Effects of standardized testing with an emphasis on

the testing affects on students

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**Project Revision Summary Sheet**

Focus & Rational (10/10)

I changed nothing in this section. I had good feedback from my professor. Other than keeping in mind to add information about how the specials class would help student retain information as well as how I would collect data.

Literature Review & Annotated Summaries (25/30)

While I understood what was asked of me I definitely confused the setup of my Literature Review. I had to go back through it and make a number of changes so that my information fit better.

* I added more information to my perspectives section so that it was comparable to giving pros and cons to standardized testing
* I also deleted some information that didn’t fit into this section
* I moved information from this section and placed it in the assessment section as well as in the design proposal
* I went back and revisited many of my articles and changed the assessment section to show how the data was gathered rather than the results of the data
* I tried to find more articles pertaining to how students retain information
* I added a new article to the perspectives section about the pros and cons to teaching
* I went through and fixed all of my in citations while referencing in a text
* I made sure that all of my references followed APA formatting

Research Design 7/10)

I had a good start on this section but it needed some more details added into it.

* I explained how students would be chosen to fit into the Social Studies special classroom.
* I added more details about what type of projects the specials teacher would be working on
* I was more specific about what type of data collection would be used
* I offered more assessment information
* Overall, more detail was added to make the proposal more persuasive and understanding

**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.

**Literature Review & Annotated Summaries**

This literature review is focusing on the effects of standardized testing with an emphasis on the testing affects on students. I had more difficultly trying to find specific information about the affects on students compared to amount I was able to find on standardized testing. This information is centering on standardized testing in all places, this is not just specific to Michigan schools.

“The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, increased the role of the federal government in public education and also expanded the role of standardized testing”. (Johnson-Collins, 2010) Many of the articles I have read described standardized testing as a result of government/politics advances into the school system. The test results influence school rating as well as school funding. The grades that the students receive are based on the information that they are being tested on, standardized tests are not testing on the students’ ability to think critically. (Knudson, 2009)

Perspectives:

Standardized testing is helpful because it gives feedback to students, parents, educators, policy makers, and the public. (Margie, 2010) Michigan’s standardized test, the MEAP is given in October but the results are not given back to the teachers until February/March. This gives the teacher little time to take the data and use it within their classroom to make improvements on their teaching. Using the assessment to improve teaching and to improve the classroom environment is helpful to both the teacher and the students. (Simmons, 1998)

According to Reed and Gifford, the rationale behind standardized testing is that when trying to figure out how a student is doing academically there must be a standard of measure. Due to the fact that schools are funded by the state, the state needs some kind of test to show how the schools are progressing; this is where standardized testing comes into play. (Reed and Gifford, 2001)

Standardized tests, in the United States, have been given on a large scale and have been controlled by political groups. (Phelps, 2008) They are not the perfect evaluation tool, however, used properly they can provide very useful information. According to Phelps, 2008, schools are the ones who are held responsible for something that they have no control; students are the ones responsible for their test scores.

According to Riffert, 2005, standardized testing can lead to teaching to the test which leads to the loss of a broader education. Subjects that are being tested have more weight, such as English Language Arts and Mathematics in Third, Fourth, and Fifth. Teachers spend more time of these subjects. The subjects that are not tested aren’t as important and don’t get the time put into to them, such as Social Studies and Science in the lower grades. A switch happens from performance based testing to multiple choice tests. Financing gets held from those schools which desperately need it due to their need to improve staffing and resources. Drilling students for the tests affects the students in their general attitude towards education. Students become very passive and end with being bored. Students wait for their head to be opened so the information can be poured in, they lose their sense of creativity. (Riffert, 2005)

There are many pros and cons to standardized testing. According to an article through BrightHub, some pros to standardized testing: (Margie, 2010)

1. it gives teachers some guidance on what they should teach and when they should teach it
2. gives parents a good idea of where their students are performing compared to the majority
3. it allows students to be tracked through their school careers
4. can provide data to compare across groups of students.

Some cons that go along with these pros are as follows:

1. some teachers are accused of ‘teaching to the test’
2. some schools are under great pressure and this pressure can have negative affects on the students on that school
3. students and teachers can be stressed by the process
4. impossibility to rid the tests of ALL testing bias

Tests are stressful to everyone that is involved. Helpful hints on how to prepare students to take a standardized test help students to feel more comfortable with the test. (Glatt, 2006) This is a common theme through many of my articles that I have read.

According to Klein and the teachers that were surveyed in her study, teachers generally changed their way of teaching without teaching to the test. They felt that students gain a dislike for the subjects that they do not do well in. The teachers feel that students are not learning to learn. Teachers feel that the influence of testing on self and education was generally more dishearting. They feel that students have lowered self-esteem, feel hopeless, and have lots of fears of tests and not passing them. (Klein, 2006)

Due to the technology that has sprung up in schools, technology may be of some use within the future. (Shostak, 1982) This would allow for more immediate feedback which would be more helpful to students as well as teachers. There are also groups that want to look at improving the tests so all students have the ability to succeed. (Pellegrino, 2003)

Pedagogy:

Because standardized tests have been around for so long many teachers have their opinions on how to prepare their students for these tests. Changes in instruction occur due to standardized testing. (Barksdale-Ladd, 2001) Teaching is influenced because of these tests. Teachers face the issue of making sure all of the standards are taught, whether they are teaching to the test or not. (Barksdale-Ladd, 2001) I teach third grade, I cannot let my students go unprepared into their first MEAP test. I have a curriculum which prepares my students for their very first test. This concept was talked about in the Klein article: making sure students are prepared and not intimidated by the test. Teachers as well as students need to be aware of how the standardized tests are going to look. This enables the teachers to be able to teach their students about the appropriate protocol to go about having success within the test. (Klein, 2006)

Different resources are used to prepare teachers for these tests: in-services, training, booklets, and materials, formal and informal discussions with other teachers, and teacher purchased books and materials. (Barksdale-Ladd, 2001) In my experience the internet has become a tool that is impossible to live without when gaining different material to prepare me to prepare my students.

In the –Ladd article, 2001, teacher’s feelings of assessments were positive. They felt that best practice assessments provided feedback to students, is part of the students work and could go into their portfolios, do not dominate curriculum, informs teachers on where improvements can be made, and uses more than one measuring stick to measure student achievements.

“There is a new pedagogic term for introducing children to these testing practices at a very early age. The term, according to a teacher-educator in Ohio, is ‘front-loading children,’ a usage that appears to have originated in the world of capital investment.” (Kozol, 2006) Another common theme throughout these articles was that teachers are no longer teaching to the ‘whole child’, but we are focusing on test related standards and forgetting that we need to teach much more than just that to our students.

Below is a table depicting specific teaching strategies through the year. (Klein, 2006)

Table I Specific Teaching Strategies Used by Teachers

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Teach test content throughout year | 71 % |
| Generally taught test content | 58 % |
| Prepare students for format | 33 % |
| Prepare students mentally | 33 % |
| Focus on organization | 33 % |
| Used test-driven teaching | 24 % |
| Encourage healthy behaviors | 23 % |
| Offer appropriate test environment | 19 % |
| Teach test-taking strategies | 14 % |
| Model evaluation | 14 % |
| Decrease other demands on students | 14 % |
| Give accommodations where required | 9 % |
| Teach to individual learning styles | 9 % |
| Provide authentic instruction | 4 % |
| Prepare students who need extra help | 4 % |

Assessment

Standardized tests in these articles ranged from in-class tests, grade level tests, and state tests. The times that the state level tests were given varied throughout the states. The MEAP is taken in October and that time period gives teachers time to prepare their students. However, the data from the MEAP is not delivered back to the teachers until February/March.

Michigan’s standardized test, the MEAP, measures students’ progress into their current class, for example a fourth graders test score will reflect their knowledge of the standards they learned to prepare them for fourth grade. “What matters in most situations is how well one can evoke the knowledge stored in long-term memory and uses it to reason efficiently about current information and problems. *Therefore, within the normal range of cognitive abilities, estimates of how people organize information in long-term memory are likely to be more important than estimates of working memory capacity.”* (Pellegrino et al., 2001) Along the lines of Piaget teaching, this statement is discussing how schemas affect students’ ability to retain and produce their knowledge from their long-term memories. According to Pellegrino et al., 2001, people typically organize information in schemas to support retrieval processes, children do not learn the same ways and therefore their processes can be different. Students are being tested on their acquisition of knowledge and not the mastery of the skills. (Barrier-Ferreira, 2008)

Klein, a teacher-educator, and a colleague, a clinical psychologist, surveyed teachers in two local school districts to find out how standardized testing was affecting their teaching. Prior to the surveying the two held focused interviews with community members and administration. Those interviews allowed Klein and her colleague to shape their research questions and construct a research plan. 200 questionnaires were placed in teacher’s mailboxes in 5 schools in New York. Of these five schools, two were elementary, two were middle school, and one was high school. The questionnaires job was to assess the teacher’s way of managing standardized testing. There were eight questions on the questionnaire and it had a self addressed return envelope attached with it. (Klein, 2006)

The Barksdale-Ladd article, 2001, used information based on interviews with teachers and parents from two large states. A total of 59 teachers were interviewed, 35 from a large southern state and 24 from a large central/northern state. The teachers ranged from 3rd year to veteran teachers with 20 years of experience. Twenty parents, 10 in each state, were interviewed individually. The interviews were geared towards learning about “teacher and parent knowledge about standards and testing, teacher test administration and student preparation practices, effects of tests on teachers, parents, and students, how teachers make instructional decisions based on these tests, and the value of such tests” (Barksdale-Ladd, 2001)

In the last few years, Hoagland-Smith has surveyed over 500 teachers. All of their feelings are similar on how students learn in the classroom:

* Read It
* Learn It
* Test It
* Forget It
* Proceed to Next Lesson
* Repeat Process

This process shows how students acquire their knowledge not about their performance. (Hoagland-Smith, 2006)

This topic was of interest to me because 6th grade Social Studies MEAP test asks questions about standards that the students learned back in third grade.

As a young teacher who has only had four years of experience I am for standardized testing. I do feel that it helps me to find my teaching weak spots. After completing this literature review I am on the fence as to the feelings that I have about standardized testing. A lot of the information that I did find was very negative. It makes me wonder if standardized testing is not as helpful as I thought it was or if there are more negative sources because of the amount of people who are upset with the idea of standardized testing. A very powerful documentary,”The Race to Nowhere”, shows the pressures that school children and teachers face when dealing with the standardized testing era. It’s easy to read an argument and get hung up on the research that they have completed to support their topic. I feel that standardized tests are beneficial to me because I take the information, along with colleagues, in March and analyze where we could make improvements or where we have succeeded as teachers.

Annotated Summaries

1. **The Race to Nowhere**

The Race to Nowhere is a documentary about the pressures that school children and teachers face when dealing with the achievement based era. This documentary features the struggles that students, teachers, and parents face. There is a trailer available for this movie and it is very powerful. It made me rethink some of my own teaching within my room.

Abeles, V. 2010. *The Race to Nowhere* [Documentary]. Retrieved from

<http://www.racetonowhere.com/>

1. **What’s at Stake in High-Stakes Testing?**

This articles information is based on interviews with teachers and parents from two large states. This article focuses its information on teachers and parents perception on about mandated tests and standards. A total of 59 teachers were interviewed, 35 from a large southern state and 24 from a large central/northern state. The teachers also ranged from 3rd year to veteran teachers with 20 years of experience. Twenty parents, 10 in each state, were interviewed individually. Both of these states use criterion-referenced tests, the same as Michigan. A common theme between the teachers and parents in the southern state and northern state was that children’s responses to the test were feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and disappointment.

Barksdale-Ladd, M. A., & Thomas, K. F. 2001. What's at Stake in High-Stakes Testing? *Journal*

*of Teacher Education*

1. **Producing Commodities or Educating Children? Nurturing the Personal Growth of Students in the Face of Standardized Testing**

This article looks at the area of educating children. One example was given about a principal who e-mailed the staff and told them to forgo anything to do with the up coming holidays unless it directly fit into the standards. The main theme of academic achievement is focused around standardized testing. Teachers forgo teaching the whole child and do not focus on anything unrelated to the test. This article seemed to be asking, are we forgetting about the students we teach, socially and emotionally, and only focusing on pushing the standards?

Barrier-Ferreira, J. (n.d.). Producing Commodities or Educating Children? Nurturing the

Personal Growth of Students in the Face of Standardized Testing. *Clearing House*.

1. **Standardized Testing Teaching Tips**

This article was from a 34 year teaching veteran. There are helpful hints for parents and children on how to prepare before the test takes place. Hints in this section were to study every night to prepare for the test, the night before the test do something fun, and to remember that all children need to be encouraged to do their best and not necessarily get 100%. Hints for taking the test included taking their time, staying calm, and monitoring their time on the test and questions.

Glatt, F. J. 2006. Standardized Testing Teaching Tips. *Education Articles*. Retrieved from

<http://www.edarticle.com/pdf/article-71.pdf>

1. **Excellence in Education Versus High Stakes Standardized Testing**

These article focuses on educators who are successful, regardless of circumstances, in helping children succeed. The article talks about a disconnection between standardized testing and excellence in education: the validity of standardized tests, appropriate standards, standardized tests measure of small range of behaviors. Master teachers can help to improve their students’ tests scores without teaching to the test and still keep the whole child in mind while they are teaching. These teachers can also help low performing teachers and help them to become master teachers.

Hilliard III, A. G. (n.d.). Excellence in Education Versus High Stakes Standardized Testing.

*Journal of Teacher Education*

1. **Education: The Fallacy of Teaching to the Test**

This article focuses on the idea of teaching to the test. Teaching to the test is ideally wrong. In this author’s opinion teaching to the test is 100% correct. Drivers training teachers teach to the test and their students are successful. This author surveyed over 500 teachers and they feel that students learn it for the tests and then forget the information. It’s all about the acquisition of knowledge.

Hoagland-Smith, L. 2006. Education-The Fallacy of Teaching to the Test. *Education Articles*.

Retrieved from <http://www.edarticle.com/pdf/article-125.pdf>

1. **Standardized Testing: A Race to Nowhere**

This article was written by a teacher who has had 13 years of experience in special education classrooms. She also has experience working as a social worker. This article focuses on the negative side of standardized testing, California is the state that is being referenced, and refers to *The Race to Nowhere*.

Johnson-Collins, L. Y. 2010. Standardized Testing: A Race to Nowhere. *Education Articles*.

Retrieved from [http://www.edarticle.com/school-improvement/s-standardized-testing-a-race- to-nowhere.html](http://www.edarticle.com/school-improvement/s-standardized-testing-a-race-%20%20%20%20to-nowhere.html)

1. **Managing Standardized Testing in Today’s Schools**

This is from a group 200 teachers that had been surveyed. Some type of test preparation was shown to be at 100% throughout the surveyed teachers. Teachers try to encourage a positive test taking environment; they send home notes and try to put their students’ minds at ease about the test. The results of the study suggest that standardized testing affects teaching and learning. Surveyed teachers felt that standardized testing drives much of their teaching.

Klein, A. M., Zevenbergen, A. A., & Brown, N. (2006, August). Managing Standardized Testing

in Today's Schools. *Journal of Educational Thought*.

1. **When Pedagogy and Policy Collide: A Liberal Education**

This is a blog written by a veteran high school English teacher who is perusing her PhD. Brigitte became a teacher because she thought that she could do a better job at teaching compared to some teachers that she had had as a student. One important lesson that she feels she has learned is that learning is not linear, learning is dynamic. After No Child Left Behind she felt as if her administrators had delivered a message: *If* we teacher proof the curriculum, all of the students will be on the same page on the same day and will be equally prepared for the state’s standardized tests.

Knudson, B. (2009, May 5). When Pedagogy and Policy Collide: A Liberal Education [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://brigitteknudson.wordpress.com/2009/05/05/when-pedagogy-and-policy-collide/>

1. **Standardized Testing: The Do or Die Agenda**

This article is focused on inner-city schools that don’t have the luxury of deviating away from the designated road. Kozol focuses on schools where subjects like History, Science, and the arts have been pushed aside to focus on the test. Students are being penalized due to their low performances by the incessant test preparation. Recess has been taken away from low performing students. These students also are mandated to come into school during the summer.

Kozol, J. 2006. Standardized Testing: The Do or Die Agenda. *Principal*.

1. **A Look at the Pros and Cons of Standardized Testing**

This is article that is through the website <http://www.brighthub.com/>. “Bright Hub’s goal is simple: share knowledge about how the simplest scientific idea evolves into tomorrow’s technology.” According to this website all of its writers are accredited teachers. This article gives four pros and cons to standardize testing as well as the uses for standardized testing.

Margie. *A Look at the Pros and Cons of Standardized Testing*. (2010, July 27). Retrieved from

<http://www.brighthub.com/education/k-12/articles/16137.aspx>

1. **Standardized Testing Takes Center Stage-Knowing What Students Know-Recent advances in the cognitive and measurement sciences should be the foundation for developing a new system of student assessment**

This article describes a council bent on the development of a new kinds of assessment that will help students to succeed. They “want assessments to be a facilitator of higher levels of student achievement.” In this committee’s opinion assessments must meld three components: cognition, observations, and interpretation. Keeping these three components in mind, a test should also be designed for a specific purpose. This article is emphasizes the need for a new assessment to replace the lacking assessments that are in place today.

Pellegrino, J. 2003. Standardized Testing Takes Center Stage: Knowing What Students Know-

Recent advances in the cognitive and measurement sciences should be the foundation for

developing a new system of student assessment. *Issues in Science and Technology*.

1. **Knowing What Students Know: the science and design of educational assessment**

This is a book that I found through Google books. Educational assessments, in classes and in large scale contexts, are important for everyone involved due to the fact that they show how well the student is performing based on the criteria of the test. This book focuses on three areas of educational assessments: to assist learning, to measure individual achievement, and to evaluate programs.

Pellegrino, J. W., Chudowsky, N., & Glaser, R. (2001). *Knowing what students know: the  
 science and* *design of educational assessment*. Retrieved from   
 <http://books.google.com/books?id=Omhi8_K9kC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

1. **The Role & Importance of Standardized Testing in the World of Teaching and Training (June 3, 2008)**

This is an essay that was presented at the 15 Congress of the World Association for Educational Research. This essay gives a little background on standardized testing. It also explains that current standardized tests have thought out questions. They are also graded by impartial participants; all tests are graded within the same qualifications. This essay also talks about how schools are held responsible for students’ successes and failures.

Phelps, R. P. 2008. The Role and Importance of Standardized Testing in the World of Teaching

and Training. *Nonpartisan Education Review*. Retrieved from

<http://www.npe.ednews.org/Review/Essays/v4n3.htm>

1. **How Does the MEAP Measure Up?**

More than 15 years ago the government published a report stating that the nation’s student achievement was declining. It is unclear in this article how this information was researched. Due to this documentation, forty-four states have mandated curriculum in the basic curriculum and twenty-one states test their students in these standards. Public opinion surveys have shown that parents like standardized tests and show educational improvements and promotes accountability. While this article was helpful, the information was based on old information, the article was from 2001. The MEAP test and the time it is given have continued to change and develop. This article focuses on moving away from the politics and more towards parental choice.

Reed, L. W., & Gifford, M. F. (n.d.). 2001. *How Does the MEAP Measure Up?* Retrieved June 28,   
 2010, from <http://www.mackinac.org/3919>

1. **The Use and Misuse of Standardized Testing: A Whiteheadian Point of View**

This article gives some background knowledge on standardized testing. This article also pointed out some pros and cons to standardized testing. It talks about standardized testing for the use of policy makers and high-stake decisions are becoming more and more popular. Without the use of standardized testing low performing schools could be invisible and not be held to the same standards as other schools. In the past the influence from the government had been through its curriculum. Another reason why standardized testing has gained speed is that studies have shown that teachers’ testing is not always objective, valid, or reliable. Riffert believes that if standardized testing is to occur that it should be individualized by school.

Riffert, Franz. 2005. The Use and Misuse of Standardized Testing. A Whiteheadian Point of View.

1. **Standardized Testing in the 21st Century**

Standardized testing is likely to change in the upcoming future. Computers are more than likely going to help with this change. Some think that this change will be that standardized testing will be done simultaneously on computers. The tests could be automatically adjusting to the level of the test taker.

Shostak, A. B. 1982. Standardized Testing in the 21st Century. *NASSP Bulletin*.

1. **Importance of Being Tests**

This article gives some background of the definition of test and the type of tests that measure performances. It’s very important for students to understand the meaning of the tests, the format of the tests, as well as how their scores will be used in the local school system. This article implies that teachers should restructure their classrooms to follow more standardized test formats. No more math problems where students give the answers, the students will do this in standardized test format with time constraints. Teachers should take the information from their tests and use it to improve their classroom environment otherwise the test was for naught.

Simmons, B. J. 1998. Importance of Being Tested. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*.

**Teaching & Research Proposal Project**

**Research Question:**

Will a Social Studies special for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade help to increase our 6th grade students MEAP scores for Social Studies?

**Procedures:**

This is an empirical study of findings based on the concept of a Social Studies special helping to raise MEAP scores. This will be a qualitatative study that is interactive. The data gained will come from case studies that will be intense studies of Social Studies dealing with 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders. The project will be ethnography, due to the fact that the entire 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades will be involved in the study.

In my school all, 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders will be expected to attend a Social Studies special every four days on a rotating schedule along with music, computers, and gym. The time period that they will be in the classroom will be approximately 50 minutes every four days. This class is going to be an extension of the Social Studies curriculum, rather than being the main entity in which the students learn the Social Studies standards. Due to the large gap between 3rd and 6th grade we created a Social Studies special to help students retain information about Social Studies. The 6th graders take the Social Studies MEAP which tests them on material that they have learned in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade.

The teachers will continue to teach Social Studies within their classrooms as they have in previous years, through lectures, videos, projects, and more. The Social Studies teacher will be working closely with the teacher to understand where more time could be needed on a particular topic. They will come up with a plan for the curriculum based on previous MEAP tests, looking at questions that students missed in the past. There will also be tests screeners that the student will need to take at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year to show students’ progress in Social Studies. These screeners will be provided through the ISD and it will be the same test given at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. Assessments can also be given through CompassLearning, <http://compass2.eup.k12.mi.us/childu/index.html>. Through this site the Social Studies teacher can assessing assignments as well as assessments that follow the standards that they are teaching. These assessments are computer generated as well as graded through the CompassLearning site. This information can be stored and used as progress monitoring to evaluate the Social Studies special.

The Social Studies teacher will be completing Social Studies projects with the students. They will spend between one and three class sessions on these projects. These projects will consist of dioramas, for example a third grader may be expected to show how Native Americans changed, adapted to, or modified their environment. Students will also be expected to use Wordle, <http://www.wordle.net/>. This is an example of a project where a third graders chooses a historical figure in Michigan’s history and adds word clouds to the name of the figure adding information about that historical figure. Another example of projects that the students are going to be part of is taking an in-depth look at The Bill of Rights. The students are going to talk about The Bill of Rights and look into what they mean and how they affect them. They are then going to create a poster or PowerPoint presentation on this assignment showcasing what they have learned about The Bill of Rights.

Based on my Literature Review, I have found that standardized tests are not necessarily valid if the information is not used to better the classroom and teachings. (Simmons, 1998) Keeping this in mind, the teachers in each grade level will design unit tests to be used as data collectors. This data will be used to find areas in which the students are lacking, whether from missed information, lost knowledge, or knowledge that was never gained. This class will act as a remediation classroom to help bridge the gap between 3rd and 6th grade.

The third graders will be expected to work on third grade standards to help the students make the ideas concrete. The fourth graders will be working on third grade standards as well as fourth grade standards. The fifth graders will work on the main third grade standards, the main fourth grade standards, as well as their own standards. The concepts in this paragraph are working towards the idea of bridging the gap between learning Social Studies in Third grade and then taking the Social Studies MEAP in Sixth grade.

**Assessments:**

“The Michigan [Educational Assessment](http://www.mackinac.org/3919) Program or MEAP is a criterion-referenced test that measures student progress against the state academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education.” (Reed and Gifford, 2010) The MEAP is a standardized test that began around 1969 to help measure student achievement. The face of the MEAP has changed in the past few years and today it is a criteria-referenced test that is supposed to measure how well the students have acquired the standards.

Standardized tests that were created by the grade level teachers will be used within the classroom after each unit. This data will be taken and used to help create an environment within the Social Studies special to give students more time to become masters at the curriculum. This class will help students organize and store the Social Studies curriculum into their long term memories. (Pellegrino et al., 2001) Not all students learn the same way and the use of projects will be another strategy to help students to retain the curriculum. (Pellegrino et al., 2001) Using projects to review and revisit the standards will help students make the standards more concrete. They will be given a higher order thinking project that will spark their long term memories. (Glatt, 2006) This class will help to prepare the students and make them more comfortable for the sixth grade Social Studies MEAP test which will in turn raise their test scores.

The data that will be generated from the standardized tests, direct observations from the specials teacher, and project grades will be used to measure if the Social Studies special class is being successful. The observations will be made after each project to gauge whether each individual student has a better understanding of the information that was presented to them. The MEAP scores from 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 will be taken into account.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Social Studies MEAP 2009/2010** | | | | |
|  | 1-Advanced | 2-Proficient | 3-Partially Proficient | 4-Not Proficient |
| **Newberry** | 25.9 % | 34.5 % | 22.4 % | 17.2 % |
| **ISD** | 40.4 % | 31.6 % | 18.8 % | 9.2 % |
| **STATE** | 42.3 % | 31.1 % | 16.1 % | 10.5 % |
|  | | | | |
| **Social Studies MEAP 2008/2009** | | | | |
| **Newberry** | 23.2 % | 34.1 % | 20.7 % | 22 % |
| **ISD** | 42.2 % | 32.9 % | 12.7 % | 12.2 % |
| **STATE** | 44.2 % | 29.5 % | 13.2 % | 13 % |

The MEAP will be a main entity within the data; the next four years of MEAP results from Social Studies will also be taken into account with this study. Based on past results, if MEAP scores raise and continue to raise in the next four years the class will be a success. The basis behind the Social Studies class is to help to bridge the large gap between 3rd grade and 6th grade which will indeed raise the test scores.

**Design Rationale:**

Students in third grade learn about Michigan History. Fourth graders learn about the United States History, and Fifth graders study integrated American History. In the sixth grade students are expected to take the Social Studies MEAP. This test, in the past, has asked questions about third, fourth, and fifth grade Social Studies. The argument behind this class is to help students increase their MEAP scores. It will be designed to help re-teach information every year, so when the students enter sixth grade it hasn’t been three years since they have talked about Michigan History. This is class that is specially designed for third, fourth, and fifth graders. This is also a class that is going to present different curriculum each year based on previous years data that is collected.

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