Hanover H.S. and Northwest H.S. Building Report Card Comparison

EDUC 543- Assessments, Test, and Measurement

February 2, 2014

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Abstract

Standardized testing in schools have become the norm for students entering our school. Where are the days where the students could come into the classroom to learn? Now our students are tested for everything and that’s the only thing that schools seem to be focusing on. Koretz (2008) suggest that testing has enormous impact on the practice of education, and it looms large in the minds of countless families as they decide where to live and whether to use public schools (p.1.) Even though I’m in Texas, we are going to compare two Kansas schools. I thought that it would be interesting to see the demographics of other schools and use them to understand how testing and assessments really work. In this paper we will compare each schools Adequate Yearly Progress reports for 2012. A variety of things will be explored in this paper, the influence of testing, and the impact of testing and how factors that our students face at home come into when students are testing. Most students won’t talk about what is going on at home and that sometimes effects the scores that students get on test. I think we as educators have to take a step back and be able to see what it is our students really need before we can force them to get a perfect score on a test that may be the determining factor in their future.

Comparing school report cards can show us a lot of different factors that we don’t take the time to look at on a daily basis. Scores seem to always loom over student’s heads, they are always wondering if this is going to be the test that is going to allow them to be done with school or even move on to the next level. Koretz (2008) suggest that debate about American education has been dominated by scores on standardized tests for more than a quarter century (p.74.) This is almost alarming because it almost seems like we are taking education out of the schools and just having the kids here to test and that’s it. There is so much more to education than a student scoring high on a test. What we as educators want to provide to our students are lessons that are going to be interesting and informative to our students. If you get a student in a classroom where the information they are receiving is not interesting, they automatically shut down. It’s the same thing with testing if a student feels like they are being pressured to much they will not be willing to perform as well as they could have if they would have been in a relaxed environment. I decided to compare schools that were in two different cities vs being in the same city because I wanted to see what the difference in their demographics would be. To me it made the assignment a little more challenging for me.

**Hanover H.S.**

It’s interesting to look at Hanover’s demographics because I am comparing a very small school to a school that has a large amount of students in it. The report that I pulled was for Hanover in 2010, which is located in Hanover, KS. The attendance for this building was 49 students, to me that is one of the smallest schools that I’ve ever seen. The whole school was comprised of only white students, 100% of the students in the school were white. This doesn’t leave a lot of room for any comparison of the different races that are in the school. The way that the gender was split in this school was also really interesting to me because they were more male dominated, even though the female population was not very far behind. In the school there was 27.85% of the students that were considered to be economically disadvantage and 72.15% of the students were not, that is a staggering number for a school that has that small amount of students in their presence. Looking at this schools graduation rate is amazing as well because not a lot of schools have a high percentage of students that graduate, but Hanover H.S. had 100% of its students graduate from the school. Looking at the demographics for the math assessment for the economically disadvantage students, although they have a lot of students who meet the standards, they also have a high amount of students that are in the academic warning section of the demographics. Looking through this school demographics to me was very interesting because they were a smaller school and you sometimes think that schools in a small town are usually the ones that the students don’t get quality educations in, but by looking at this schools report card they seem to be doing a great job. Hanover H.S. Met AYP for the year 2012 and the school was also an accredited school.

**Northwest H.S.**

Looking at this schools demographics was a completely different ball game for me. The student body count was bigger and they also have a more diversified group of students as well. It will be a little bit easier I think to see the differences and the different waves when it comes to looking at how certain races or genders are stacked up to each other. First looking at the school the things that jumps out to me first is the amount of students that this school has. The total enrollment for this school is 1373. That’s a huge jump from looking at the demographics from a school that has only 49 students. The way they student body is split up by race is pretty interesting as well, you have 10.78% African American, 15.95% Hispanic, 13.55% Other and 59.72% of the student body is White. In the other school we looked at it was completely filled with only white students so this is a welcoming change to be able to pull from different areas. Looking at the demographics there are 56.74% of the students that are not economically disadvantage and then there are 43.26% of the student body who are. The gender ratio in this school is 49.02% female and 50.98% male, still another male dominated school. The dropout rate for this school is very low in both 2011 and 2012 the dropout rate was 1.9% of the student population. Looking at the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate 77.0% Free and Reduced Lunch, 71.4% students with disabilities, 91.7% ELL students, 80.0% African-American, 100% Asian, 86.3% White and 90.9% Hispanic. In the other school they had no choice but to have a high percentage for white students to pass. Looking at the percentage for race, even though the white students seem to have a higher amount, the other races seemed to have surpassed them in the graduating.

**Influence of Testing**

Koretz (2008) suggest that what we need is a way to be more precise in using information about the distribution of scores (p.78.) To me that makes complete sense because we want to be able to provide the students with information that is going to allow to understand where they stand. We have to make sure that there will be no margin for error when we are presenting these scores to the students and to their parents. A lot of the times we as educators don’t sit back and think about all the things that could be effecting how a student is performing on a test. There are a lot of factors that go into making sure they are doing well. The slightest shift in a student’s life could mean whether they pass a test or whether they fail a test. Koretz (2008) suggest that a test may be biased, producing systematically incorrect estimates of the performance of a particular group of students (p.13.) With that being said we have to think about the influences of different races. I think a student performs as well as they are acting at home. If a student comes from a home where the parents don’t really pay attention to them or care about their education, they are likely not to succeed or they may try to prove their families wrong. You could also have a student come from a home where the parents are very strict and they are used to having to perform and make great grades, or they may do the opposite and just fail because they have given up. We have to make sure that we are not pressuring our students to make great grades and just being there to gently guide them.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, being able to look at the demographics for both schools and comparing things has been a very eye opening experience for me. Before taking this class, I wasn’t very sure what I was going to be up for, but now that I’ve actually dove into the work I can see that there are so many factors that go into making a school work and to make sure that our students are on track for graduation. Koretz (2008) suggest that figuring out when discriminating items are needed is a bit trickier at first glance, and a misunderstanding about this point is widespread in the world of educational policy (p.28.) We as educators have to be able to understand what is going on when we are looking at the test scores. I know that if I had a teacher in school that had looked out for my best interest instead of pressuring me when it comes to test scores I probably would have done better when I took the test. I felt very pressured and that made me nervous to take the test. I’m very excited that I’m taking this class and I’m looking forward to learning more about how to compare test schools and look at them so that I will be of better service not only to my school but also to my students.

**Reference**

Koretz, D. (2008). *Measuring up what educational testing really tells us*. Cambridge, Mass:

Harvard University Press.

Retrieved from the KSDE Report Card Website:  <http://online.ksde.org/rcard/searchpage.aspx>.