

# **Measuring Teachers' Perceptions of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress**

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## **Introduction**

Standardized testing has become increasingly more common as a method of academic assessment in the U.S. and around the world (Webb, 2013). Given the discriminatory history of education in the United States, it is important that we maintain a critical perspective when taking into account the methods that are used to assess children in school (Webb, 2013). This study seeks to determine and analyze teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of standardized testing in grades three through six in the Central Valley of California, particularly regarding their students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) is a state-mandated standardized test which covers ELA and mathematics and is to be taken by students grades three through eight and grade eleven ("California Assessment, n.d.). It is administered in order to "assist teachers, administrators, students, and parents by promoting high-quality teaching and learning through the use of a variety of assessment approaches and item types" ("California Assessment," n.d.).

## **Research Question**

It is important to gather information on teachers' perceptions of standardized tests because teachers can provide an insider view of what may or may not be effective for their students regarding how the tests are administered, whether or not they measure student achievement well, etc. I believe that researching teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of standardized tests in representing student achievement can provide a new perspective on these tests. My research

question is: What are the perceptions of teachers from the Central Valley regarding the effectiveness, appropriateness, validity, and impacts of the CAASPP.

### **Background and Literature Review**

Grodsky et al. (2008) explain that there are correlations between lower test scores and economic class due to differences in opportunities to learn. Unfortunately, as ELLs tend to come from minority groups that are underserved, this leaves ELLs at a disadvantage. Therefore, Grodsky et al. (2008) believe that test scores are ultimately a reflection of the inequalities in our society, and they state that if we're going to hold students accountable for their scores then schools must be held accountable for providing opportunities to learn that will allow them to achieve good scores. In a study by Winke (2011), teachers in Michigan who administered a test called the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) were given a survey containing questions regarding the administration, appropriateness, effectiveness, impacts, and validity of the test in order to gain insight as to whether the test served the purpose that it is intended to serve, and also to determine whether or not the environment and/or demographic factors influence teachers' perceptions. Ultimately, this study showed that teachers were able to provide more insight into the details of the test than was available to the public (Winke, 2011).

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The participants in this study will be credentialed third through sixth grade teachers from the Central Valley of California, and it is likely that most of them will be from Merced County.

Participation will be voluntary and anonymous.

#### **Materials**

This study will use a survey containing both Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. For example, a Likert scale question may be “On a scale from one to seven, how appropriate do you believe the CAASPP is regarding the length of the test-taking window?” An example of an open-ended question would be “What impacts (if any) do you believe the CAASPP has on your English Language Learning students?”

### Design

This research will utilize an original survey that is both quantitative and qualitative.

### Procedure

Elementary school principals with schools that have grades three through six will be contacted by email and sent the survey to send to their third through sixth grade teachers. Upon receiving the results of the survey, the Likert scale results will be analyzed for trends and open-ended responses will be coded based on how negative or positive they are regarding the different topics of the survey (test administration, impacts on students, etc).

### **Expected Conclusions**

Based on studies of this type that have already been done, I expect that the survey results will reflect that there are mixed perceptions about the impact of the CAASPP on students and school curriculum depending on the number of ELLs the teacher has and the environment that the teacher teaches in. I would also expect that, since a standardized test can only represent so much about a student, teachers will tend to agree that there is more to students’ abilities than what the test can measure. As for the appropriateness and effectiveness of the test, I believe that will come down to teachers’ personal feelings, depending on their teaching experiences preparing students for the CAASPP.

### **Significance**

This study seeks to compare the given reasons for assessment with teachers' opinions and perceptions of the test in order to determine whether the CAASPP fulfills the goals that it sets out to accomplish, as well as to determine whether teachers believe that the test accurately reflects their ELL students' abilities and measure teachers' perceptions of the impacts of this test on ELL students. This is done in the hopes that new insights can be made as to how these tests can be improved as well as how we can be sure that our Central Valley ELL students are recognized for their achievements and receive the funding and resources that they need. This information can be used by test creators to understand how the results may affect students, by teachers to understand each other's perceptions, and by parents to gain an understanding of how teachers feel about the CAASPP and how the test may affect their students.

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