# Chapter 1 Educational Testing and Assessment: Context, Issues, and Trends

# Exercise 1-A

## HISTORY OF TEST-BASED REFORM

LEARNING GOAL: Identifies trends in the use of tests in educational reform efforts.

*Directions:* Indicate whether the following statements about the use of tests in reform efforts during the past forty years are **true (T)** or **false (F)** by circling the appropriate letter.

T F 1. The current emphasis on accountability in education has resulted in increased school testing.

T F 2. The rapid growth of minimum-competency testing requirements in the 1970s and early1980s was stimulated by the widely-held belief that high school graduates often lacked essential skills.

T F 3. There is public support for the use of test results to compare schools academically.

T F 4. Concerns that accountability leads to teaching to the test have contributed to calls for increased reliance on performance-based assessments.

T F 5. Content standards specify the minimum score required to pass a test.

LEARNING GOAL: Distinguishes between the purposes and characteristics of content standards and performance standards.

*Directions:* List the defining features of content standards and of performance standards. Distinguish between and describe the primary purposes of these two types of standards.

Content Standards:

Performance Standards:

Note: Answers will vary

## Exercise 1-B

## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

LEARNING GOAL: Identifies characteristics of and rationales for the use of performance assessments.

*Directions:* Indicate whether measurement specialists would **agree (A)** or **disagree (D)** with each of the following statements concerning performance assessments by circling the appropriate letter.

A D 1. The belief that testing and assessment shapes instruction has led to increased emphasis on performance assessments.

A D 2. The best way to achieve authentic assessment in the classroom is through performance assessments.

A D 3. Many proponents of performance assessments accept the idea that “what you test is what you get.”

A D 4. Tasks requiring extended responses have been the target of most criticisms of testing and assessment.

A D 5. Anything that can be measured by a performance assessment task could also be measured by a multiple-choice test.

LEARNING GOAL: Identifies advantages and disadvantages of performance-based assessments.

*Directions:* List some of the major advantages and disadvantages of performance-based assessments.

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

Note: Answers will vary

Exercise 1-C

## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT

LEARNING GOAL: Identifies characteristics and limitations of national and international assessments.

*Directions:* Indicate whether the following statements about national and international assessment are **true (T)** or **false (F)** for circling the appropriate letter.

T F 1. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) enables schools to compare the performance of their students to the nation as a whole.

T F 2. NAEP provides a means of monitoring trends in the achievement of a student over 25 years.

T F 3. In addition to national results, NAEP now provides results for state-by-state comparisons on a voluntary basis.

T F 4. NAEP collects achievement data for students by both age and grade level.

T F 5. Comparisons of nations based on international assessments are as trustworthy as comparison of regions of the country based on NAEP results.

T F 6. Comparability of results in international assessments is assured by translating assessments to the languages spoken in different countries.

LEARNING GOAL: Identifies influences at the national level that may influence the role and nature of testing and assessment in the future.

*Directions:* Briefly describe actions of the federal government that are likely to influence testing and assessment in the future.

Note: Answers may vary.

##### Exercise 1-D

**CURRENT TRENDS IN EDUCATIONAL MEASUREMENT**

LEARNING GOAL: Identifies factors related to current trends in testing and assessment.

*Directions:* Indicate whether measurement specialists would **agree (A)** or **disagree (D)** with each of the following statements concerning current trends in testing and assessment by circling the appropriate letter.

A D 1. Computers are especially useful for adaptive testing.

A D 2. Computer-administered simulations of problems enable the measurement of complex skills not readily measured by paper-and-pencil tests.

A D 3. Despite concern about the quality of school programs, there has been a demand for **less** testing and assessment.

A D 4. Computerized adaptive tests increase efficiency by reducing the number of items that need to be administered to achieve reliable measurement for a given test taker.

A D 5. The focus on the consequences of testing and assessment has decreased in recent years.

A D 6. The computer provides the potential to present simulations that can measure the processes that student use to solve problems.

LEARNING GOAL: Describes advantages and limitations of expanded uses of computer-based tests and assessments.

*Directions:* Briefly describe some of the important advantages and major limitations of expanded uses of computer-based tests assessments.

Advantages:

Limitations:

Note: Answers may vary

Exercise 1-E

**CONCERNS AND ISSUES IN TESTING AND ASSESSMENT**

LEARNING GOAL: Identifies factors related to concerns and issues in testing and assessment.

*Directions:* Indicate whether test specialists would **agree (A)** or **disagree (D)** with each of the following statements describing concerns and issues in testing and assessment by circling the appropriate letter.

A D 1. Many of the criticisms of testing are the result of misinterpretation and misuse of test scores.

A D 2. A common misinterpretation of scores on tests and assessments is to assume they measure more than they do.

A D 3. Testing can only benefit students.

A D 4. If a particular group of students receives lower scores on a test, it means the test is biased against members of that group.

A D 5. It is good practice to post scores on standardized tests so that students in a class can see how their performance compares to that of their peers.

A D 6. Test anxiety may lower the performance of some students.

LEARNING GOAL: Lists the possible effects of students and parents examining school testing and assessment results.

*Directions:* List the advantages and disadvantages of the legal requirement that students and parents must be provided with access to school testing and assessment records.

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

Note: Answers may vary

**Answers to Student Exercises**

**1-A 1-B 1-C 1-D 1-E**

1. T 1. A 1. F 1. A 1. A

2. T 2. D 2. T 2. A 2. A

3. T 3. A 3. T 3. D 3. D

4. T 4. D 4. T 4. D 4. D

5. T 5. D 5. F 5. D 5. D

6. F 6. A 6. D

**Chapter 1**

**Educational Testing and Assessment: Context, Issues, and Trends**

1. Externally mandated testing and assessment programs are often appealing to policy makers because they
2. are popular with teachers.
3. are written by teachers in the child’s given school or school system.
4. indicate whether a given school or school district is effective.
5. indicate high or low teacher quality.
6. Content standards are intended to specify which of the following?
7. instructional approaches to use in teaching specific content
8. the curriculum for all subjects and grade levels
9. what students are expected to learn in a subject or course
10. lists of curriculum materials that should be used in lessons

3. Accountability programs for educational reform have put pressure on schools to make which of the following decisions?

1. abolish the use of published tests and assessments for test preparation
2. reduce the number of classroom aides working in schools
3. increase the use of a variety of tests and assessments to prepare students
4. offer financial incentives such as scholarships for high-performing students

4. When externally mandated tests are used to measure current student achievement and progress, the tests are being used as

1. a barometer
2. a lever
3. a method of formative assessment
4. a process to test teacher efficiency and quality.

5. Which of the following best summarizes the findings in the report “A Nation at Risk”?

1. children tended to be tested too much, especially in later grades
2. tests should be administered beginning in the upper elementary or middle school grades
3. children in the USA scored better than students in most European countries but lower than most students in Asian countries
4. the quality of American education was mediocre compared with other countries

6. One negative influence of the pressures of accountability on schools is that it encourages teachers to

1. show students how to make educated guesses on difficult multiple choice test questions.
2. put less emphasis on important instructional topics not on the test.
3. stress the importance of test scores on students’ overall academic career.
4. organize into grade level teams in order to co-teach curriculum.

7. Which of the following would likely be a possible danger of the accountability movement on the local school program?

1. a narrowing of objectives
2. a neglect for basic skills
3. an expansion of the curriculum
4. an overemphasis on performance objectives

8. Which of the following events followed **shortly** after the publication of “A Nation at Risk”?

1. Many teachers and administrators were fired and/or transferred to other positions.
2. All 50 states introduced some form of educational reform.
3. No Child Left Behind was enacted.
4. One standardized test was adopted for use by all 50 states.

9. Which of the following summarizes the main difference between content standards and performance standards?

1. Content standards define what will be learned while performance standards define how things will be learned.
2. Content standards define how things will be learned while performance standards define what will be learned.
3. Content standards measure student effort while performance standards measure the quality of the student performance.
4. Content standards are gender specific while performance standards are specific to certain minority groups.

10. Computerized testing can increase the efficiency of testing by incorporating

1. adaptive testing procedures.
2. conventional test layout and formats.
3. informal teacher-made tests.
4. more essay questions.

11. Test critics have focused much of their attention on which of the following?

1. how essay tests are administered
2. how math and science tests are scored
3. the use of multiple-choice items
4. printing tests other languages for nonnative English speaking students

12. Abolishing all published tests would most likely yield which of the following results?

1. quicker administrative staffing decisions
2. less effective educational decisions
3. a more objective assessment of accountability programs
4. more opportunities for individuals to succeed on merit

13. Misuse of published tests probably can best be prevented by more careful

1. administration.
2. interpretation.
3. scoring.
4. collation.

14. Which of the following would serve as a particularly well founded criticism of standardized tests?

1. they are used to evaluate teachers rather than children’s achievement levels
2. they measure only limited characteristics of an individual
3. they require excessive time to administer
4. they result in an overemphasis on complex reasoning skills

15. Critics of externally mandated tests argue that these tests cause anxiety for children. Which of the following arguments might a proponent of externally mandated test likely counter with?

1. Moderate test anxiety can lead to student motivation to learn and do well on tests.
2. Students with test anxiety tend score well on these tests because they are awarded extra time.
3. Giving students positive rewards for doing well on tests negates most test anxiety.
4. Test anxiety may be present for older students but is virtually nonexistent for younger students.

16. Which of the following is of particular concern regarding the **interpretation** of students’ test scores?

1. that students were given adequate time to take the test
2. that the test did not contain any open-response questions
3. that the test was administered in the morning
4. that the test results do not lead to stereotyping or labeling students

17. Mr. Johnson has told Billy that he “can do better” while admitting to Monica that she is probably doing “as well as can be expected.” Which of the following acts is Mr. Johnson likely guilty of?

1. alienating parents
2. reinforcing a self-fulfilling prophecy
3. relying too much on test results
4. not taking into account that some tests may contain gender bias

18. Ms. Smith is using an assessment to gauge how well James is learning day-to-day class material as well as devising educational programs designed to help students learn the classroom material better. Which of the following types of assessment would be most beneficial to Ms. Smith?

1. externally mandated
2. summative
3. formative
4. arbitrary

19. Briefly explain, in 4–6 sentences, the mandates of No Child Left Behind and how it relates to the inclusion or exclusion of testing children with disabilities.

**Chapter 1: Answer Key**

1. C

2. C

3. C

4. A

5. D

6. B

7. A

8. B

9. A

10. A

11 C

12. B

13. B

14. B

15. A

16. D

17. B

18. C

19. According to NCLB, all students regardless of disability must indicate proficiency in mastering learning goals. Only students with the most severe disabilities may obtain a waiver from this requirement and such waivers must be arrived at the district level. However, in achieving State proficiency standards, allowance and accommodations must be allowed for students with disabilities. The requirement for such accommodations states that a student’s disability cannot be an impediment or the cause of his/her inability to demonstrate competency in learning goals. An example of this would be allowing a student with learning disabilities to have extra time to take the State mandated tests.