

## **Teachers Network Leadership Institute**

### **Santa Barbara County TNLI MetLife Fellow**

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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#### **Research Summery**

##### **Rational:**

It seems fairly obvious why education needs common assessment and testing. Much has been studied about how to teach the standards and how to motivate students to do well on standardized tests, but it seems that one major component has been left out in the state of California: students' motivation to do well on a "low stakes test" when the district and state place such high stakes on the same test. This is the crux of what this study will examine.

##### **Question:**

The state's understanding of student motivation during standardized testing is built on the assumption that students want to do well on this test. This study is designed to ask the question: Is there variants to student motivation, and, if so, what are they? Also from the students' perspective, what is their motivation during testing and what does this tell us about the accuracy and validity of testing?

##### **Research/Readings:**

In education a great deal of emphasis is placed on these "high stakes tests," and because funding and jobs are attached to these tests, much has been studied on "how to teach to the standards" and "tips for getting students to score well on the standardized test." After an in-depth review of the literature, however, there is no supporting documentation of a high school student's perspective of these tests nor what level of motivation a student might have to perform well.

##### **Subjects and Tools:**

The subjects in the current study were enrolled in one of three high schools located within the same district on California's Central Coast. For the purpose of this study, the district

will be called Lamb Unified School District, and the schools will be referred to as School A, School B, and School C (the alternative high school for Lamb Unified School District).

In 2008 after surveying over 700 students from the three high schools, some interesting trends emerged which seemed to correlate with each school's API score. The same trends were correlated the following year in 2009 when over 600 students were surveyed. Only tenth grade students were surveyed from School A and School B, the traditional high schools. With School C, the local alternative high school, all students ninth through eleventh grade that took the CST participated in the survey.

**Data:** Participants by School in Spring of 2006, 2007 and 2008

	<u>School A</u>			<u>School B</u>			<u>School C</u>		
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
API	776	768	769	678	681	687	543	469	400
Survey Samples		338	297		329	199		80	62
Positive Responses		251	234		225	154		29	40
% Positive		74%	78%		68%	77%		36%	65%

When determining positive responses, if a student answered that s/he tried on most or all of the four tests, it was coded as a positive response. (Refer to the survey at the end of this paper.) It is evident that not all of the students from the three high schools tried as hard. When looking at a bar graph the higher number of positive responses (from students that admitted to trying their best) correlates with that school's higher API. This is just a portion of the results the survey further looked at other demographics to determine if there were variants in student motivation.

**Policy Recommendations:**

This study proves the State's assumption is wrong two years in a row; not all students have the same motivation to do well on this test. Even after the alternative site went to great lengths to increase student motivation they still had a much lower percentage of students that tried on the test then the two comprehensive sites. There are variants to a student's motivation, and there seems to be a correlation between socioeconomics, ethnicity, parent's education level, and course schedules (AP, ELD, ESL, etc). So it is time for the State to rethink this "high stakes test" because students are considering it a "low stakes test". The implications from this study show that if the State is going to continue with the current practice, schools with a low

socioeconomic population, a multicultural campus, and parents with less education will be at a disadvantage. Students from these schools have less motivation to score well on this test, and it seems unfair that such a school's funding should be affected by poor results. The playing field for this test is not even. This is an issue that will not go away and must be addressed or more schools will fall in PI status, and soon even more schools will not meet the federal standard. If the state would place a "stake" on this test, students may be inclined to try harder.

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