edu/~alex/teaching/assessment/standardized2.html#RTFToC9>

Superintendent William Doe  
Anytown Unified School District  
State Capital, ST

June 22, 2005

John Legislator  
State Capital  
State Capital, ST

Dear John,

I also look forward to the Town Meeting. I anticipate a large crowd and think a question and answer period is imperative.

I have assembled a panel of teachers to speak to the meeting attendees after your presentation. They will be bringing forth the pros and cons of high stakes testing. I think it is important for this to be aired to provide balance in the meeting. I plan to have them present their findings after your formal presentation.

If I can be of any assistance prior to the meeting, don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

William Doe  
Superintendent  
Anytown Unified School District

June 22, 2005

Superintendent William Doe  
Anytown Unified School District  
State Capital, ST

Dear Bill,

I look forward to the Town Meeting to be held at your city hall next week. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to your school board, district employees, and parents. I think this will be an important meeting for all of us.

As you know, educational accountability is currently a hot political item as is social promotion. Your district has historically been one of our state leaders in standardized testing. I know you are interested in maintaining that distinction.

I would like to spend the first thirty minutes of the meeting illustrating the plan I would like to see implemented in the state. This is a plan that I will be advocating to my educational committee and subsequently to the legislature. I welcome questions about the plan and hope to open the meeting to questions after I conclude my presentation.

Again, I look forward to seeing you and addressing your district.

Sincerely,

John Legislator  
Chair, Education Committee

Superintendent William Doe  
Anytown Unified School District  
State Capital, ST

June 22, 2005

Teacher Panel Member  
Anytown School  
Anytown Unified School District

Dear Panel Member,

A Town Meeting is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_. Representative John Legislator will be making a formal presentation during this meeting regarding high stakes testing and promotional gates at this meeting. I would like for you to serve on a panel to address this issue.

Prior to the meeting, you will need to meet with other panel members in order to research this topic. You will have thirty minutes to present your findings at the meeting.

There will be many people present at this meeting including the school board, administrators, fellow teachers and parents. I know that your preparation will be thorough.

If I can be of any help, please contact me prior to the meeting.

Sincerely,

William Doe  
Superintendent  
Anytown Unified School District

## Town Meeting Parameters (WebCT)

Welcome to the Town Meeting. This is the general discussion area. You will need to post your role position in the appropriate Town Meeting room and read the discussion threads in all the other Town Meeting rooms. This area will be the place to post your **responses** to the information posted in the other Town Meeting rooms. Your role posting in your appropriate room will need to be made by midnight on June 21<sup>st</sup>. All role Town Meeting rooms will be locked for postings after midnight on June 21<sup>st</sup>. Only this Town Meeting Room will be open for your three subsequent postings.

Your three subsequent postings will be in response to what you have read in all the various role Town Meeting rooms.