**Focus & Rationale**

**I am thinking of doing an empirical study of nomothetic findings based on the effects of standardized tests on young students, specifically the retention of information throughout the grade levels.**

As a third grade teacher I am always proud of my students and excited to see them learn and to succeed. I had never thought much about standardized tests; I had to proctor the MEAP in October and then waited to get the results in March to see how well my students did. For the past two years I have been a team member of our ISD Social Studies Curriculum Review Team. I learned that in 6th grade the students take their first Social Studies MEAP test. However, the information that they are tested on is from grades 3, 4, and 5.

In third grade my students learn about early Michigan. Some examples of what my students learn about are; who were the Native Americans that lived here, how they used their environment, early French explores, fur traders, the British coming to Michigan, and finally how Michigan attained statehood. This is just the history sections; I also have to teach economics, government, civics, and public issues.

In fourth grade the students pick up where we left off, Michigan’s statehood and proceed to the birth of the United States. Fifth grade they learn about integrated Early American History. Keeping all of this Social Studies history in mind, once these students travel from 3rd grade to 6th grade they are expected to take the 6th grade Social Studies MEAP. The MEAP test asks them questions based on 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade Social Studies stands. I believe that this is why 6th graders are failing to achieve on this test, in my school anyway. I feel that this is something that should be looked into. Are we setting our students up to succeed or fail? Does it make sense to ask these new 6th graders questions about information that they learned 3 years prior? Do we as educators remember what we learned 3 years ago? Do the low scores reflect the work of the teachers or the long time span between information learned and information tested? These are some questions that run through my head every time I think about this topic.

In my school we are implementing a Social Studies/Library special that will be added to our special’s schedule, which includes computers and gym. The Kindergarten, First, and Second graders will take their time in this class to learn about the library and go to the library to check out books. The Third, Fourth, and Fifth graders will be working on Social Studies projects based on their grade’s standards. To see if this truly bridges the gap and helps to increase the Social Studies MEAP scores, a longitudinal study of third graders who move up the grades to Sixth grade would give quantitative data to provide information on whether the special class is helpful or not.

**Causal Hypothesis**: The Social Studies special will help to increase our 6th grade student’s scores on the MEAP. This would take be based on a longitudinal study that lasted three years starting with the 2010-2011 third graders.