

1-1-2008

Competency-Based Testing In Nevada: Perceptions Of Legislators, School District Superintendents, Local School Board Presidents And Third Grade Teachers

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.25669/929y-1q1j>

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COMPETENCY-BASED TESTING IN NEVADA: PERCEPTIONS OF
LEGISLATORS, SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS, LOCAL SCHOOL
BOARD PRESIDENTS AND THIRD GRADE TEACHERS

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Ed.D.

1980

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Competency-Based Testing in Nevada:

Perceptions of Legislators, School District Superintendents,

Local School Board Presidents and Third Grade Teachers

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

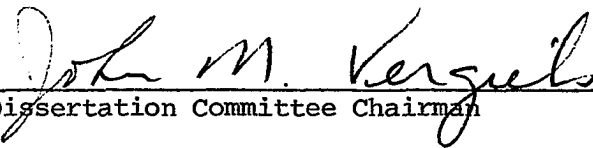
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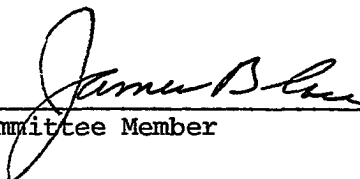
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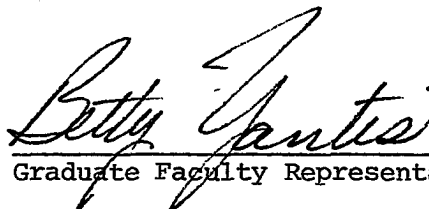
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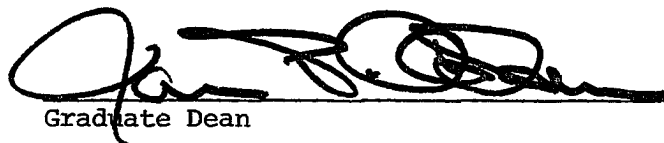
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August 1980

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many persons have contributed to this investigation and report. Particular acknowledgment is due to my Dissertation Committee Chairman, Dr. John Vergiels, and to members of my committee, Dr. Richard Kunkel, Dr. James Case, and Dr. Betty Yantis. Each has rendered valuable criticism, friendship, encouragement, and support.

Thanks are due to those Nevadans who participated in the study: school district superintendents, local school board presidents, third grade teachers, and legislators who furnished the data that made the study possible; and special thanks to Jan Hanson who did a splendid job in typing this dissertation.

The project was aided greatly by the ideas, support, and suggestions of Dr. Ray D. Ryan, Jr., of the Nevada State Department of Education; Dr. Doug Mathewson of the University of Nevada System Chancellor's Office; Dr. Roger Scott, Senior Member of the Professional Staff at Southwest Regional Lab; Dr. Fred Kirschner and Dr. Kevin Crehan of the UNLV College of Education; Dr. John Keith of Clark County Community College's Psychology Department; Dr. Allen R. Wilcox, Bureau of Government Research at UNR; and Brad Boman at the UNLV Computer Center.

My students at Golden Gate University were most helpful in preliminary preparation of the raw data.

And, of course, I am deeply indebted to my family--Nancy, Stacy, and Jason, who were patient, understanding, and who insisted that the result would be well worth the effort.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	Introduction	1
	Purpose of the Study	6
	Statement of the Problem	7
	Limitations of the Study	8
	Assumptions of the Study	10
II	Review of Literature	12
	Definition of Terms	23
III	Methodology.	26
	Procedure	26
	Instrumentation	27
	Treatment of Data	30
IV	Results	33
V	Analysis	98
	Conclusions	104
	Recommendations	106
	Bibliography	108
	Appendices	
	Appendix A	113
	Appendix B	131
	Appendix C	133
	Appendix D	135
	Appendix E	137
	Appendix F	140
	Appendix G	142
	Appendix H	146

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Population and Response Chart	37
2	Total Nevada, Question 1 Results	38
3	Total Nevada, Question 2 Results	39
4	Total Nevada, Question 3 Results	40
5	Total Nevada, Question 4 Results	41
6	Total Nevada, Question 5 Results	42
7	Total Nevada, Question 6 Results	43
8	Total Nevada, Question 7 Results	44
9	Total Nevada, Question 8 Results	45
10	Total Nevada, Question 9 Results	48
11	Total Nevada, Question 10 Results	49
12	Total Nevada, Question 11 Results	50
13	Total Nevada, Question 12 Results	51
14	Total Nevada, Question 13 Results	52
15	Total Nevada, Question 14 Results	53
16	Total Nevada, Question 15 Results	54
17	Total Nevada, Question 16 Results	55
18	Section I, Four Group Response to Question 2 . . .	59
19	Section I, Four Group Response to Question 3 . . .	60
20	Section I, Four Group Response to Question 5 . . .	61
21	Section I, Four Group Response to Question 6 . . .	62
22	Section I, Four Group Response to Question 8 . . .	63
23	Section I, Four Group Response to Question 9 . . .	64
24	Section I, Four Group Response to Question 11 . . .	65

Table		Page
25	Section I, Four Group Response by North, South, Rural Nevada, Question 2	68
26	Section I, Four Group Response by North, South, Rural Nevada, Question 3	69
27	Section I, Four Group Response by North, South, Rural Nevada, Question 6	70
28	Section II, Four Group Response to Question 1 . . .	73
29	Section II, Four Group Response to Question 4 . . .	74
30	Section II, Four Group Response to Question 7 . . .	75
31	Section II, Four Group Response to Question 10 . .	76
32	Section II, Four Group Response to Question 12 . .	77
33	Section II, Four Group Response by North, South, Rural Nevada, Question 1	80
34	Section II, Four Group Response by North, South, Rural Nevada, Question 4	81
35	Section III, Four Group Response to Question 13 . .	84
36	Section III, Four Group Response to Question 14 . .	85
37	Section III, Four Group Response to Question 15 . .	86
38	Section III, Four Group Response to Question 16 . .	87
39	Section III, Four Group Response by North, South, Rural Nevada, Question 13	90
40	Section III, Four Group Response by North, South, Rural Nevada, Question 16	91

Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to survey the opinions of four selected populations in Nevada in order to examine the aftermath of the 1977 Nevada Legislative action Assembly Bill 400 (AB400) which mandated competency based testing. The study's purpose is to see if the competency based testing program is perceived as working effectively; if it is perceived positively or negatively; and what effect the testing program will have on future high school graduates.

Method

A tentative list of survey questions was developed from the study's purpose and submitted to a jury of specialists to assist in formulating an opinionnaire. The opinionnaire was further refined after it was pilot tested. The jury of specialists assisted in structuring the final instrument and this study's doctoral committee recommended the addition of one question which brought the total number of questions to 17. The opinionnaire was color coded and mailed to 565 individuals, representing a total population of Nevada third grade teachers, legislators, school district superintendents, and local board presidents. All responses were by mail and 311 or 55.0% were received; all groups were surveyed regarding their perceptions of: (1) Is the competency test perceived as working effectively; (2) Is it perceived positively or negatively; and (3) What effect will the test have on future graduating high school seniors?

Collected data was analyzed using a simple cross-tabulation procedure and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program.

Opinionnaire items represented either nominal or ordinal data. These items were analyzed using chi-square procedures. Because of the color coding it was possible to examine each of the four groups separately, as well as by geographic region of the state.

Conclusions

As a result of the investigation and findings generated by this study, the following conclusions were drawn concerning the competency based test program in Nevada:

1. The competency test is perceived as being basically a good idea.
2. The test provides an incentive to most students to acquire basic skills and the schools are now putting more emphasis on those basic skills.
3. The test has had a positive effect on basic skill development and is a good way to improve basic skills.
4. Parents have not reacted negatively to the minimum competency requirements for graduation.
5. Basic skills are not new to Nevada in any of the geographic regions and all four groups felt that students are not required to demonstrate proficiency in subject areas where they have not been taught.
6. None of the four groups felt that their geographic region was doing better than the rest of the state; neither did they feel that the rest of the state was doing better than their local area.
7. The competency test program should continue in the future and schools should continue to teach more basic skills instead of non-basic skill courses.
8. Educators will be better able to respond to public accountability

because of the testing program.

9. Concerning the future and the competency test program as the test relates to preparing students for future adult life roles and ensuring they have acquired the basic skills, all four surveyed groups approached this topic with "guarded optimism." They generally felt that future students would be prepared for the future but then stopped way short of being overly positive, preferring instead a neutral or "wait and see" attitude.
10. The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) is the wrong test and a competency test that measures what is being taught should be substituted. The test should be structured as a helping tool to discover student weakness and not as a harassment, pressure, or threatening tactic to measure teachers. The test should reflect local curriculum standards and learning priorities and not national standards. If the aforementioned do not become part of the testing program, then the program and test should be eliminated.
11. The geographic regions of the state made very little difference when it came to group perceptions.
12. Groups shared consistent perceptions about the testing program and its future, i.e., legislators were in positive agreement that future graduating seniors will have a better knowledge of the basic skills than this year's graduating seniors.
13. Legislators and local board presidents were the most positive about the competency testing program. Superintendents were the most negative and teachers were neutral to moderately positive about the program.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Education has a particular need to be responsive to the demands of the present and to anticipate those of the future. Our society's future economic survival could depend, in part, on the preparation of today's students to meet tomorrow's challenges in a competent and proficient manner. High school graduates should have certain basic skills in order to function in today's world. The national focus on educational accountability has served to bring renewed emphasis on returning to the basic 3R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic) education in order to ensure that education provides students with at least minimum quantitative and linguistic competencies. There has been a push for local mandates and state legislation to provide for what has come to be known as competency-based education. As of January, 1979, 36 states have joined the ranks calling for competency-based testing to ensure that students have the basic skills prior to high school graduation to function proficiently in today's society.

Introductory Statement. Reilly (1978) points out in an article entitled, "Competency-Based Education: Pros and Cons," that competency-based education's (CBE) staunchest advocates are citizens calling for school accountability for tax dollars spent and have questioned the value of the high school diploma if students are automatically promoted, whether merited or not. He says: "In a 1976 national poll, 65% of those respondents said they believed that students should be required to pass a national standard examination before they can graduate from high school. Just eight years before in a similar survey, 50% of those polled favored such a test." (Reilly, 1978, p. 21).

National Institute of Education researcher, William Spady (1978), suggested that this uncoordinated competency-based education movement is rapidly transforming into a bandwagon effort that promises to be The Great American Education Fad of the 1980's.

In Gallup's Eleventh Poll of public's attitudes toward the public schools (1979), respondents felt that education today is not so good as in earlier times. The polls indicate that this drop in quality is caused by less discipline, lower standards, less interest on the part of teachers and students, and too many irrelevant subjects in the curriculum.

It is interesting to note that Gallup's Poll held the very opposite opinion in 1973. Asked to tell why children were getting a better education in 1973, the respondents cited: variety of subjects, better facilities and equipment, better teaching methods, better teachers, and a better opportunity for all ethnic groups to be educated. Gallup further points out (1979) that in 1974, a total of 48% of the respondents gave the public school an A or B rating, while in 1979, the figure dropped to 34%. The greatest change during that same period was in the Western states, where views about public schools are virtually opposite those held in 1973. In 1973, 54% said the schools are better, while 25% said they were worse. In 1979, 27% said they are better and 51% said they are worse (Gallup, 1979).

In 1978, Gallup asked in a national survey what the biggest problem was with which the public schools must deal. The results showed that poor curriculum/poor standards scored in the top five problems. In 1979, Gallup again asked the public the same question, and this time poor curriculum/poor standards was fourth behind the

following:

1. Discipline
2. Drugs, and
3. Lack of proper financial support.

The public seems to be taking a greater interest in the schools. The public is demanding answers to questions such as, "Why can't Johnny read?" They want to know about the curriculum. They are attacking the high school diploma as worthless as a means of verifying competencies. The staunchest advocates of competency-based education, according to Reilly (1978) are not the teachers, the principals, or school administrators, but the citizens. With education costs skyrocketing, the taxpayers feel they are entitled to more results for their tax dollar.

Throughout the 1970's, it was almost commonplace across the country to read headlines or by-lines such as, "Give us better schools," (Wellborn, 1979, p. 31). This leads one to assume that schools are failing to promote the learning of the basic 3R's. Parents' views reflected in newspapers and magazines concerning the quality of education gave rise to finger-pointing accusations, bold statements of opinion, and conjecture. Rational or not, one cannot discount the impact of these views, especially when tax dollars are at stake.

Looking directly at the State of Nevada, it is found that limited data has been collected, and no detailed analysis has been made to see if any of the parents' accusations are true. Throughout the decade of the 1970's, the nation in general, and Nevada in particular, received considerable media and public attention concerning the effectiveness of the educational system. This media attention has continued into the

1980's. Rebecca Kuzins, a Las Vegas Review Journal staff writer, wrote:

The (competency-based testing) laws were passed because of growing concern over poor student performance on college entrance tests. The creation of Nevada's competency testing program also was a reaction to several lawsuits that were filed against school districts in other areas of the country. Parents and students charged these districts awarded high school diplomas to students who could barely read or write. (Kuzins, 1980, p. 1B)

David W. Gordon, Assistant Chief, California State Department of Education, in a speech delivered on January 30, 1980, echoed the same concerns about California:

The task embodied in this (competency-based testing) law is no different than what the task of our schools has been over the past ten or fifteen years--to improve basic skills instruction so that more students walk out the doors of high schools having learned basic skills. (Gordon, 1980, p. 16)

Gordon adds: "In California and around the country, people seem to be constantly casting about for some...solution that will assuage their concerns about the deficiencies of the schools," (Gordon, 1980, p. 16).

A further example of this can be found in the September 10, 1979, issue of U.S. News and World Report. The report, using the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the National Education Association as its basic data source, criticized education pointing out that the "calls to upgrade education are reaching fever pitch, reflecting wide discontent and promising change in America's classrooms," (Wellborn, 1979, p. 31). The same article added, "The taxpaying public, its nerves rubbed raw by the steep decline in educational standards during the last decade, is suddenly belligerent--no longer willing to

support lax school performance" (Wellborn, 1979, p. 31).

Articles like these, plus strong newspaper, media, and public attention, in part, stimulated the 1977 Nevada Legislature to act by passing Assembly Bill 400 (AB400). This bill requires a competency-based testing program to cover reading, writing, and arithmetic and to be administered in the third, sixth, ninth, and 12th grades. The Nevada Legislature acted despite the urging of the State Department of Education and other educators to wait until the problem is studied in greater depth.

Since the passage of AB400, several major questions continually surface: Is the CBE program working effectively? Is the program positively or negatively perceived? What about the future--what effect will the test have on future high school graduates?

The Nevada State Department of Education, which is responsible for administering the AB400 testing program, is very concerned about the opinions of the public. The Department sees a real need for examining the opinions of selected groups. "We think we know what key publics thought prior to AB400," said Deputy Superintendent for Public Instruction, Ray Ryan, Jr., "but a more important question is, how do these publics view the program now that it's been implemented?" (Ryan, 1979).

Nevada's Department of Education, and many Nevada citizens concerned with quality education, are interested in the opinions of four publics:

1. Local school board presidents, since these bodies reflect the views of the local public regarding educational policy;
2. School district superintendents, since they administer policy within their individual areas and are overseers of the program;

3. Third grade teachers, since they have been directly involved the longest of any teaching faculty with the teaching and the AB400 related examination process; and

4. Legislators, because they are responsible for passing or mandating laws like AB400 or rescinding statutes that are not working. Their actions, or lack thereof, directly affect the educational health of the state.

Purpose of the Study. The data generated by these four publics could prove valuable to each of these groups and the State Department of Education. The State Department of Education would assist the groups in determining what the current public reaction is to competency-based education (CBE). Also, this information would assist other state legislatures who are sensitive to the opinions within Nevada now that a mandated testing program has been implemented. Additionally, the State Department of Education could use these views to assist in identifying groups that need additional information and clarification of objectives of the testing program as mandated by the 1977 Legislature.

As of January 1, 1979, 36 states have competency-based testing, which mandates some type of testing program either by state statute or local ordinance. However, there is an absence of information about the perceptions held by various public segments concerning these CBE programs in the country. Nevada is one such state. It is this absence of evidence that becomes the focal point for this descriptive investigation. It is not, however, the intent of this study to examine the competency-based testing program at large, but only to evaluate the opinions of selected populations to determine their perceptions of Nevada's program.

In more specific terms, this study will survey the opinions of selected populations in Nevada to examine the aftermath of the 1977 Nevada Legislature Action (AB400) which mandated competency-based testing in the schools. The study's purpose is to see if the testing program is:

1. Perceived as working effectively;
2. If it is perceived positively or negatively; and,
3. What effect the testing program will have on future high school graduates.

Since Nevada does not already have information about the opinions of various populations, a survey will be conducted, data collected and analyzed, and the results made known to the State Department of Education and to the Nevada Legislature, who has the ultimate responsibility for making the decisions and dictating the direction of Nevada's educational future. The selected populations, identified with the assistance of the State Department of Education are: Nevada's school district superintendents, local school board presidents, third grade teachers, and State legislators.

Statement of the Problem. Testing to determine competency levels of students is not new to education. However, until recent legislative action, testing was generally focused on determining student accomplishment in the classroom, or how students might fare doing university studies. Now testing is also used to determine a competence level for graduation from high school.

Two concerns in Nevada are that (1) subjective and objective data examining student performance is limited, and (2) that there is no evidence that shows what school district superintendents', local

school board presidents', third grade teachers', or legislators' opinions are concerning this testing program. It is this absence of information that is the problem and the main thrust of this investigation.

This study determines what opinions are currently held by Nevada's school district superintendents, local school board presidents, third grade teachers, and legislators regarding the Nevada Competency-Based Testing Program, mandated in AB400.

Limitations of the Study. This study has the following limitations:

1. This study is limited to Nevada school superintendents, local school board presidents, third grade teachers, and legislators only, and excluded the perceptions of any other groups.

2. The findings of this study are based on subjective data and are valid and reliable to the extent that those responding understood the opinionnaire and answered the questions to the best of their ability.

3. The study is limited to the immediate years after the implementation of AB400.

4. The study is limited because of the depth of understanding, knowledge, and experience by new teachers, new legislators, superintendents, and school board presidents. Those who are new in these positions may not be at the same level of understanding, knowledge, or background as some of their peers holding their positions since the mid 1970's or before.

5. The study is limited by the lack of equality based on different backgrounds, levels of learning, knowledge, values, and frame of

reference within each group selected for surveying.

6. There was an attrition factor in the four groups. Not all of the legislators that were present in 1977 are still in office today. The same applies to some extent to each of the three other groups. No effort is made to track down or solicit the views of anyone other than those currently holding positions in one of the parties because the focal point of the study deals with data gathering for future decisions as opposed to examining and analyzing the past.

7. This total population study is limited to the results of the 311 or 55% who responded to the opinionnaire. Even though the responses of the 45% who did not return the opinionnaire are not included in the study, there is no reason to suspect that their opinions would be significantly different than the 55% who did respond because: (1) The mix of the responses was uniform and consistent both in the North and South. School board presidents total 17 in Nevada. All but two of those in Southern Nevada and all but four in the Northern part of the state responded for a total statewide response of 64.7%. Superintendents also total 17 and all but one in the South and three in the North responded for a total response of 76.5%. (2) When rural Nevada was added to the North and South regions of the state, as in the case of teachers and legislators, the response again was uniform and consistent. Northern legislators provided a 60% return which meant that only six did not respond; rural legislators had a 58.3% return with only five not responding; and Southern legislators had a 57.5% return with 14 not responding. Teachers followed a similar pattern with 60% of the rural region responding while 56% of the North and 50% of the South also responded. (3) None of the four survey groups

collectively, individually, or geographically had less than a 50% return of the opinionnaire and school district superintendents in the South had an 83% return and a collective North and South total of 75.5%. With 55% of the total population responding, one of the strongest components of the study is the strong return within all four groups collectively, individually, and geographically.

This study examined the total population of 565 instead of sampling a percent of the total population. The chi-square test results which helped to determine if there is a systematic relationship existing between two variables, are posted at the bottom of each chart in Sections I, II, and III. This test of statistical significance is used to examine the relationship of the four groups' responses to each question.

Regardless of the opinion that there is no reason to suspect that any of the missing opinions would be significantly different, the fact that 45% of the total population did not respond is duly noted as a weakness of this study.

Any reference made from the findings of this study should be made only after considering the populations, the study's limitations, and assumptions. The greater the reader's deviation from this study, the greater the possibility for an inaccurate comparison.

Assumptions of the Study. The following assumptions are inherent in the investigation:

1. A systematic study of the perceptions of superintendents, local school board presidents, third grade teachers, and legislators is a desirable outcome of the survey.
2. The authors of the survey and later the treatment of the survey

data did not prejudice the study or the findings.

3. The time span of the study was adequate to allow for attitude change regarding competency-based testing.

4. Opinions can be measured and reported.

5. The vocabulary utilized in this study has the same interpretation by all participants within reasonable limitations.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Since this study is concerned with examining the opinions of selected populations in Nevada to determine how they view competency-based testing now that the program has been in effect since 1977, the review of literature is important in examining four areas. It is important to:

1. Examine current commonly-held understandings about competency-based testing;
2. Determine whether or not other states had similar follow-up studies;
3. Determine whether or not outside agencies or institutions in any part of the country had performed similar perception evaluations in any of the 36 states that now have competency-based testing;
4. Determine whether or not there is an absence of evidence or information concerning the various public opinions within the states which mandated competency-based testing.

Current Commonly-Held Understandings About Competency-Based Testing. As pointed out later in this study, under the Education Commission of the States, Dr. Chris Piphio, the Associate Director of the Research and Information Department, has done extensive research in the area of competency-based testing. Two of the best overviews of competency-based testing are found in Update VIII: Minimum Competency Testing and Frahm and Covington's What's Happening in Minimum Competency Testing in which the introduction was written by Dr. Piphio. Dr. Piphio's complete overview by individual states is found in Appendix A; however, the following gives a summary of competency testing.

Dr. Pipho points out that since 1976, the testing program has moved from simply a high school graduation test to an early warning testing program for identifying deficiencies and structuring remedial assistances.

As of January 1, 1979, there were 36 states that require a competency test, a minimal competency assurance at one or more grades at the elementary, junior high, or senior high school levels. In 1978, there were thirty states. The tests are mandated by either legislation or state board action and cover identified minimum basics or life skills that students should attain. The remaining fourteen states that have not adopted it have studied the issue using a variety of approaches.

A majority of 36 states require that high school graduation be based on passing a minimum competency test. Local districts that use the state test may give a high school diploma with a state board seal affixed. Idaho and New Mexico have a local option that is applicable to portions of their testing program. None of the 36 states have removed any of the traditional requirements; however, Florida and California have early exit programs.

In both Wisconsin and Minnesota, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction or the local districts have indicated that the issue is not a state problem but is a concern for local districts to resolve with the assistance of the states. The 50 states can be characterized in four groupings:

1. Eight to 10 states have adopted statewide competency tests;
2. Another 10 to 12 states have state competency programs but do not have statewide tests;
3. About 16 states have competency programs but they are not

directly tied to graduation; and

4. The remaining 14 or so states have not joined the competency movement, and Chris Pipho (1978) doubts that most of them will.

Pipho, who is a highly regarded authority in the area of competency-based testing, says:

It generally appears that the state legislatures are probably in a neutral position at this time. Moves have already been made in states that have political climates which would have permitted a move. I wouldn't expect a great deal more legislation at this point. The movement... slowed in 1978. (Pipho, 1978, Introduction page)

Dr. Pipho, in another article published in December, 1979, points out that a few dozen districts around the country have been implementing their own minimum competency testing programs over the past few years. "The Denver schools have used a high school graduation test for the last seventeen years," (Pipho, 1979, p. 3). Other districts in Gary, Indiana; Omaha, Nebraska; and in the states of California and Florida have been working on their own competency program for four to five years.

Edward Fiske, Education Editor of the New York Times (1979), points out that teachers in districts have the longest track record of implementing the new competency testing policies and feel that these tests can be used to increase student motivation and foster greater public support for the educational process. "In Berea, Ohio, a Cleveland suburb, the number of eighth graders scoring at the level of high school proficiency has risen since a minimum competency program was instituted." (Fiske, 1979, p. 3). According to Dean Kelly, Assistant Superintendent of Schools (1979), one reason was that the public school is being taken much more seriously as an educational entity by parents, students, and teachers.

The academic nature of the new requirements varies widely among the states. Some of the tests deal primarily with the 3R's, while others are oriented toward "life skills." Maryland, for example, will ask students to perform such tasks as reading household product labels and then answer multiple choice questions about them. The most unusual that has been discovered to date is in Craig City, Alaska, where school administrators on this tiny island have ruled that no one can graduate from high school until he or she demonstrates ability in, among other things, reading a marine chart, performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and being able to float in the water for two minutes (Fiske, 1979). In addition to the above review, it is important to review literature directly related to perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and feelings.

There are several mental activities that can be measured. Julian Simon suggests five:

How a person perceives a stimulus; what a person knows or thinks about a factual state of affairs (cognition); how a person intends to behave; what a person's values, preferences, and attitudes are; and the extent of a person's mental capacities. (Simon, 1978, p. 236)

Simon continues:

The psychophysicists took the lead in scaling human responses when they began work on how different stimuli are perceived by a person. The scales were invented in the nineteenth century by Weber, Fechner, and others and are still in use today for a variety of purposes. (Simon, 1978, p. 236)

Fechner's procedure asked people to give a number that represents the relative strength of each test stimulus compared to the reference stimulus. Fechner's method works with the size of individual stimuli rather than with the differences between test stimuli and the reference

stimuli, as in Weber's procedure (Fechner, 1978, p. 257).

Among the most important composition of attitude scaling techniques, according to Simon (1978) are those of Likert, Guttman, Thurstone, and Osgood. One of the simplest types of composite scales presents several items to the respondent and considers a sum of the responses to the items to be the scale score. Rensis Likert scales, which present statements with five possible response levels or categories from "strongly approve" to "strongly disapprove," are commonly used in summed scales with numbers ranging from, say, +2 to -2. The simple total is the score.

Scaling is the term applied to the measurement of human responses to stimuli. Many scaling methods have been invented to evaluate the individual's perception to a variety of related stimuli and then to evaluate the response range (Simon, 1978, pp. 240-253).

It is well to point out that according to Fred Kerlinger (1965), survey research focuses on people; the vital facts of people; and their opinions, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and behavior. The survey researcher is primarily interested in what people think and what they do (Kerlinger, 1965, p. 394). An example of this is the N. Gross study of members of boards of education and superintendents of schools in Massachusetts. The board members and superintendents were asked whether they thought there should be specific academic standards for promotion in the first six grades. The scale consisted of: Desirable, No Opinion, and Undesirable (Gross, 1958, p. 115).

A further example is found in Rensis Likert's book, New Patterns of Management. Here he discusses superiors on the job who display the most favorable and cooperative attitude and Likert's efforts to measure

the perceptions of both the subordinate and the supervisor.

Literature determinations 2, 3, and 4 which were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter are now summarized below. In order to make these determinations in the literature review, the following were contacted:

1. The Education Commission of the States;
2. The Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development;
3. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Learning Resource Center;
4. Nevada State Department of Education;
5. Nevada State Legislature's Legislative Council Bureau,
Research Division; and
6. Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) for Educational Research
and Development Division.

Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado. The Associate Director of the Research and Information Department, Chris Pipho, in a letter dated November 29, 1979, (Appendix B) stated that, "I know of no state that has formally evaluated the results of their minimum competency testing program." Pipho provided additional information which was noted earlier regarding the status by states of each CBE program.

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development,
San Francisco, California. The Laboratory Director, John K. Hemphill, in a letter dated December 3, 1979, (Appendix C) stated:

Although it seems a logical step, I don't know of an evaluation study of any of the existing programs. Of course, the reaction of the courts and general outcry from various segments of the public can be viewed as 'evaluation,' yet I presume that you have a more systematic approach. I commend you and Dr. Ryan on selecting this topic for a thesis.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Learning Resource Center (ERIC)

Search, Las Vegas, Nevada. An ERIC search was performed in December of 1979 with the same results as the two previously mentioned sources. The search examined competency tests and found five. The search examined evaluations and found 59,907; however, when competency tests and evaluations were compared and cross-referenced, only two studies appeared. The first dealt with evaluating competencies of Environmental Health Interns and Practitioners, and the second examined Trade Competency Testing Via Specimen Inspection. Neither study was applicable to this research. The ERIC search also looked at test results, test reviews, and evaluation methods; however, comparisons of each of these areas with competency-based testing or education indicated no CBE perception studies exist.

Nevada State Department of Education, Carson City, Nevada.

Deputy Superintendent for Public Instruction, Ray Ryan, Jr., stresses in the introductory statement the need for this kind of study by pointing out the lack of information concerning the attitudes of selected publics concerning the attitudes of publics concerning the program. He pointed out the desirability of the study and indicated the willingness of the Department of Education to assist in the study. "This is highly desirable information," Ryan stated, "and we are very interested in knowing the opinions of selected Nevada Publics," (Ryan, 1979).

Nevada's Legislative Council Bureau, Research Division, Carson City, Nevada. Research Analyst, J. Kenneth Creighton, in a letter dated August 27, 1979, (Appendix D) found nothing being done in the states in evaluation of their competency-based education programs.

He sent the Gallup Poll's "Public Attitude Toward Educational System" results. Creighton referenced the State Department of Education study and said that the survey supported the back-to-basics movement when we wrote: "Responses to the first question seem to strongly support the 'back-to-basics' position," (Creighton, 1979).

The Research Division has computer hook-ups with other state capitols and legislatures across the nation in order to search, find, and share information. When Gallup Poll surveys were their only major find in this area, it seems rather apparent that nothing is being done to examine opinions concerning views of competency-based testing. This contention is supported by Far West Lab, ERIC, Nevada State Department of Education, and Education Commission of the State.

Southwest Regional Laboratory Educational Research and Development, Los Alamitos, California. SWRL Director, Dr. Robert O'Hare, and Senior Staff Member, Dr. Roger Scott, working with Dr. Robert Baker at the University of Southern California's Education Psychology Department ran three data base searches in an effort to thoroughly review the literature. A second ERIC search was conducted in January of 1980 to ensure that nothing was omitted from the first ERIC search conducted by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This ERIC search examined attitudes, measures, social service, school board, legislature, teacher, parent, and superintendent. Nineteen items emerged; however, none of these relate to this study. Two of the studies were selected because of the possible opinionnaire instrument that might be utilized to determine if a similar model could be adopted. The result proved only as a good information source; however, no instrument was derived from the document examination.

Psychological Abstracts and Sociological Abstracts. Also, abstracts were searched in January of 1980 using the same criteria as the second ERIC search with the same negative outcome. Dr. Roger Scott (1980) pursued this even further by collaborating with other knowledgeable colleagues to determine whether or not they knew of anything being done in the 36 states in the areas of follow-up studies or evaluation of the opinions surrounding the Competency-Based Testing Program. The letter is Appendix E, and the answer, in simplified terms, was that no one knows of perception studies being done in this area of study. Scott found three states, California, Florida, and Oregon, that had performed CBE studies. The California study surveyed local school districts to assess their progress in implementing state proficiency requirements. Among other things, they asked people for their responses to the technical assistance materials that were being published by the Department of Education. They asked how useful these materials are--Very Useful, Not Useful, Somewhat Useful. Beyond that, they asked about other needs they have (California State Department of Education, 1979).

In Florida, a panel of five members was charged to evaluate and report if education in Florida had improved and what effect policies have had on students, the public, and the profession. The panel held three hearings and while finding the purpose praiseworthy, found seriously faulty the mandatory standards for receiving a regular high school diploma as well as the implementation being faulty (Florida Accountability Program, 1978).

Although these two studies are not similar in method, approach, or structure to this study, it is well to point out that the nature and

purpose of the studies were relatively similar or at least in the same ballpark as far as general intent.

The third study was an impact study of the new requirement for high school graduates in the State of Oregon. It was conducted by the University of Oregon through a contract with the Oregon State Department of Education. There was a descriptive survey of Oregon school districts in relation to three of the state's minimum educational standards. These were:

1. Minimum competencies;
2. Units of credit; and
3. Instructional planning.

They combined a survey instrument and a structured interview schedule in order to ask respondents their questions relating to the effectiveness of the standards, problems encountered, and outcomes achieved. It is this component of their study that is closest to this study. However, the comparison diminishes again when one realizes that Oregon's development has been evolving since 1972 while Nevada's program has been in existence since July, 1977. Therefore, most of the questions Oregon asked were concerning a different stage of growth and development than what are examined in the Nevada study. Oregon also examined factual information relating to the response of school districts to the standards without examining student outcomes. The Oregon and Nevada studies did parallel again in terms of the four groups of respondents. Oregon surveyed superintendents, chairpersons of district school boards, teachers, and students. This Nevada study selected legislators instead of students for surveying and did a total population survey instead of developing a random sampling procedure.

Oregon asked as many as 73 questions in their complex survey. They were, however, as interested to gather units of credit and instructional planning data as they were minimum competency requirement information. This was the reason, in part, for the long, detailed, and searching questionnaire. The Oregon questionnaire proved to be a valuable mode in some areas even though they are much more detailed and advanced in their CBE development than Nevada. The Oregon study did provide similar test questions and similar objectives. Of all of the studies or literature reviewed for this dissertation, the Oregon study was the closest in scope, approach, and content (Oregon State Department of Education, 1980).

In summary of this chapter's objective, it was important to determine:

1. If other states had similar follow-up studies and with the possible exception of Oregon, the result again was that none were found.
2. If outside agencies or institutions in any part of the country had performed competency-based testing evaluations of selected public opinions, views, or attitudes, and the result was that none were found.
3. If there is an absence of evidence or information concerning the various public opinions within the 36 states that have mandated competency-based testing. The result was that there is an absence of data, research, and literature in the area of public opinions, views, and attitudes in the individual states that have mandated competency-based testing.

Conclusion. A need for this dissertation is further supported in this chapter. In reviewing the literature, it was discovered that none

of the 36 states that have, as of January 1, 1979, enacted some form of competency-based testing have examined the views or opinions of any selected publics within their respective states.

The focal point of this study is to see how selected Nevada publics view this program since it was enacted in 1977 through Assembly Bill 400. The review of literature indicates that this form of evaluation, again with the possible exception of Oregon, and in a limited scope, Florida and California, has not been done elsewhere in the country even though it would seem to be a logical next step by other competency-based testing states.

Finally, the intent of the literature review chapter was to explain the rationale for the problem selected for this study and to inform the reader of the literature and research that was reviewed for this dissertation.

Definition of Terms.

1. Nevada's Competency-Based Testing Program refers to the program mandated by the 59th Session of the Legislature in AB400.

2. AB400 refers to Assembly Bill 400 of the 59th Session of the Nevada Legislature which met in Carson City, Nevada, in 1977. See Appendix F for a copy of the legislation.

3. Competency-Based Education (CBE) refers to performance based education which Wayne Reilly, in American Education's April, 1978, issue indicates several visible features such as: testing components, particularly in the growing phenomenon of state mandated or proficiency tests in reading, writing, and arithmetic; accountability or proof by tests which measure minimum competency levels; and precise, measurable objectives that can be used to control who is promoted or graduates

from school.

4. Competency-based tests refer to the testing measurement of CBE which is different from normal reference tests.

5. School district superintendents, school board presidents, third grade teachers, and legislators refer to all of those who currently hold these positions within the State of Nevada.

6. Attitude toward CBE refers to the reactions by the four groups to competency-based testing as revealed by responses on an attitude scale.

7. Gallup Poll refers to the attitude survey by George H. Gallup of Attitudes Toward Education published each year from 1969 to 1978. The sample report applies only to the country as a whole.

8. The basics refer to reading, writing, and arithmetic skill areas or subject matter.

9. SPSS refers to the primary computer program utilizing the "Statistical Package for Social Sciences" (SPSS). The SPSS is described as follows:

The "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" (SPSS) is an integrated system of computer programs for the analysis of social science data. The system has been designed to provide the social scientist with a unified and comprehensive package enabling him to perform many different types of data analysis in a simple and convenient manner.

SPSS allows a great deal of flexibility in the format of data. It provides the user with a comprehensive set of procedures for data transformation and file manipulation, and it offers the researcher a large number of statistical routines commonly used in the social sciences. In addition to the usual descriptive statistics, simple frequency distributions, and cross tabulations, SPSS contains procedures for simple correlation (for both ordinal and interval data), partial correlation, multiple regression, factor analysis, and Guttman scaling. (Nie, Bent, & Hull, 1979)

10. Chi-square refers to a test of statistical significance. It helps to determine whether a systematic relationship exists between two variables. This is done by computing the cell frequencies which would be expected if no relationship is present between the variables given the existing row and column totals (marginals). The expected cell frequencies are then compared to the actual values found in the table according to the following equation:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_i \frac{(f_{oi} - f_{ei})^2}{f_{ei}}$$

Chapter III

Methodology

The methodology employed in conducting this study is described in this chapter under the following subsections: Procedures, Population, Instrumentation, and Treatment of Data.

As previously stated, the purpose of the study is to survey the opinions of four selected populations in Nevada to examine their perceptions of the aftermath of the 1977 Nevada Legislature action (AB400), which mandated competency-based testing in the schools.

After reviewing the literature, it was determined that an identical study had not been done in any of the 36 states that have mandated similar programs. California conducted, however, a status report on the implementation of the state proficiency requirements and Oregon conducted an advanced study of their program after the program had been in existence for eight years. Their report did not examine initial opinions, perceptions, or attitudes as is the case with this study. Therefore, after reviewing this material, it was decided that the objective of surveying the opinions of four selected populations could best be achieved through an opinionnaire sent directly to the total population of the four selected survey groups.

Procedure. Careful consideration resulted in development of the following as a logical progression of steps to be accomplished in reaching the objective:

1. Development of a tentative list of questions to be submitted to a jury of specialists for consideration. These questions reflect the study's purpose; namely, to see if the CBE testing program is perceived as working effectively, if it is perceived positively or

negatively, and what effect the testing program will have on future high school graduates.

2. With the assistance of the dissertation committee, identify a jury of specialists to be utilized in structuring the opinionnaire.

3. Identification of the names and addresses of the population to be surveyed.

4. Development of a survey opinionnaire to collect data pertaining to their perceptions of the competency-based testing program in Nevada, pilot test the instrument, further refine the instrument with the assistance of the jury of specialists, then finalize the instrument.

5. Collection of data from the identified populations.

6. Analysis of the data considers the following components:

- a. How each of the four groups collectively perceived the program;
- b. How each of the four groups within three separate geographical areas (northern urban Nevada, southern urban Nevada, and rural Nevada) perceived parts of the program;
- c. How each of the four groups separately perceived the program;
- d. The opinionnaire is divided into three sections, and the four groups are examined within those sections.
- e. The open-ended questions are tallied, categorized, and described.

The Nevada Department of Education assisted in identifying three of the four groups and provided names and addresses in order to contact the total population of all of the four groups.

Instrumentation. Development of the instrument used for the study was accomplished in two steps:

1. A preliminary list of possible questions was developed with the assistance of the State of Oregon Impact Study of New Requirements for High School Graduation, the California Assembly Education Committee's Subcommittee on Educational Reform, and the Southwest Regional Educational Research and Development Lab. The potential questions were submitted to a jury of specialists for review and comment. The jury of specialists consisted of: Dr. Doug Mathewson of the Chancellor's Office, University of Nevada System; Dr. Ray Ryan, Jr., Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada State Department of Education; Dr. Roger Scott, Senior Member of the Professional Staff, SWRL Educational Research and Development in Los Alamitos, California; Dr. Allen R. Wilcox, Bureau of Government Research at the University of Nevada, Reno; Dr. Fred Kirschner, Chairman of the Educational Foundations and Counseling Department, College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and Dr. John Keith, Psychology Department at Clark County Community College.

The above jury of specialists was selected with the aid of Dr. John Vergiels, the chairman of this dissertation committee. They were selected because of their knowledge, background, willingness to participate in this type of study, and their considerable experience in at least one of the following: testing, opinionnaires, attitude studies, competency-based testing programs, behavioral and psychological examinations, questionnaire formulation, and/or computer analysis. The decision to select the above-mentioned six specialists came from a list of 17 highly qualified individuals which was compiled and reviewed by the dissertation committee chairman. It was assumed, after an initial contact, that each of the six would be willing to assist. Each already had the reputation that would easily qualify him as a jury

specialist in one or more of the previously-mentioned areas of expertise. Each judge was then contacted again, either in person or by telephone, and all six gave an affirmative participation response.

Once the instrument was constructed in rough draft format by the jury of specialists, the opinionnaire was pilot tested by Las Vegas high school teachers, grade school teachers, and graduate students from Golden Gate University. They examined it for clarity, understanding, and interpretation.

The instrument was then revised and resubmitted to the jury of specialists. The types of questions included in the instrument were determined by the information and data gathering objectives:

- a. Is the test perceived positively or negatively?
- b. Is it perceived as working effectively?
- c. What effect will the test have on future graduating high school seniors?

Using these objectives as the basis for instrument construction and refinement, additional factors were then considered, such as:

- a. The respondent group's role in relation to the test:
 administrative (school board president, superintendent)
 implementation, monitoring (third grade teacher) and policy
 making (legislator);
- b. The type of information the respondent would have (or could have access to) in relation to the competency test and the respondent's role in the program.

The instrument questions were then structured into one opinionnaire that could be used by all four groups. The next step was to limit the questions and finalize the instrument.

2. In order to survey the populations, a Likert-type instrument was formulated. Forty questions were condensed to 28 and then, after three more revisions, finally to 17. A final instrument was approved by the jury of specialists in early May of 1980. With the form approved and the items determined, the survey instrument was printed in four colors to identify the four survey groups and prepared for mailing to the four total populations. A cover letter, utilizing an IBM typewriter and quick printing, accompanied each color-coded instrument; return coded envelopes were provided for reply. Copies of the final instrument and cover letter are included in Appendix G.

The overall response rate following the mailing was 55.0%. Table 1, Population and Response Chart, shows the exact population by group and the number of responses that were received. After six weeks, a decision was made by the dissertation chairman that the return was sufficient for the purposes of the investigation, and a follow-up letter plan to non-respondents was eliminated. The returned color-coded envelopes and surveys were then given number codes in order to assist the data processing keypunch operator and programmer in sorting, computing, and analyzing the data. The 311 returned opinionnaires were then taken to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Computer Center. Under the direction of the Director, Brad Boman, the surveys were keypunched and programmed.

Treatment of Data. The data initially was analyzed descriptively and collectively using a simple cross-tabulation procedure and the SPSS computer program. Questionnaire items represented either nominal or ordinal data. Items yielding nominal data (categorical judgmental

responses) were analyzed using chi-square. Items yielding ordinal data (using judgmental responses which are commonly called "Likert Scales") also were analyzed using chi-square procedures. Because of the color coding, it was possible to examine each of the four groups separately. The return envelope also was coded, enabling the examination of the groups by geographic regions in Nevada. The analyses made it possible to determine whether statistically significant differences existed item by item as a function of geographic location or type of respondent; e.g., superintendent, teacher, board president, legislator. By using cross-tabulation, the questionnaire was then divided into three sections. Section I comprised the seven questions related to perceptions about the minimum competency test, and if the test was viewed as working effectively. Section II comprised five "Is the test perceived positively or negatively?" questions. Section III comprised five "What effect the test will have on future high school graduates?" questions. The statistical test used for the tables was chi-square. Definitions and descriptions of the statistical test can be found in the Definition of Terms section of this study.

Opinionnaire survey questions 7 and 17 were open-ended. The comments were transferred to pads of paper, cross-checked to be sure that no comments were omitted or misread, and then typed. The comments were only slightly edited to add clarity, correct spelling, and to correct grammar. The comments were then clustered into eight category groupings. They were further grouped according to similarity and then ranked according to the repeated comments. A complete list of all of the comments can be found in Appendix J; however, a summarized version was prepared for tabulations.

The tabulation was done in two ranking ways: first, by the most commonly repeated 17 responses regardless of cluster categories; and second, the most common responses within each of the eight cluster groups. The responses totaled 27 and varied according to the importance placed by the respondent. The ranking and comments can be found in Chapter IV, as well as the overall results of the opinionnaire.

Chapter IV

Results

This chapter summarizes the data collected from the study and includes descriptive tables of comparison. The opinionnaire results are examined in four ways:

1. The "Total Nevada" responses, which are combined totals of the four surveyed groups, are examined in 16 tables.

2. The 17 question opinionnaire is divided into three sections. Each section examines a specific set of questions. The Section I question is: "Is CBE test perceived positively or negatively?" Opinionnaire questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 11 all relate to the first section's results. The Section II question is, "Is it perceived as working effectively?" Opinionnaire questions 1, 4, 7, 10, and 12 all relate to the second section's results. The Section III question is, "What effect will the tests have on future graduating high school seniors?" Opinionnaire questions 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 all relate to the third section's results. The three sections contain a total of 16 tables. Each of the three sections is examined independently of the others.

3. Each of the four groups also is divided into geographic regions of the state using cross-tabulations to determine how the different areas of the state respond to the various questions. In Section I three geographic region questions are examined as represented by Tables 25, 26, and 27. Section II has two geographic region questions (Tables 33 and 34), as does Section III (Tables 39 and 40).

4. The open-ended questions are tallied, categorized, and recorded at the end of this chapter. The complete list of all comments

is found in Appendix J.

The opinionnaire was subjected to statistical analysis procedures. The purpose of these analyses was to identify statistically significant differences that may exist either geographically or among the four specially selected groups (school district superintendents, third grade teachers, school board presidents, and legislators). A .05 confidence level was established as the minimum standard for determining statistical significance across all items and statistical tests. Chi-square procedures were applied to items within the opinionnaire that were appropriate for such analysis.

The 17 question opinionnaire also consisted of items requiring: categorical judgment or factual responses yielding nominal data and Likert-type scales yielding judgmental responses of an ordinal nature. Chi-square analysis is used for the opinionnaire's questions that yield nominal and ordinal data. The chi-square analysis tested for differences in the categorical responses.

As mentioned earlier, all individuals responding to this opinionnaire were treated as one respondent group for purposes of testing for item-by-item differences; however, a second chi-square analysis was conducted to identify differences among the four group respondents or the geographical area respondents. Areas of statistical significance are identified and described at the bottom of Section I, II, and III Tables.

The first question asked in the opinionnaire was, "Do you think the competency tests are basically a good idea or basically a bad idea?" Table 2 reflects the combined totals of the four groups that responded to this question. The phrase "Total Nevada" that will be used in this

and the next 16 tables is defined as, "The Combined Totals of the Four Groups." The Nevada total consisted of 311 of a possible 565 responses, or a 55% return of the opinionnaire. Table 2 reflects a very positive 78.1% opinion that competency tests are basically a good idea.

Table 3 reflects the responses of Total Nevada, as defined above, to the question, "Do you think the competency test had a positive effect on students' basic (reading, writing, and arithmetic) skill development?" Here, 41.5% said yes, definitely, or probably; while 31.8% said no, definitely not, or probably not; and another 26.7% were undecided.

Table 4 reflects the Total Nevada responses to the question, "In your opinion, do the competency requirements provide an incentive for most students to acquire basic skills competencies as mandated by the State of Nevada?" The respondents were asked to express a "yes," "no," or "don't know" opinion; 49.2% said no, while 31.8% said yes; 18.0% didn't know; and 1% left it blank.

Table 5 reflects the opinions of Total Nevada to the question, "Has there been any negative reaction on the part of parents to the implementation of minimum competencies for graduation?"; 42.8% said no; however, 46.3% said they didn't know; and 9.3% said yes, that there had been some negative reaction from parents.

Table 6 reflects the opinions of Total Nevada to the question, "Do you think competency testing is a good way to improve basic skills?"; 59.7% said yes, definitely, or probably; 30.8% said no, definitely not, or probably not; and 9.3% were uncertain.

Table 7 reflects the opinions of Total Nevada to the question, "Are today's students required to demonstrate competency in skills

which have not previously been taught? In other words, are students being tested in skill areas where they have not been taught or received knowledge; 46.0% said no, while 33.5% said yes, and another 19.6% didn't know.

Table 8 reflects the opinions of Total Nevada to the question, "Have the competency tests had any other positive or negative effects (other than basic skills) on education in Nevada? In other words, is there a side benefit or a side liability because of the testing program? Are there any consequences that result because of the testing program? Breakdown reveals 21.2% said yes; 19.7% no; 57.2% said they didn't know.

Table 9 reflects the opinions of Total Nevada to the statement, "The schools in my local area are now starting to put more emphasis on the basic skills." This question and the following eight questions are all structured using Likert scales. The respondent has an opportunity to select any one of the five choices. The scale is one to five with one (1) being strongly agree; two (2) moderately agree; three (3) neutral, don't agree or disagree; four (4) moderately disagree; and five (5) strongly disagree.

The response to this inquiry showed that 68.8% strongly or moderately agree that the schools are putting more emphasis on the basics; 18.6% were neutral; and 11.9% moderately or strongly disagree.

Table 1

Population and Response Chart

	Identification Code*	Total Population	Number of Returns	Percent of Returns
<u>Third Grade Teachers</u>				
Urban Southern Nevada	11	250	124	
Urban Northern Nevada	12	124	69	
Rural Nevada	13	<u>97</u>	<u>59</u>	
		471	252	53.5%
<u>State Legislators</u>				
Urban Southern Nevada	21	33	19	
Urban Northern Nevada	22	15	9	
Rural Nevada	23	<u>12</u>	<u>7</u>	
		60	35	58.3%
<u>School District Superintendents</u>				
Southern Nevada	31	6	5	
Northern Nevada	32	<u>11</u>	<u>8</u>	
		17	13	76.5%
<u>School Board Presidents</u>				
Southern Nevada	41	6	4	
Northern Nevada	42	<u>11</u>	<u>7</u>	
		17	11	64.7%
	Grand Total	<u>565</u>	<u>311</u>	<u>55.0%</u>

* Code Explanation: First digit is the group identification. The second digit is the geographic area. First digit 1 means teachers, 2 means legislators, 3 means superintendents, and 4 means board presidents. Second digit 1 means south, 2 means north, and 3 means rural; e.g., 21 means legislator (2) from Southern Nevada (1).

Table 2

Total Nevada

DO YOU THINK THE COMPETENCY TESTS ARE BASICALLY

A GOOD IDEA OR BASICALLY A BAD IDEA?

	Number	Percent
A Good Idea	243	78.1%
A Bad Idea	48	15.4%
Don't Know	17	5.5%
No Response	3	1.0%

Table 3

DO YOU THINK THE COMPETENCY TEST HAS HAD A POSITIVE
EFFECT ON STUDENTS' BASIC (READING
WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC) SKILL
DEVELOPMENT?

	Number	Percent
Yes, Definitely	4	13.8%
Yes, Probably	86	27.7%
Uncertainty, Not Sure	83	26.7%
No, Probably Not	76	24.4%
No, Definitely Not	23	7.4%

Table 4

Total Nevada

IN YOUR OPINION, DO THE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS
 PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR MOST STUDENTS TO ACQUIRE
 BASIC SKILL COMPETENCIES AS MANDATED BY THE STATE
 OF NEVADA?

	Number	Percent
Yes	99	31.8%
No	153	49.2%
Don't Know	56	18.0%
No Response	3	1.0%

Table 5

Total Nevada

HAS THERE BEEN ANY NEGATIVE REACTION ON THE
 PART OF PARENTS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
 MINIMUM COMPETENCIES FOR GRADUATION?

	Number	Percent
Yes	29	9.3%
No	133	42.8%
Don't Know	144	46.3%
No Response	5	1.6%

Table 6

Total Nevada

DO YOU THINK COMPETENCY TESTING IS A
GOOD WAY TO IMPROVE BASIC SKILLS?

	Number	Percent
Yes, Definitely	67	21.5%
Yes, Probably	115	37.0%
Uncertain, Not Sure	29	9.3%
No, Probably Not	69	22.2%
No, Definitely Not	25	8.0%
No Response	6	1.9%

Table 7

Total Nevada

ARE TODAY'S STUDENTS REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE
COMPETENCY IN SKILLS WHICH HAVE NOT
PREVIOUSLY BEEN TAUGHT?

	Number	Percent
Yes	104	33.4%
No	143	46.0%
Don't Know	61	19.6%
No Response	3	.9%

Table 8

Total Nevada

HAVE THE COMPETENCY TESTS HAD ANY OTHER POSITIVE
OR NEGATIVE EFFECTS (OTHER THAN ON BASIC SKILLS)
ON EDUCATION IN NEVADA?

	Number	Percent
Yes	66	21.2%
No	60	19.3%
Don't Know	178	57.2%
No Response	7	2.3%

Table 9

THE SCHOOLS IN MY LOCAL AREA ARE NOW STARTING
TO PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON BASIC SKILLS.

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	95	30.5%
Moderately Agree	119	38.3%
Neutral	58	18.6%
Moderately Disagree	19	6.1%
Strongly Disagree	18	5.8%
No Response	2	.6%

Tables 10 and 11 were questions 9 and 11 in the opinionnaire. These two questions are just the opposite of each other. Question 9 says, "Today's students in my local geographic area are doing better than the rest of the state in meeting the competency standards at various grades." The reason that question 11 is the opposite was to determine how closely the respondent read the two questions and to see if there was any uniformity in responses to each question. A comparison of Tables 10 and 11 shows that 51.1% were neutral in Table 10 and 51.8% were neutral in Table 11.

Table 12 asks Total Nevada's opinion of, "The schools should continue to teach more of the basic skills instead of non-basic skill courses," and 54% strongly agree; 26% more moderately agree, for a combined total of 80%. This was one of the strongest responses to any of the questions asked.

Table 13 asks about public accountability, and if the test will make it easier for the public to see what's happening in the schools and those in the schools will more effectively be able to respond. The question reads, "In your estimation, because of the competency test, will educators in the future be able to respond more effectively to community demands for public accountability?"; 56% strongly and moderately agreed.

Table 14 asks Total Nevada if "the competency test program should continue in the future." To this inquiry, 34.4% strongly agreed; 27.3% moderately agreed; and 20.3% were neutral.

Table 15 asks Total Nevada's opinion concerning the future, the test, and the graduates. The question, "Because of the competency

test program, future graduating seniors will have a better knowledge of basic skills than this year's graduating seniors"; 32.2% were neutral--neither agreeing nor disagreeing; 48.9% strongly and moderately agreed, while 17.7% strongly and moderately disagreed.

Table 16 asks Total Nevada to look into the future and express an opinion. The question is, "The competency test program will play a positive role in preparing students for future adult life roles, example: consumer, citizen, producer, life-long learner, and so forth"; 30.5% were neutral on the issue; 24.8% moderately agreed; 18.3% strongly agreed. Along the same line, Table 17 looks at the future ten years and asks, "As a result of the competency-based testing program, graduating seniors in the year 1990 will have acquired the knowledge, skills, and confidence in the basic skills necessary to function effectively in contemporary society." Here also, as in the previous table, 35.4% were neutral; 25.4% moderately agreed; 13.8% strongly agreed; 12.5% moderately disagreed; 11.7% strongly disagreed. The significant point of the last two charts regarding the future was that the respondents were not sure and preferred to be neutral instead of agreeing or disagreeing with the position.

Table 10

Total Nevada

TODAY'S STUDENTS IN MY LOCAL GEOGRAPHICAL AREA
 ARE DOING BETTER THAN THE REST OF THE STATE IN
 MEETING THE COMPETENCY STANDARDS AT VARIOUS GRADES

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	33	10.6%
Moderately Agree	84	27.0%
Neutral	159	51.1%
Moderately Disagree	14	4.5%
Strongly Disagree	12	3.9%
No Response	9	2.9%

Table 11

Total Nevada

TODAY'S STUDENTS IN THE STATE OF NEVADA ARE DOING
 BETTER THAN STUDENTS IN MY LOCAL GEOGRAPHICAL AREA
 IN MEETING THE COMPETENCY STANDARDS AT VARIOUS GRADES

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	7	2.3%
Moderately Agree	28	9.0%
Neutral	161	51.8%
Moderately Disagree	49	15.8%
Strongly Disagree	53	17.0%
No Response	13	4.2%

Table 12

Total Nevada

THE SCHOOLS SHOULD CONTINUE TO TEACH MORE
OF THE BASIC SKILLS INSTEAD OF NON-BASIC SKILL COURSES

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	168	54.0%
Moderately Agree	81	26.0%
Neutral	33	10.6%
Moderately Disagree	23	7.4%
Strongly Disagree	5	1.6%
No Response	1	.3%

Table 13

Total Nevada

IN YOUR ESTIMATION, BECAUSE OF THE COMPETENCY TEST,
 WILL EDUCATORS IN THE FUTURE BE ABLE TO RESPOND MORE
 EFFECTIVELY TO COMMUNITY DEMANDS FOR PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY?

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	67	21.5%
Moderately Agree	110	35.4%
Neutral	68	21.9%
Moderately Disagree	30	9.6%
Strongly Disagree	32	10.3%
No Response	4	1.3%

Table 14

Total Nevada

THE COMPETENCY TEST PROGRAM SHOULD

CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	107	34.4%
Moderately Agree	85	27.3%
Neutral	63	20.3%
Moderately Disagree	22	7.1%
Strongly Disagree	30	9.6%
No Response	4	1.3%

Table 15

Total Nevada

BECAUSE OF THE COMPETENCY TEST PROGRAM

FUTURE GRADUATING STUDENTS WILL HAVE A BETTER KNOWLEDGE

OF BASIC SKILLS THAN THIS YEAR'S GRADUATING SENIORS

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	63	20.3%
Moderately Agree	89	28.6%
Neutral	100	32.2%
Moderately Disagree	28	9.0%
Strongly Disagree	27	8.7%
No Response	4	1.3%

Table 16

Total Nevada

THE COMPETENCY TEST PROGRAM WILL PLAY A
 POSITIVE ROLE IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR FUTURE
 ADULT-LIFE ROLES, EXAMPLES: CONSUMER, CITIZEN, PRODUCER,
 LIFELONG LEARNER, AND SO FORTH

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	57	18.3%
Moderately Agree	77	24.8%
Neutral	95	30.5%
Moderately Disagree	34	10.9%
Strongly Disagree	46	14.8%
No Response	2	.6%

Table 17

Total Nevada

AS A RESULT OF THE COMPETENCY BASED
 TESTING PROGRAM, GRADUATING SENIORS IN THE
 YEAR 1990 WILL HAVE ACQUIRED THE KNOWLEDGE,
 SKILLS, AND CONFIDENCE IN THE BASIC SKILLS NECESSARY TO
 FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.

	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	43	13.8%
Moderately Agree	79	25.4%
Neutral	110	35.4%
Moderately Disagree	39	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	35	11.3%
No Response	5	1.6%

As previously mentioned, the 17 question opinionnaire was divided into three groups of questions which are called Sections in this study. Section I comprised seven questions related to perceptions about the minimum competency test, and if it was viewed as working effectively. Section II comprised five questions which ask, "Is the test perceived positively or negatively?" and the five questions in Section III ask, "what effect the test will have on future high school graduates."

For purposes of comparison, the SPSS computer program was then cross-tabulated in order to see not only how each group (teachers, legislators, superintendents, and board presidents) viewed Sections I, II, and III but how each group, according to geographical location, viewed each section of the opinionnaire.

Tables 18 through 24 examine the responses to questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 11 which comprise Section I using the totals of the four surveyed groups.

Table 18 examines the opinions to question 2, "Do you think the competency test has had a positive effect on students' basic (reading, writing, and arithmetic) skill development?" One segment of legislators and board presidents expressed the most uncertainty; 40% and 45.5%, respectively, while the other segment of legislators (34.3%) were very positive, giving the question a yes, definitely, response. The other segment of board presidents (36.4%) gave it a yes, probably. Teachers and superintendents were scattered in their responses, leaning toward a qualified yes response.

Table 19 examines the opinions to question 3, "In your opinion, do the competency requirements provide an incentive for most students

to acquire basic skill competencies as mandated by the State of Nevada?" Teachers and superintendents said no; legislators said yes; and board presidents were evenly divided.

Table 20 examines the opinions to question 5, "Do you think competency testing is a good way to improve basic skills?" Board presidents, superintendents, and legislators said yes, while teachers were more spread out in their responses; with 53.5% saying yes, 35.4% saying no, and 11.4% were not sure.

Table 21 examines the opinions to question 6, "Are today's students required to demonstrate competency in skills which have not previously been taught?" On this question, teachers were fairly evenly divided while board presidents and superintendents said no, and legislators did not know.

Table 22 examines the opinions to question 8, "The schools in my local area are now starting to put more emphasis on the basic skills." The general consensus by all four groups was a moderate agreement. The strongest disagreement (18.2%) came from board presidents, but this does not overshadow the fact that 63.7% agree with the question.

Table 23 examines the opinions to question 9, "Today's students in my local geographical area are doing better than the rest of the state in meeting the competency standards at the various grades." There was moderate agreement (64.2%) to the statement by superintendents; however, the general opinion of the other three groups, and to some degree even superintendents, was that they did not agree or disagree. In other words, their position was one of neutrality.

Table 24 examines the opinions to question 11, "Today's students in the state of Nevada are doing better than students in my local

geographical area in meeting the competency standards at various grades." This question is the exact opposite of question 9, Table 23. As should be expected, the opposite results to question 9 were found to be the pattern in question 11. Again, three groups were neutral with some neutrality and some disagreement by superintendents.

Table 18

Section 1

DO YOU THINK THE COMPETENCY TEST HAS HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON
STUDENTS' BASIC (READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC)
SKILL DEVELOPMENT?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Yes, Definitely	29 11.5%	12 34.3%	1 7.7%	1 9.1%
Yes, Probably	68 27.0%	9 25.7%	5 38.5%	4 36.4%
Uncertain, Not Sure	60 23.8%	14 40.0%	4 30.8%	5 45.5%
No, Probably Not	73 29.0%	0	3 23.1%	0
No, Definitely Not	22 8.7%	0	0	1 9.1%

Table 19

Section 1

IN YOUR OPINION, DO THE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS
 PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR MOST STUDENTS TO ACQUIRE BASIC
 SKILL COMPETENCIES AS MANDATED BY THE STATE OF NEVADA?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Yes	70 28.1%	20 57.1%	4 30.8%	5 45.5%
No	139 55.8%	1 2.9%	8 61.5%	5 45.5%
Don't Know	40 16.1%	14 40.0%	1 7.7%	1 9.1%

Table 20

Section I

DO YOU THINK COMPETENCY TESTING IS
A GOOD WAY TO IMPROVE BASIC SKILLS?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Yes, Definitely	45 18.3%	18 51.4%	2 15.4%	2 18.2%
Yes, Probably	86 35.0%	17 48.6%	7 53.8%	5 45.5%
Uncertain, Not Sure	28 11.4%	0	1 7.7%	0
No, Probably Not	62 25.2%	0	3 23.1%	4 36.4%
No, Definitely Not	25 10.2%	0	0	0

Chi square = 39.21544 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0001

Table 21

Section I

ARE TODAY'S STUDENTS REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE
COMPETENCY IN SKILLS WHICH HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN TAUGHT?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Yes	100 40.0%	1 2.9%	1 7.7%	2 18.2%
No	114 45.6%	12 34.3%	9 69.2%	8 72.7%
Don't Know	35 14.0%	22 62.9%	3 23.1%	1 9.1%
No Response	1 .4%	0	0	0

Chi square = 58.56963 with 9 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0000

Table 22

Section I

THE SCHOOLS IN MY LOCAL AREA ARE NOW
STARTING TO PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON THE BASIC SKILLS.

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	85 34.0%	4 11.4%	3 23.1%	3 27.3%
Moderately Agree	90 36.0%	19 54.3%	6 46.2%	4 36.4%
Neutral	45 18.0%	8 22.9%	3 23.1%	2 18.2%
Moderately Disagree	15 6.0%	4 11.4%	0	0
Strongly Disagree	15 6.0%	0	1 7.7%	2 18.2%

Chi square = 16.88754 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .1539

Table 23

Section I

TODAY'S STUDENTS IN MY LOCAL GEOGRAPHICAL AREA
 ARE DOING BETTER THAN THE REST OF THE STATE IN
 MEETING THE COMPETENCY STANDARDS AT THE VARIOUS GRADES.

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	30 12.3%	2 5.7%	0	1 9.1%
Moderately Agree	69 28.4%	6 17.1%	6 46.2%	3 27.3%
Neutral	124 51.0%	24 68.6%	5 38.5%	6 54.5%
Moderately Disagree	12 4.9%	0	2 15.4%	0
Strongly Disagree	8 3.3%	3 8.6%	0	1 9.1%

Chi square = 16.92699 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .1524

Table 24

Section I

TODAY'S STUDENTS IN THE STATE OF NEVADA
 ARE DOING BETTER THAN STUDENTS IN MY LOCAL GEOGRAPHICAL
 AREA IN MEETING THE COMPETENCY STANDARDS AT VARIOUS GRADES.

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	4 1.7%	3 8.6%	0	0
Moderately Agree	23 9.6%	2 5.7%	2 15.4%	1 9.1%
Neutral	128 53.6%	25 71.4%	4 30.8%	4 36.4%
Moderately Disagree	38 15.9%	3 8.6%	5 38.5%	3 27.3%
Strongly Disagree	46 19.2%	2 5.7%	2 15.4%	3 27.3%

Chi square = 21.45337 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0441

Tables 25, 26, and 27 represent the composite of each response by grouping and also by geographical areas for some Section I questions. Section I comprised of seven questions of which questions 2, 3, and 6 are examined below.

Table 25 provides the reader with the cross-tabulated results to question 2, "Do you think the competency test has had a positive effect on students' basic (reading, writing, and arithmetic) skill development?"

In looking for characteristics of the groupings, it is interesting to note that 45% of Southern Nevada legislators are the "yes, definitely," while both Northern and rural legislators register 20% each to "yes, definitely"; 60% of the Northern legislators were uncertain while 40% of the rural legislators and 30% of Southern legislators were uncertain. None of the legislators living in the three geographic locations posted a no, probably not, or no, definitely not response.

Northern and Southern Nevada teachers were very harmonious in their overall responses while rural teachers gave a 43.3% "yes, probably" response. This can be closely compared to their rural legislative counterparts' response of "yes, probably" of 40%. North and South school board presidents do not agree at all with each other while North and South superintendents are very close in their responses.

Table 26 asks the respondents to state their views to question 3, "In your opinion, do the competency requirements provide an incentive for most students to acquire basic skill competencies as mandated by the State of Nevada?" In looking at the groupings, North, South, and

rural teachers all seem to agree that the answer is no. This "no" position is also supported by Northern board presidents and Northern and Southern superintendents, but not by Southern board presidents or Southern legislators. Northern and rural legislators gave "don't know" as their response 60% of the time.

Table 27 describes the responses to question 6, "Are today's students required to demonstrate competency in skills which have not previously been taught?" A definite "no" was the most dominating response by all groups except Southern teachers. The no responses in order of strongest protest were: Southern board presidents, 75%; Northern superintendents and Northern board presidents, each with 71.4%; Southern superintendents, 66.7%; rural legislators, 60%; rural teachers, 50%; and Northern teachers, 45.5%. Both Southern and Northern legislators did not know, but Southern teachers split-- 46.8% said yes and 43.5% said no.

Table 25

Section I

NORTH-SOUTH-RURAL NEVADA

DO YOU THINK THE COMPETENCY TEST HAS HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON STUDENTS' BASIC (READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC) SKILL DEVELOPMENT?

	Teachers South	Teachers North	Teachers Rural	Legislators South	Legislators North	Legislators Rural	Superintendents South	Superintendents North	Board Presidents South	Board Presidents North
Yes, Definitely	16 12.7%	6 9.1%	7 11.7%	9 45.0%	2 20.0%	1 20.0%	1 16.7%	0	0	1 14.3%
Yes, Probably	28 22.2%	14 21.2%	26 43.3%	5 25.0%	2 20.0%	2 40.0%	2 33.3%	3 42.9%	3 75.0%	1 14.3%
Uncertain, Not Sure	32 25.4%	18 27.3%	10 16.7%	6 30.0%	6 60.0%	2 40.0%	2 33.3%	2 28.6%	1 25.0%	4 57.1%
No, Probably Not	40 31.7%	19 28.8%	14 23.3%	0	0	0	1 16.7%	2 28.6%	0	0
No, Definitely Not	10 7.9%	9 13.6%	3 13.0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 14.3%

Chi square = 62.45662 with 36 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0040

Table 26

Section I

IN YOUR OPINION DO THE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR MOST STUDENTS TO ACQUIRE BASIC SKILL COMPETENCIES AS MANDATED BY THE STATE OF NEVADA?

	Teachers South	Teachers North	Teachers Rural	Legislators South	Legislators North	Legislators Rural	Superintendents South	Superintendents North	Board Presidents South	Board Presidents North
Yes	33 26.8%	19 28.8%	18 30.0%	15 75.0%	3 30.0%	2 40.0%	2 33.3%	2 28.6%	2 50.0%	3 42.9%
No	74 60.2%	40 60.6%	25 41.7%	0	1 10.0%	0	3 50.0%	5 71.4%	1 25.0%	4 57.1%
Don't Know	16 13.0%	7 10.6%	17 28.3%	5 25.0%	6 60.0%	3 60.0%	1 16.7%	0	1 25.0%	0

Chi square = 60.41111 with 18 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0000

Table 27
Section I
NORTH-SOUTH-RURAL NEVADA
ARE TODAY'S STUDENTS REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE COMPETENCY
IN SKILLS WHICH HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN TAUGHT?

	Teachers South	Teachers North	Teachers Rural	Legislators South	Legislators North	Legislators Rural	Superintendents South	Superintendents North	Board Presidents South	Board Presidents North
Yes	58 46.8%	23 34.8%	19 31.7%	1 5.0%	0	0	0	1 14.3%	0	2 28.6%
No	54 43.5%	30 45.5%	30 50.0%	7 35.0%	2 20.0%	3 60.0%	4 66.7%	5 71.4%	3 75.0%	5 71.4%
Don't Know	12 9.7%	13 19.7%	10 16.7%	12 60.0%	8 80.0%	2 40.0%	2 33.3%	1 14.3%	1 25.0%	0

Chi square = 75.12329 with 27 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0000

Section II responses consider whether or not the test is perceived positively or negatively by each of the four surveyed groups.

Section II consists of five questions which are 1, 4, 7, 10, and 12. The first group of five (Tables 28 to 32) look at these five questions and the responses of the individual group.

Table 28 examines the responses to question 1, "Do you think the competency tests are basically a good idea or basically a bad idea?" Each of the four groups said that it was basically a good idea. The degree to which they agreed is worthy of mention. Legislators who passed the law were in 100% agreement that it was a good idea. Elected school board presidents were also in strong agreement, posting a 90.9% good idea response, followed by superintendents with 76.9%, and teachers with 75.5%. As previously stated, all four groups think that the tests were basically a good idea and each group registered over a 75% agreement in registering it.

Table 29 examines the opinions of the four groups to question 4, "Has there been any negative reaction on the part of the parents to the implementation of minimum competencies for graduation?" Board presidents and superintendents think that the answer was no; 50% of legislators also think the answer was no; however, another 27.1% didn't know; 50% of the teachers didn't know, while another 40.7% said that there was not any negative reaction by parents to the minimum competency requirements for graduation.

Table 30 examines the opinions of the four groups to question 7, "Have the competency tests had any other positive or negative effects (other than on basic skills) on education in Nevada?" Teachers and legislators didn't know; 41.7% of the superintendents said they

didn't know, and another 33.3% said yes. With board presidents, the opposite was true; 45.5% said they didn't know, and another 36.4% said no.

Table 31 examined the opinion of the four groups to question 10, "The schools should continue to teach more of the basic skills instead of non-basic skill courses." Board presidents, teachers, and legislators strongly agreed that they should, while 30.8% of the superintendents moderately agreed, and another 46.2% were neutral.

Table 32 examined the opinion of the four groups to question 12, "In your estimation, because of the competency test, will educators in the future be able to respond more effectively to community demands for 'public accountability'?" 54.3% of the legislators strongly agreed, and another 40% moderately agreed which is a combined total of 94.3%. Teachers and board presidents either moderately agreed or were neutral, and superintendents either moderately disagreed or were neutral.

Table 28

Section II

DO YOU THINK THE COMPETENCY TESTS ARE
BASICALLY A GOOD IDEA OR BASICALLY A BAD IDEA?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
<hr/> Basically a:				
Good Idea	188 75.5%	35 100.0%	10 76.9%	10 90.9%
Bad Idea	45 18.1%	0	2 15.0%	1 9.1%
Don't Know	16 6.4%	0	1 7.7%	0

Chi square = 12.30904 with 6 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0554

Table 29

Section II

HAS THERE BEEN ANY NEGATIVE REACTION
ON THE PART OF THE PARENTS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF MINIMUM COMPETENCIES FOR GRADUATION?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Yes	23 9.3%	1 2.9%	3 23.1%	2 18.2%
No	101 40.7%	17 50.0%	7 53.8%	8 72.7%
Don't Know	124 50.0%	16 47.1%	3 23.1%	1 9.1%

Chi square = 13.62584 with 6 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0341

Table 30

Section II

HAVE THE COMPETENCY TESTS HAD ANY OTHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE
EFFECTS (OTHER THAN ON BASIC SKILLS) ON EDUCATION IN NEVADA?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Yes	58 23.5%	2 5.7%	4 33.3%	2 18.2%
No	51 20.6%	2 5.7%	3 25.0%	4 36.4%
Don't Know	137 55.5%	31 88.6%	5 41.7%	5 45.5%
No Response	1 .4%	0	0	0

Chi square = 17.57534 with 9 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0404

Table 31

Section II

THE SCHOOLS SHOULD CONTINUE TO TEACH MORE
OF THE BASIC SKILLS INSTEAD OF THE NON-BASIC SKILL COURSES

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	134 53.4%	26 74.3%	1 7.7%	7 63.6%
Moderately Agree	69 27.5%	5 14.3%	4 30.8%	3 27.3%
Neutral	24 9.6%	2 5.7%	6 46.2%	1 9.1%
Moderately Disagree	19 7.6%	2 5.7%	2 15.4%	0
Strongly Disagree	5 2.0%	0	0	0

Chi square = 29.92175 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0029

Table 32

Section II

IN YOUR ESTIMATION, BECAUSE OF THE COMPETENCY TEST, WILL
 EDUCATORS IN THE FUTURE BE ABLE TO RESPOND MORE EFFECTIVELY
 TO COMMUNITY DEMANDS FOR "PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY"?

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	45 18.1%	19 54.3%	1 7.7%	2 18.2%
Moderately Agree	90 36.3%	14 40.0%	2 15.4%	4 36.4%
Neutral	57 23.0%	2 5.7%	5 38.5%	4 36.4%
Moderately Disagree	25 10.1%	0	4 30.8%	1 9.1%
Strongly Disagree	31 12.5%	0	1 7.7%	0

Chi square = 43.53574 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .000

For a further examination of Section II, two of the five questions were selected for a geographical examination. Questions 1 and 4 are examined in this manner in Tables 33 and 34.

Table 33 examines the opinions of the four groups in the three geographic locations. This provided a total of 10 variables to question 1, "Do you think the competency tests are basically a good idea or basically a bad idea?" Legislators, regardless of location, were 100% convinced that the competency test was basically a good idea. Board presidents in the South also gave it 100% support. Northern board presidents, Northern superintendents, and rural teachers each gave an 85% good idea response while Northern and Southern teachers were in the 70-73% range. The lowest approval came from Southern superintendents (66.7%).

Table 34 examines the opinions of the four groups in the 2-3 variable geographic locations. This provides a total of 10 variables to question 4, "Has there been any negative reaction on the part of parents to the implementation of minimum competencies for graduation?" The strongest no answer to the question came from Southern board presidents (75%), Northern board presidents (71.4%), Southern superintendents (66.7%), and Southern legislators (60%). The I don't know response was dominant among rural legislators (60%), Northern legislators (55.6%), Southern (51.6%) and Northern (51.5%) teachers. Rural teachers were mixed with 48.3% saying no and 44.8% saying that they didn't know. While Northern superintendents gave no a 42.9% response, they were also the highest group to say yes (28.6%). Legislators showed the strongest agreement (60.0%) while the other 40% were neutral; 34.4% of the teachers were neutral, while 38.5%

agreed and 24.6% disagreed. Board presidents were also mixed; 45.5% agreed, 38.2% disagreed, and the rest were neutral. Superintendents again were neutral on this question (69.2%) as could be expected since they were neutral on the previous two questions dealing with the future.

Table 33

Section II

DO YOU THINK THE COMPETENCY TESTS ARE BASICALLY A GOOD IDEA OR BASICALLY A BAD IDEA?

	Teachers South	Teachers North	Teachers Rural	Legislators South	Legislators North	Legislators Rural	Superintendents South	Superintendents North	Board Presidents South	Board Presidents North
Basically a:										
Good Idea	91 73.4%	46 70.8%	51 85.0%	20 100.0%	10 100.0%	5 100.0%	4 66.7%	6 85.7%	4 100.0%	6 85.7%
Bad Idea	28 22.6%	11 20.0%	4 6.7%	0	0	0	1 16.7%	1 14.3%	0	1 14.3%
Don't Know	5 4.0%	6 9.2%	5 8.3%	0	0	0	1 16.7%	0	0	0

Chi square = 24.82516 with 18 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .1298

Table 34

Section II

HAS THERE BEEN ANY NEGATIVE REACTION ON THE PART OF PARENTS TO
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MINIMUM COMPETENCIES FOR GRADUATION?

	Teachers South	Teachers North	Teachers Rural	Legislators South	Legislators North	Legislators Rural	Superintendents South	Superintendents North	Board Presidents South	Board Presidents North
Yes	13 10.5%	6 9.1%	4 6.9%	0	1 11.1%	0	1 16.7%	2 28.6%	1 25.0%	1 14.3%
No	47 37.9%	26 39.4%	28 48.3%	12 60.0%	3 33.3%	2 40.0%	4 66.7%	3 42.9%	3 75.0%	5 71.4%
Don't Know	64 51.6%	34 51.5%	26 44.8%	8 40.0%	5 55.6%	3 60.0%	1 16.7%	2 28.6%	0	1 14.3%

Chi square = 19.57924 with 18 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .3570

Section III consists of four interval response data questions and one open-ended question. The latter is tabulated separately and is found at the last of this chapter. The Section III questions are 13, 14, 15, and 16 and are found in Tables 35, 36, 37, and 38. They examine what effect the test will have on future high school graduates.

Table 35 examines the opinions of the four groups to question 13, "The competency test program should continue in the future." Teachers, school board presidents, and legislators agreed that the testing program should continue in the future. Superintendents agreed also but registered the highest degree (30.8%) of neutrality of any of the four groups; 22.6% of the teachers were also neutral.

Table 36 examines the opinions of the four groups to question 14, "Because of the competency test program, future graduating seniors will have a better knowledge of basic skills than this year's graduating seniors." Legislators agreed with the statement while the other three groups reserved judgment and remained neutral. The highest neutrality, as in the previous table, came from superintendents (69.2%). Teachers and board presidents were the most mixed in their response.

Table 37 is almost a direct copy of Table 36 in terms of response. The question that they examined was question 15, "The competency test program will play a positive role in preparing students for future adult life roles, example: consumer, citizen, producer, life-long learner, and so forth." Legislators again agreed with the statement. Teachers and board presidents were mixed in their responses but leaned toward neutrality while superintendents were very neutral (61.5%).

Table 38 looks into the future ten years and asks the four groups to respond to question 16, "As a result of the competency based testing program, graduating seniors, in the year 1990, will have acquired the knowledge, skills, and confidence in the basic skills necessary to function effectively in contemporary society."

Table 35

SECTION III

THE COMPETENCY TEST PROGRAM SHOULD CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE.

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	76 30.6%	25 71.4%	3 23.1%	3 27.3%
Moderately Agree	68 27.4%	8 22.9%	3 23.1%	6 54.5%
Neutral	56 22.6%	2 5.7%	4 30.8%	1 9.1%
Moderately Disagree	20 8.1%	0	1 7.7%	1 9.1%
Strongly Disagree	28 11.3%	0	2 15.4%	0

Chi square = 32.62568 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0011

Table 36

Section III

BECAUSE OF THE COMPETENCY TEST PROGRAM, FUTURE
GRADUATING SENIORS WILL HAVE A BETTER KNOWLEDGE
OF BASIC SKILLS THAN THIS YEAR'S GRADUATING SENIORS.

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	44 17.7%	17 48.6%	0	2 18.2%
Moderately Agree	71 28.6%	13 37.1%	3 23.1%	2 18.2%
Neutral	82 33.1%	5 14.3%	9 69.2%	4 36.4%
Moderately Disagree	27 10.9%	0	0	1 9.1%
Strongly Disagree	24 9.7%	0	1 3.7%	2 18.2%

Chi square = 37.13158 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0002

Table 37

Section III

THE COMPETENCY TEST PROGRAM WILL PLAY A POSITIVE
 ROLE IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR FUTURE ADULT LIFE
 ROLES, EXAMPLE: CONSUMER, CITIZEN, PRODUCER,
 LIFE-LONG LEARNER, AND SO FORTH.

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	39 15.6%	16 45.7%	0	2 18.2%
Moderately Agree	57 22.8%	14 40.0%	3 23.1%	3 27.3%
Neutral	78 31.2%	5 14.3%	8 61.5%	4 36.4%
Moderately Disagree	31 12.4%	0	1 7.7%	2 18.2%
Strongly Disagree	45 18.0%	0	1 7.7%	0

Chi square = 42.38127 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0000

Table 38

Section III

AS A RESULT OF THE COMPETENCY BASED TESTING PROGRAM,
 GRADUATING SENIORS, IN THE YEAR 1990, WILL HAVE
 ACQUIRED THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND CONFIDENCE IN
 THE BASIC SKILLS NECESSARY TO FUNCTION
 EFFECTIVELY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.

	Teachers	Legislators	Superintendents	Board Presidents
Strongly Agree	31 12.6%	11 31.4%	0	1 9.1%
Moderately Agree	64 25.9%	10 28.6%	1 7.7%	4 36.4%
Neutral	85 34.4%	14 40.0%	9 69.2%	2 18.2%
Moderately Disagree	34 13.8%	0	2 15.4%	3 27.3%
Strongly Disagree	33 10.8%	0	1 7.7%	1 9.9%

Chi square = 29.03039 with 12 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0039

Using a cross-tabulation of Section III of questions 13 and 16, the geographic regions of the state were examined by groups. This provides for a greater comparison among the groups' response to the future of competency testing and high school graduates.

Table 39 examines the opinions of the four groups in the three geographical regions and provides ten variables for comparison to question 13, "The competency test program should continue in the future." Geographically, the North and South board presidents and North and rural legislators were fairly uniform in their agreement; 60% of the Northern legislators moderately agreed while 40% strongly agreed. The Northern superintendents were in stronger agreement with the question than Southern superintendents, one-third moderately agreed with the question and one-third disagreed; the remaining one-third were neutral. Teachers in the three geographic regions were fairly harmonious in their response, with the strongest agreement from the rural area (50.8%), and the strongest disagreement (15.4%) coming from the South.

Table 40 follows the same format as Table 39 with ten variables from the four groups and the three geographic regions. The question under examination was question 16, "As a result of the competency-based testing program, graduating seniors, in the year 1990, will have acquired the knowledge, skills, and confidence in the basic skills necessary to function effectively in contemporary society." Teachers in all three areas of the state were uniform in their diversified response, with about the same percent agreeing, disagreeing, and being neutral throughout the state. Their responses were fairly evenly divided in the opinions, regardless of location. Northern legislators

were the most neutral (60%) while rural and Southern legislators agreed with the question. Southern superintendents were more neutral than Northern superintendents; 76% of the Southern board presidents were in agreement (70%) while Northern board presidents were uniformly mixed.

Table 39
Section III

THE COMPETENCY TEST PROGRAM SHOULD CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE.

	Teachers South	Teachers North	Teachers Rural	Legislators South	Legislators North	Legislators Rural	Superintendents South	Superintendents North	Board Presidents South	Board Presidents North
Strongly Agree	26 21.1%	18.7 30.3%	30 50.8%	17 85.0%	4 40.0%	4 80.0%	0	3 42.9%	1 25.0%	2 28.6%
Moderately Agree	41 33.3%	13 19.7%	14 23.7%	2 10.0%	6 60.0%	0	2 33.3%	1 14.3%	2 50.0%	4 57.1%
Neutral	24 19.5%	21 31.8%	11 18.6%	1 5.0%	0	1 20.0%	2 33.3%	2 28.6%	1 25.0%	0
Moderately Disagree	13 10.6%	6 9.1%	1 1.7%	0	0	0	1 16.7%	0	0	1 14.3%
Strongly Disagree	19 15.4%	6 9.1%	3 5.1%	0	0	0	1 16.7%	1 14.3%	0	0

Chi square = 75.85420 with 36 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0001

Table 40

Section III

AS A RESULT OF THE COMPETENCY BASED TESTING PROGRAM, GRADUATING SENIORS,
IN THE YEAR 1990, WILL HAVE ACQUIRED THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND CONFIDENCE
IN THE BASIC SKILLS NECESSARY TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

	Teachers South	Teachers North	Teachers Rural	Legislators South	Legislators North	Legislators Rural	Superintendents South	Superintendents North	Board Presidents South	Board Presidents North
Strongly Agree	15 12.1%	8 12.1%	8 14.0%	8 40.0%	2 20.0%	1 20.0%	0	0	1 25.0%	0
Moderately Agree	35 28.2%	12 18.2%	17 29.8%	6 30.0%	2 20.0%	2 40.0%	0	1 14.3%	2 50.0%	2 28.6%
Neutral	42 33.9%	23 34.8%	20 35.1%	6 30.0%	6 60.0%	2 40.0%	5 83.3%	4 57.1%	0	2 28.6%
Moderately Disagree	14 11.3%	10 15.2%	10 17.5%	0	0	0	1 16.7%	1 14.3%	1 25.0%	2 28.6%
Strongly Disagree	18 14.5%	13 19.7%	2 3.5%	0	0	0	0	1 14.3%	0	2 28.6%
										1 14.3%

Chi square = 48.69011 with 36 degrees of Freedom. Significance = .0770

The opinionnaire contained two open-ended questions. The first question (question 7) asked, "Have the competency tests had any other positive or negative effects (other than on basic skills) on education in Nevada? If yes, what are these effects and why have they occurred?" The second question (question 17) asked, "Competency testing in Nevada would be better if...."

The responses to these two questions were examined in two ways. The first is to combine all of the response groups and second, is to then categorize all of the responses into cluster groupings (how, where, when, who, what, other comments, and comments directed specifically at teachers). The seven cluster groups are defined as follows: How means how the test should be administered, how it should be physically constructed, and the format used; where means the geographic location or specific comments directed to one geographic location or specific comments directed to one geographic region and not the whole state; when means time or when the test should be administered, when follow-up programs or remedial programs should begin and when basic skills should be taught; who means responses directed at people or selected groups such as parents, students, and administrators. Teachers were separated out of the group and given a group of their own because of the large number of responses directed specifically at teachers; what means what should or should not be taught, tested, and evaluated; and other means comments that do not fit into any of the above groupings.

In this way, the most often comments can be examined and prioritized according to how they rank within each cluster. However, the first way the data was examined was to see the overall most commonly expressed points of view, regardless of cluster category; then

the second, third, and so forth most commonly expressed opinions to see which comments were repeated most often, regardless of cluster category. Collectively, among all participating groups, the highest single response category came in reference to the test or the examination (what). Twenty respondents indicated that, "A different competency test other than the SAT should be used." More specifically, the responses suggested a Nevada test which is made by Nevadans with considerable teacher input, designed specifically for Nevada students.

The second highest response category also came in reference to (what) the test or examination, and followed in the same direction as the first response, namely, "Look at the test to see if it is measuring what is taught." The respondents more specifically suggest that each testing grade should have established learning levels or levels of knowledge and that the teachers should teach to knowledge level objectives and that the test then measure what is being taught.

The third highest comment category was that, "The test is used to threaten, pressure, and harass teachers and teachers feel a great deal of stress being put into this position."

The fourth, sixth, and seventh highest number of comments indicate that: Fourth: the test should be constructed as a helping tool to discover learning weaknesses; that the test should be a local test reflecting local curriculum standards and learning priorities; and that national standards should be less significant than school district curriculum standards. Sixth: the test is considered to be too long in duration. Comments were made that a week of testing is more than nine- and ten-year-olds can take. Common comments were that a test that goes all day forces even the best students to get tired, give up, or guess

in order to finish the test. The seventh most common response was that: the test is basically a good idea, but it is not working and it does not meet the desired needs. Comments suggested that the SAT is an intelligence test, not a competence test, and that the wrong test was being used. In summary, they are reflecting the same kinds of opinions expressed in the first and second most common comments; namely, that if you do not know what you are going to be tested on, both in content and level of learning, it is difficult to teach to that unknown standard.

The fifth most frequent comment is mentioned intentionally after the seventh because of its suggested solution to the problem; namely, that if the testing program is going to continue as presently constituted, then, "The test should be eliminated." Respondents defended their "eliminate the test" position by suggesting two basic positions:

1. The test currently does not measure learning; it does not effect learning; it does not effect comprehensive teaching; good teachers know who has a learning problem without a test, and it forces the weaker, problem student to quit.

2. Students miss out on other learning experiences by being forced to spend their time on the basics instead.

Other popular comments in order of frequency were:

Eighth: Teach competency and don't use the test for teacher accountability or comparison.

Ninth: Students who do not pass the test should repeat the grade.

Tenth: Other subjects than the 3R's should be tested.

Eleventh: The test should be the last two weeks of school, or

at least given in May instead of March or April.

Twelfth: Remedial programs should be established. There should be a follow-up program by both teachers and students, and alternatives such as trade school should be explored.

Thirteenth: The competency test is not given in our geographic area; we give the SAT.

Fourteenth: Teachers are forced to teach to the test.

Fifteenth: The pressure forces cheating on all levels and by all parties (teachers, students, and administrators).

Sixteenth: Parents should be knowledgeable, supportive, and say less about retention.

Seventeenth: Proctors, monitors, or test teams should give and oversee the test.

By separating the comments into clusters (who, what, where, etc.) a ranking can show levels of importance in each area. This is the second way that the comments were examined. The results are as follows.

The HOW Cluster (leading three choices):

1. Proctors, monitors, or test teams should give and oversee the test.
2. Use booklets not confusing answer sheets.
3. Keep an established format each year.

The WHEN Cluster (leading four choices):

1. Test the last two weeks of school or in May.
2. Remedial programs, follow-up by teachers and students, and alternatives such as trade schools should be explored.
3. Skills should be taught in the first grade.

4. Competencies should correspond to future needs.

The WHERE Cluster (leading three choices):

1. The competency test is not given in this area, instead the SAT is used.
2. Make the test fit the geographic area and social groups.
3. We haven't given a competency test yet in our area.

The TEACHER Cluster (leading four choices):

1. The test is used to threaten, pressure, and harass teachers, and teachers are placed in a position of great stress.
2. Teach competency instead of using the test for teacher accountability or comparisons.
3. Teachers are forced to teach to the test.
4. Teachers don't understand the potential influences of the test nor are they allowed input.

The WHO Cluster (leading six choices):

1. Repeat a grade if students fail the exam.
2. Parents need to be knowledgeable, supportive, and say less about grade retention.
3. Students need to first learn basics, then application, and then see the importance of education to future jobs.
4. Cheating (in all forms and at all levels).
5. Student guessing; change the test to a fill-in-the-blanks format.
6. Public relations program for teachers and parents.

The WHAT Cluster (leading seven choices):

1. Have a different test other than the SAT.
2. Look at the test to see if it's measuring what's being taught.

3. Structure the test to discuss student weakness.
4. Eliminate the test.
5. The test is too long in duration.
6. The test is a good idea, but it isn't working. It should be a local test, not a national test.
7. Test more subjects than just the 3R's.

The complete context of all received responses to open-ended questions 7 and 17 is found in Appendix J. The responses are coded to assist the reader in knowing from which of the four groups and three geographical regions the replies came.

Chapter V

Analysis, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to survey the opinions of selected populations in Nevada to examine how they perceive Nevada's Competency Based Testing Program (AB400 of the 59th Legislature). The study's purpose was to examine if the testing program was: (1) perceived as working effectively; (2) if it is perceived positively or negatively; and (3) what effect the testing program will have on future high school graduates. The detailed results of the investigation were found in Chapter IV. The analysis of those results, together with conclusions and recommendations, are in this concluding chapter.

Analysis

The opinionnaire that surveyed the four selected groups was designed around the purpose of this study which comprised, in part, the three questions that are listed again below. The opinionnaire, which consisted of 17 questions, also reflected the study's purpose. There were seven questions that addressed the overall question of: "Is the testing program perceived as working effectively?" The results of these seven questions were described under Section I in the previous chapter. The five questions which addressed the overall question of: "Is the test perceived positively or negatively?" are described in Section II; and Section III comprises five questions which ask: "What effect will the test have on future high school graduates?" The analysis will examine the results that are described in the 40 tables of Chapter IV which comprise Sections I, II, and III, as well as a composite look at "Total Nevada," meaning the four selected publics, and their views of the opinionnaire.

In order to do this all 40 tables and the open-ended questions were analyzed in order to reflect accurately in the analysis the views of the four groups. The analysis, therefore, will examine each question in its proper order and make a general statement which is supported and documented with percentages and totals in the previous chapters.

Question 1 of the opinionnaire asks:

Do you think the competency tests are basically a good idea or basically a bad idea?

- ☐ 1) A good idea
- ☐ 2) A bad idea
- ☐ 3) Don't know

All four groups overwhelmingly agreed that it was a good idea.

The strongest support came from Southern school board presidents and legislators from all three geographic regions of the state.

Question 2:

Do you think the competency test has had a positive effect on students' basic (reading, writing, and arithmetic) skill development?

- ☐ 1) Yes, definitely
- ☐ 2) Yes, probably
- ☐ 3) Uncertain, not sure
- ☐ 4) No, probably not
- ☐ 5) No, definitely not

All groups in all regions of the state were in moderate agreement with this statement with the exception of Southern legislators who were in definite agreement.

Question 3:

In your opinion, do the competency requirements provide an incentive for most students to acquire basic skill competencies as mandated by the State of Nevada?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

negative responses. Southern teachers were the only group that registered more yes responses than no.

Question 7:

Have the competency tests had any other positive or negative effects (other than on basic skills) on education in Nevada?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

All four groups were reserving judgment on this question. They said that they didn't know; however, Southern superintendents were evenly divided on this question between the three possible choices. For the remaining questions a Likert scale was used which asked them to:

Please mark the following questions:

- 1 - For strongly agree
- 2 - For moderately agree
- 3 - For neutral--don't agree or disagree
- 4 - For moderately disagree
- 5 - For strongly disagree

Questions 8 through 16 used this scale with question 17 being an open-ended question.

Question 8:

The schools in my local area are now starting to put more emphasis on the basic skills.

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____

All four groups were in agreement with rural and Southern teachers and Northern superintendents being in the strongest agreement with the question.

Question 9:

Today's students in my local geographical area are doing better than the rest of the state in meeting the competency standards at the various grades.

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____

Both question 9 and question 11, which is the exact opposite of question 9, registered high degrees of neutrality (51.1% for question 9 and 51.8% for question 11). More rural and Northern legislators and Southern superintendents were neutral than any of the regions and all three responded identically to both questions.

Question 10:

The schools should continue to teach more of the basic skills instead of non-basic skill courses.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

Three groups agreed, with the strongest agreement coming from legislators, board presidents, and then teachers. Northern and Southern superintendents showed the most disagreement and neutrality.

Question 12:

In your estimation, because of the competency test, will educators in the future be able to respond more effectively to community demands for "public accountability"?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

Three groups agreed, with the strongest agreement coming from legislators in all three geographic regions. Again superintendents in both ends of the state were either neutral or in disagreement on the question.

Question 13:

The competency test program should continue in the future.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

Legislators and rural teachers led the four groups in agreeing with this question. The general consensus was positive; however, again superintendents were the weakest in their support and even registered some moderate and strong disagreement.

Question 14:

Because of the competency test program, future graduating seniors will have a better knowledge of basic skills than this year's graduating seniors.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

Legislators were the most positive on this question and Southern superintendents the most neutral (100%). Everyone else fluctuated between neutrality to moderate agreement to some strong agreement.

Question 15:

The competency test program will play a positive role in preparing students for future adult life roles, example: consumer, citizen, producer, life-long learner, and so forth.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

All four groups again fluctuated between neutrality, moderate agreement, with some strong agreement. "Cautious optimism" can best be used to analyze responses to this question, as well as the previous and the next question.

Question 16:

As a result of the competency based testing program, graduating seniors, in the year 1990, will have acquired the knowledge, skills, and confidence in the basic skills necessary to function effectively in contemporary society.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

As in the previous two questions, the trend continued with all four groups fluctuating between neutrality, moderate agreement with some strong agreement. Southern superintendents, followed by Northern superintendents, continued to be the most neutral and showed some disagreement.

Question 17:

Competency testing in Nevada would be better if....

The five most frequent responses were:

1. Use a different test other than the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT).
2. Look at the test to see if it is measuring what is taught.
3. The test is used to threaten, pressure, and harass teachers and teachers feel a great deal of stress.
4. The test should be structured as a helping tool to discover weaknesses.
5. The test should be eliminated.

Conclusions

As a result of the investigation and findings generated by this study, the following conclusions were drawn concerning the competency based test program in Nevada:

1. The competency test is perceived as being basically a good idea.
2. The test provides an incentive to most students to acquire basic skills and the schools are now putting more emphasis on those basic skills.
3. The test has had a positive effect on basic skill development and is a good way to improve basic skills.
4. Parents haven't reacted negatively to the minimum competency requirements for graduation.
5. Basic skills are not new to Nevada in any of the geographic regions and all four groups felt that students aren't required to demonstrate proficiency in subject areas where they haven't been taught.
6. None of the four groups felt that their geographic region was doing better than the rest of the state; neither did they feel that the rest of the state was doing better than their local area.

7. The competency test program should continue in the future and schools should continue to teach more basic skills instead of non-basic skill courses.
8. Educators will be better able to respond to public accountability because of the testing program.
9. Concerning the future and the competency test program as the test relates to preparing students for future adult life roles and insuring they have acquired the basic skills, all four surveyed groups approached this topic with "guarded optimism." They generally conclude that future students would be prepared for the future but then stopped short of being overly positive, preferring instead a neutral or "wait and see" attitude.
10. The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) is the wrong test and should be replaced with a competency test that measures what is being taught. The test should be structured as a helping tool to discover student weakness and not as a harassment or pressure or threatening tactic to measure teachers. The test should reflect local curriculum standards and learning priorities and not national standards. If the aforementioned factors do not become part of the testing program, then the program and test should be eliminated.
11. The geographic regions of the state made very little difference when it came to group perceptions.
12. Groups shared consistent perceptions about the testing program and its future, i.e., legislators were in positive agreement that future graduating seniors will have a better knowledge of the basic skills than this year's graduating seniors.
13. Legislators and local board presidents were the most positive about

the competency testing program. Superintendents were the most negative and teachers were neutral to moderately positive about the program.

Recommendations

As a result of the investigation, findings, and conclusions generated by the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The competency test program should continue in Nevada.
2. Schools should continue to put more emphasis on the basic skills instead of non-basic skill courses.
3. The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) should be eliminated from Nevada's Competency Test Program.
4. A Nevada competency test should be constructed using the following criteria:
 - a. it should reflect local curriculum standards and learning priorities;
 - b. these standards and priorities should be written in the form of objectives;
 - c. these objectives should be given to the teacher accompanied by expected and specific minimum competency level results, as well as a teacher's manual that reflects the specifics of those objectives and desired results;
 - d. teachers should then use the manuals and teach to those objectives;
 - e. the test should be constructed to measure only these objectives, which are then taught in the third, sixth, ninth, and 12th grades;
 - f. the test results should be compiled by district and sent to the

Nevada State Department of Education for state-wide compilation and publication.

5. The test should be viewed as a tool to help teachers identify student basic skill weaknesses and all efforts to use it to threaten, pressure, or harass teachers should be eliminated.
6. Copies of this study should be made available to the Nevada State Department of Education, the two Education Committees in the Senate and Assembly of the Nevada State Legislature, and the local school board presidents. They should be allowed to review the findings of this study with a view to establishing policies which will maximize the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.
7. The Nevada State Department of education should give consideration to a follow-up study once the conclusions and recommendations are implemented. This study should commence no later than January 1985 and should also include sixth and ninth grade teachers who will, by that date, have had experience with the competency test. If recommendations one through six are not implemented by the time a second study is to commence (January, 1985) then the Nevada Legislature should repeal the competency test program.

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APPENDIX A

State Activity

Minimal Competency Testing

Some of the information on this report was gathered under activities pursuant to NIH-G-79-0033.

STATE ACTIVITY MINIMAL COMPETENCY TESTING

Prepared by:
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Denver, Colorado

July 1, 1979

STATE	ACTION TAKEN	SETTING OF STANDARDS	GRADE LEVELS ASSESSED	SKILL AREAS ASSESSED	USE OF STANDARDS AND TEST	COMMENTS
Alabama	State Board Resolution 1977	State department of education	3, 6 & 9	Mathematics, reading and writing	For high school graduation June 9, 1981, and identification of students needing remedial assistance	The state superintendent has appointed a committee of 100 and a special test committee to make recommendations for a 3-year implementation program. Full implementation is to be achieved by June 1981.
Arizona	State board of education ruling in 1971 and 1976. Legislation 1972.	State standard for 8th & 12th grade set by state board. Local school districts to implement. No state test prescribed.	8th grade 12th grade	Reading, writing and computation	For graduation from 8th and 12th grades	Effective January 1, 1976, students must be able to read, write and compute at the 6th grade level to receive the standard 8th grade certificate and at the 9th grade level for high school graduation.
Arkansas	Act 666, 1979	State board to establish minimum performance goals.	Grades 3, 6 and 8	Reading and mathematics	Student diagnostic purposes. Test is not to be used for grade placement or promotion.	Pilot testing and analysis is to be conducted in 1979-80 and 1980-81. All students to be tested in the 1981-82 school year.

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California	(early exit test) SB 1112, 1972 SB 1243, 1975 SB 1502, 1976	Test and cut-off standards set by the California Department of Education.	Age 16 to adult	Process areas of reading and computation content areas: consumer economics and mathematics	Award high school diploma and leave school with parent permission	Title of program: California High School Proficiency Test Test administration and security handled under contract with private testing corporation.
	AB 3408, Ch. 856, 1976	State board to supply performance indicators and examples of minimum standards. Local districts set graduation standards.	Test once between 7-9 and twice between grades 10-11.	Reading, writing and computation	For high school graduation	This act also prescribes course of study requirements. In effect for the graduation class of 1980.
	AB 65, Ch. 894	Local districts	Once between grades 4-6; once between grades 7-9; twice between grades 10 & 11.	Reading comprehension, writing, computation skills	For remediation and grade promotion decisions	This law is to move California into elementary grade testing.

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Colorado	SB 180, 1975 C.R.S. 22-32-109.5	Local boards if they initiate a competency requirement for high school graduation	9 and 12 - test twice a year	Local district option	Local district option for high school graduation	If a local board of education imposes a proficiency test for high school graduation, it must follow the stipulations of this act. Law does not require districts to initiate any program.
Connecticut	State Board Resolution Nov. 1977 (Early exit program). Resolution not implemented. See comments.	State department using existing GED and APL test standards	16-year-olds	Academic: General Educational Development (GED) test. Life skills: Adult Performance Level (APL) test	With appropriate counseling and follow-up teaching, students can leave school with a high school equivalency diploma.	Final implementation was contingent upon \$300,000 appropriation from legislature in 1978. This appropriation was not made. No action was taken on state board resolution.
	SHB 5859 P.A. 78-194 (5-28-78)	Local district (Plan for testing and remediation)	3rd, 5th and 7th	Basic skills: reading, language arts and mathematics	For instructional improvement and remedial assistance	Title of Act: Education, Evaluation and Remedial Assistance. Beginning with '79-'80 school year, state aid for remedial assistance will be available.
	"	State board	9th	Statewide proficiency examination in basic skills: reading, language arts & mathematics	For instructional improvement and remedial assistance	

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Delaware	State board of education resolution 1976	State department of education, after baseline test is given	Baseline instrument grade 11 1978	Level II Competencies, i.e., the application of reading, writing and mathematics	For high school graduation	The development of the baseline testing instrument has been awarded to a private test contractor.
Florida	CSSB 340, 1975 F.S. 229.814 CSSB 107, 1976 F.S. 76.226	State and local boards	Grades 3, 5, 8 and 11	Basic skill areas Functional literacy	For high school graduation, grade promotion and early exit from high school	Court decision - Debra P. v. Turlington, 7/13/79 - upheld use of the test but deferred implementation of the high school graduation requirement for four years.
Georgia	State board of education action 1976, 1977 & 1978	State board and state department	Grades 4, 8 and 11 - norm-referenced sampling. Grades 4, 8 and 10 - criterion-referenced testing	Grades 4 & 8: reading, math and career development. H.S. test to be developed in FY '80.	The state board of education has not taken final action on the use of the tests.	The student assessment program is part of a long-range plan to fund local school districts through a program of comprehensive planning. Activities related to General Assembly Act (1974) creating the Adequate Program For Education in Georgia Act.

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Idaho	State board of education resolution 1977	State board of education using a proficiency testing steering committee.	Grades 9-12	Reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling	For high school graduation at the option of local districts beginning with class of 1982	Students passing the proficiency program will receive a diploma with the state board seal. In districts not participating, students will receive district diploma.
Illinois	SB 238, 1978	Local districts with assistance from the state board of education	Local districts with assistance from the state board of education	Local districts with assistance from the state board of education	Local districts with assistance from the state board of education	This act provides for the state board to prepare procedures and materials to encourage and assist local school districts to develop minimal competency testing programs. Study is to begin by Dec. 15, 1978. The state board of education is to report back to the legislature on state progress by June 30, 1980.
Indiana	State board resolution adopted Feb. 1978 and amended in Oct. 1978	To be set by local districts with advisory committee of teachers, administrators, parents and community members.	3, 6, 8 and 10	Reading, composition and spelling	Primarily for remediation; local district may use for other purposes	Some handicapped and emotionally disturbed students are excluded. Non-English dominant students are excluded. Sensory and physically handicapped to have test administered appropriate to needs.

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Kansas	State board of Education adopted policy statement, January 1978	State department of education will set standards and goals with assistance of local districts	3, 6, 9 & 12	Academic skills: reading and mathematics, grades 3, 6 & 9. Life skills: grade 12	Local district option	State board resolution was superceded by enacted HB 3115.
	Senate Substitute for HB 3115 (passed in April 1978)	State board of education	Grades 2, 4, 6, 8 and 11	Reading and mathematics	Not mentioned in law. Legislature to study pilot test results and make recommendations during 1980 interim or 1981 legislative session.	Law calls for a voluntary participation in '78-'79 school year, full district participation in '79-'80. At the close of the '79-'80 school year, results of the pilot effort are to be reported back to the governor and the legislature.
Kentucky	State board of education adopted 4-yr competency plan in 1977.	State department with task force assistance	Grades 3, 5, 8 and 11	Criterion-referenced test in reading, writing and arithmetic	High school graduation was included in the state board ruling but this use was removed in HB 579.	

(Kentucky continued next page)

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(Kentucky continued)	HB 579, 1978	Local districts are to develop educational improvement plans.	Grades 3, 5, 7 and 10	Reading, writing, spelling, language arts and mathematics	Law also provides that student test results are <u>not</u> to be used to evaluate teachers or administrators.	HB 579, the Education Improvement Act, also calls for the appointment of a statewide task force and for local districts to include student remediation in their plan. Beginning 1979.
Louisiana	HB 810, Act 709, 1976 Act 621, 1977	State superintendent of schools	Grades 4, 8 and 11	Basic communication and computational skill areas with criterion-referenced test	No student may be prevented from graduation or grade promotion.	Requirements a part of the accountability and assessment law.
Maine	Enacted amended LD 1810, Ch. 78 of the Private Special Laws	State department of education	Grade 11, all grade 8, sample	Reading, mathematics and writing	One-time test only	This one-time test was reported to the legislature. The Joint House and Senate Education Committee recommended the state board formulate a policy on competency-based education. No further legislative action taken.

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Maryland	HB 1433, M.A.C., Art. 77, Sec. 980, 1976 and HB 1462, Ch. 559, 1977	State board of education	Grades 3, 7, 9 and 11	Reading	For grade promotion and high school graduation	Students not meeting minimum requirements may be retained in same grade or enrolled in remedial program.
	State board resolution, 1977, 1978					State board resolution implements "Project Basic" including assessment in basic and life skills.
Massachusetts	State board of education	Local school districts; minimum standards for basic skill competency by September 1980.	Early elementary, later elementary, secondary	Mathematics and communication skills Listening and speaking skills are to be added.	"The purpose is NOT to establish a new condition for promotion or graduation."	Intent of the board policy is to "...improve basic skills competency in partnership with local school officials." ----- Test: Elementary, local option. Secondary options: (1) state test (2) commercial test approved by state department of education (3) local test approved by state department of education

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Michigan	State board of education resolution in the late 1960's for assessment and 1974 for minimum performance	State department of education through advisory committees	Grades 4, 7, Grade 10 - voluntary Grade 12 - under study	Reading and mathematics	For local district use	Twelfth grade minimal competency test, covering life role skills under study. Legislative support for full scale testing at grade 10 is being sought.
Missouri	State board of education 1976 and 1978	State department of education	Grade 8	The application of reading, mathematics and government/economic skills	No mandate for graduation or grade promotion	The Basic Education Skills Test, developed by the department of education, has been field tested in grades 8, 10 and 12. Full testing of all 8th grade students started in the spring of 1979.
Nebraska	State department of education, 1975	Local school districts	Begins in grade 5 and continues until mastery is achieved by each student in each skill area	Reading, writing and mathematics	State developed test is not to be used for grade retention or promotion.	Local school districts may use the Nebraska Assessment Battery of Essential Learning Skills (N-ABELS) or develop their own test.

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Nevada	AB 400-1977 State board resolution 1979 to implement law	State board of education	Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12	Reading, writing and mathematics	For high school graduation and remediation	Students may be promoted to the next grade if examination is failed but remedial work is to be provided.
New Hampshire	State department of education, 1977	State department of education	Grades 4, 8 & 12	Communications and mathematics	Grade promotion and high school graduation not mentioned. Some local districts are using for this purpose.	Program is to serve as guideline for local school districts.
New Jersey	A.1736, Ch. 97, 1976	Statewide committees		Reading and mathematics	Student diagnosis and remedial identification	Local districts are to provide remedial assistance in order for students to meet state standards.
	State department of education	State department of education	3, 6, 9 and 11	Reading and mathematics; life skills under study	Identification of students needing instructional assistance	Development of testing instrument is under contract to a private test development company.
	Legislation enacted 8/79 awaiting Governor's signature SB 1154	State board of education	Grade 9 with reassessment in grades 10, 11 and 12	Reading, writing and arithmetic State funds will be available for remediation.	For high school graduation class of 1985	By 7/80, state board develops guidelines for test & standards. By 7/81, districts complete plans. 9th grade tests given in spring, 1982. Special education students to be covered by special guidelines prepared by state board.

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New Mexico	State board of education	State department of education	Elementary level: grade choice up to local district. Grade 10	Elementary: local option Secondary: proficiency battery based on adult performance level (APL) and a writing sample at local option	Proficiency endorsement on high school diploma if test is passed	
New York	State board of regents amended Sec. 103.2 of the commissioner's regulations, August 1978 Amendments to the Commissioner's Regulations approved by the Board of Regents	Board of regents with advice of professional educators and the general public	Reading: PEP* tests in grades 3 & 6. Preliminary competency test in grades 11 or 12 Writing: Preliminary competency test in grades 8 or 9. Final competency test in grades 11 or 12 Mathematics: PEP* tests in grades 3 and 6. Final competency test in grades 9, 10, 11 or 12.	Reading comprehension, writing and mathematics	PEP* tests and preliminary competency tests are used to identify students needing special help. Final competency tests are required for a high school diploma.	*PEP -- Pupil Evaluation Program -- an annual assessment in reading and mathematics required of all pupils in grades 3 and 6. Students may satisfy the competency testing requirement by passing Regents' examinations in English and mathematics.

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North Carolina	Enacted HB 204	By Competency Test Commission created by law	Grade 11 beginning in 1978-79	To be determined by the Competency Test Commission. See Comments	For high school graduation	The test is to measure "those skills and that knowledge thought necessary to enable an individual to function independently and successfully in assuming the responsibilities of citizenship."
	Enacted HB 205	By Competency Test Commission (separate from HB 204)	Grades 1 & 2: criterion-referenced test Grades 3, 6 & 9: "norm"-referenced test	To be determined by the Competency Test Commission	To be determined by the Competency Test Commission	
Oklahoma	State board of education	None	Grades 3, 6 & 9 Grade 12	Reading Survival skills	For comparative purposes by local districts and the state	The baseline test instrument was administered to 15,000 students in the fall of 1977 and 1978.

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Oregon	State board of education 1972 & 1976	Local districts	District option	Reading, writing and computation. Local option for personal development, social responsibility and career development.	For high school graduation	Graduation requirements are based on course credit, attendance and required competencies in personal, social and career areas.
Rhode Island	State department of education		Grades 4, 8 & 10	Comprehension analysis and evaluation known as the "life skills"	For local districts and state department use A competency-based high school diploma was studied and rejected.	The Rhode Island master plan for evaluation and the statewide assessment program have jointly contributed to the pilot testing in the life skills areas.
	Board of regents, 1978	Board of regents in conjunction with State Standards Council	Elementary, early and late secondary grades	Elementary: basic skills, i.e., reading, language arts, mathematics and cultural arts Secondary: minimum competency standards in selected life skills		This policy was adopted 5/11/78 to support the master plan for evaluation mentioned above. The policy also calls for the development of standards of excellence to be "measured by extensive assessment of advanced life skills, scholastic and cultural achievement for students aspiring to attain recognition by the regents for special distinction along a variety of dimensions."

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South Carolina	Enacted H 2053, August 1978	State board of education	1, 2, 3, 6 & 8: Basic skill areas Grade 11: Adult functional competency	Mathematics and communication skills of reading and writing	For remediation (see Comments)	Also establishes Basic Skills Advisory Commission, 15 members. Provides for grade 1 readiness test for students entering school. Grade 11 high school test will be used to gather baseline data until 1989. At that time, the state board is to make a decision regarding high school graduation and the test.
Tennessee	State board of education Nov. 10, 1977 State board of education Nov. 10, 1977	State department of education Local districts	Grades 11 & 12 Grades 4, 5, 6 and 8	Reading, mathematics, grammar and spelling Subjects at discretion of local districts	For high school graduation, class of 1982 Remediation	Two different programs were established in the same state board resolution.

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Texas	SB 350, 1979 Texas Educational Finance Act	Standards not mentioned. Law does imply some form of standard based on test scores for state and funded remediation programs.	1978-80: grades 5, 9 and high school for retake After 1980-81: 3rd grade	Reading, writing, mathematics and language arts	For state-funded remedial programs	These provisions appear in a section of the finance law dealing with disadvantaged students.
Utah	State board of education Jan. 1977	Local district	Local district	Reading, writing, speaking, listening, arithmetic, democratic governance, consumerism, problem solving	For high school graduation, class of 1980	Local districts will develop or choose the test and set the cut-off standards.
Vermont	State board of education 1977	State board of education	Continuous	Reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics and reasoning	For high school graduation	Mastery of the basic competencies is to be one requirement for graduation unless student has a limiting handicap.

STATE ACTIVITY
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16
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Virginia	HB 402, 1978	State: reading and mathematics Local: essential citizenship skills Skills to qualify for further educa- tion or employ- ment	Grades 9-12	State: reading and mathematics Local: essential citizenship skills Skills to qualify for further educa- tion or employ- ment	For high school graduation beginning with class of 1981 and for planning for specific instructional needs	Testing in reading & mathe- matics of 9th and 10th grades in school year of 1978-79 for initial diagnosis for instructional needs. Subsequent years, reading and mathematics testing to begin in 9th grade. Local assessments of essential citizenship skills and skills to qualify for further educa- tion or employment can be by means other than tests.
	Initiated in HB 256, 1976 Repeated in HB 402, 1978, State Board, 1978	State board of education in cooperation with local districts	Grades K-6	Reading, communications and mathematics	To measure pro- gress of individual students.	Field testing in spring of 1978. Testing for all students K-6 to begin in school year of 1978-79, extended through 6th grade in 1980-81.

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Washington	SB 3026 HB 1345, 1976	Local districts	4th and 8th	Standardized achievement test in reading, mathematics and language arts	For school district and parent use	School districts are encouraged to develop a separate test for second grade for the early identification of pupils needing assistance in language and computational skills.
Wyoming	State board of education policy 1977	Local districts will establish specific standards.	District option	Reading, writing and computing with proficiency. Process and structure of democratic governance and free enterprise.	For high school graduation	The start-up date and rules and regulations are to be drawn up by the state department of education. Local districts will verify the state standards and are encouraged to go beyond the minimum standards set by the state board of education.

APPENDIX B

Letter from Dr. Chris Pipho



Education Commission of the States

Suite 300 • 1860 Lincoln Street
(303) 861-4917 • Denver, Colorado 80295

November 29, 1979

The Honorable Nicholas J. Horn
State Assemblyman
2543 Boise Street
Las Vegas, Nevada 89121

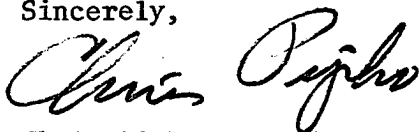
Dear Assemblyman Horn:

In response to your question concerning the evaluation of state minimum competency testing programs--I know of no state that has formally evaluated the results of their minimum competency testing program. The Maine legislation did call for a one-time test effort with the results reported back to the legislature, and Kansas has mandated a two-year testing effort with the results to be given to the legislature in 1980. More information can be found on these states in the enclosed copy of Update VIII: Minimum Competency Testing.

The article by Robert Frahm makes mention of the fact that few districts or states have evaluated their programs.

Please call or write if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Chris Piphos, Associate Director
Research and Information Department

CP:mob

Enclosures

APPENDIX C

Letter from John K. Hemphill

Laboratory Director

Far West Laboratory



FAR WEST LABORATORY
FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

134

December 3, 1979

Mr. Nicholas J. Horn
Assemblyman
Clark County, District No. 15
2543 Boise Street
Las Vegas, Nevada 89121

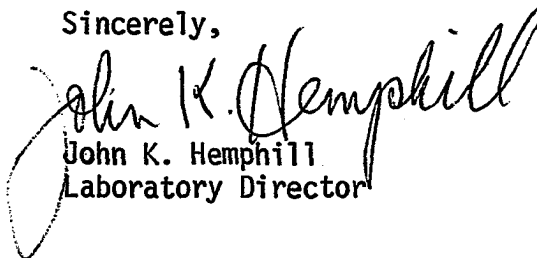
Dear Assemblyman Horn:

I read your short letter regarding evaluating competency-based testing programs with great interest. Although, it seems a logical step, I don't know of an evaluation study of any of the existing programs. Of course, the reactions of the courts and general outcry from various segments of the public can be viewed as "evaluation" yet I presume that you have in mind a more systematic approach. I commend you and Dr. Ryan on selecting this topic for a thesis.

I'm enclosing a copy of an evaluation planning document that if you have not had the opportunity to review it, you may find useful in designing your own study. It's not directly concerned with competency testing but may suggest ideas.

Please keep me informed as your work progresses.

Sincerely,


John K. Hemphill
Laboratory Director

JKH/ca

Enclosure

APPENDIX D

Letter from J. Kenneth Creighton

Research Assistant

State of Nevada, Legislative Counsel Bureau

STATE OF NEVADA
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU

LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
CAPITOL COMPLEX
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89710



ARTHUR J. PALMER, *Director*
(702) 885-5627

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION (702) 885-5627
KEITH ASHWORTH, *Senator, Chairman*
Arthur J. Palmer, *Director, Secretary* 136
INTERIM FINANCE COMMITTEE (702) 885-5640
DONALD R. MELLO, *Assemblyman, Chairman*
Ronald W. Sparks, *Senate Fiscal Analyst*
William A. Bible, *Assembly Fiscal Analyst*

FRANK W. DAYKIN, *Legislative Counsel* (702) 885-5627
JOHN R. CROSSLEY, *Legislative Auditor* (702) 885-5620
ANDREW P. GROSE, *Research Director* (702) 885-5637

August 27, 1979

Assemblyman Nicholas J. Horn
2543 Boise Street
Las Vegas, NV 89121

Dear Nick:

Enclosed are some materials from the Gallup Polls, the state department of education, and other organizations regarding public attitudes toward the educational system.

Several of the Gallup polls seem to support your position, in particular the poll on page 867 and the "citizenship test", both conducted by the Gallup organization (see the enclosed editorial comment, "Astounding Civic Illiteracy"). The state department of education conducted its study in 1978. Responses to the first question seem to strongly support the "back-to-basics" position.

I hope this material is helpful to you. If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken".

J. Kenneth Creighton
Research Analyst

JKC:jlc
Encl.

APPENDIX E

Letter from Dr. Roger Scott

Senior Member of the Professional Staff

Southwest Regional Laboratory



April 10, 1980

Mr. Nicholas J. Horn
Assemblyman
Clark County, District No. 15
2543 Boise Street
Las Vegas, NV 89121

Dear Nick:

Dorie Boynton and I have looked over the evaluation questionnaire you recently sent to us and we have a few comments. First of all, this questionnaire seems carefully thought-out and presents few technical problems, i.e., persons answering such a questionnaire are likely to interpret the questions correctly and be clear about how to respond. It also seems about the right length, i.e., most people would be willing to respond to 18 questions but probably a lot of people would not want to respond to a larger number.

The major question that we have is whether this questionnaire has the right balance. During the day you spent with us at SWRL you talked about the need to collect opinions that could be drawn upon to "fine tune" future legislative CBE decisions. We talked about three categories of information that would be particularly helpful: Understanding of the law, compliance with AB400, and attitude towards AB400. You might want to look again at the February 12th memo describing our meeting and elaborating on these categories. A copy is enclosed. Some of the items in the questionnaire do relate to these categories, particularly "compliance with AB400--to what extent is AB400 working?" And "attitude toward AB400--what current benefits accrue from AB400?" However, quite a few of the questions concern what people think about the current effectiveness of their schools. Such information is nice to know but it doesn't really tell you about how people feel about AB400 and competency-based education.

Mr. Nicholas J. Horn
April 10, 1980
Page 2

Another problem is that many of the questions focus on high school seniors and 12th grade examinations. This is a dangerous trap which has caused a great deal of grief for a lot of people who are concerned about competency-based education. When we look at CBE for 12th graders, we are looking at legal problems, moral problems, and the dilemma of not being able to do much to help the kids that fail. But there is another more positive aspect of CBE. This is the work that can be done in elementary schools--and to some extent junior high schools--where the information can be used to diagnose problem areas for individual kids as well as the school's instructional program and where we have time to correct the situation. Attitudes towards CBE may be different for these two situations, i.e., 12th grade and elementary school.

I have found out about several surveys related to CBE that may be useful to you. They are being sent to me and I will relay them to you as soon as they arrive. If it would be helpful to you, I would be glad to come over and spend a half-day working on a survey. Another possibility is for you to come back to SWRL for a day with the same type of arrangements we made last time. I'll call you next week and we can discuss these options.

Regards,



Roger O. Scott
Senior Member of the
Professional Staff

ROS:alr
Enclosure

APPENDIX F

Assembly Bill 400 of the
59th Session of the Nevada Legislature

Assembly Bill No. 400—Assemblymen Horn, Hayes, Dreyer, Vergiels,
Sena and Robinson

CHAPTER.....

AN ACT relating to public schools; requiring periodic examinations of pupils to determine their proficiency in specified subjects; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

*The People of the State of Nevada, represented in Senate and Assembly,
do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. Chapter 389 of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto a new section which shall read as follows:

1. The board of trustees of each school district shall administer examinations in all public schools within its district to determine the proficiency of pupils in:

- (a) Reading;*
- (b) Writing; and*
- (c) Mathematics.*

The examinations shall be administered before the completion of grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

2. Different standards of proficiency may be adopted for pupils with diagnosed learning disabilities.

3. If a pupil fails to pass the proficiency examination administered before the completion of grade 3, 6 or 9, he may be promoted to the next higher grade, but the results of his examination shall be evaluated to determine what remedial study is appropriate. If a pupil fails to pass the high school proficiency examination administered before the completion of grade 12, he shall not be graduated until he is able, through remedial study, to pass that examination, but he may be given a certificate of attendance, in place of a diploma, if he has reached the age of 17 years.

4. The state board of education shall prescribe standard proficiency examinations to be administered pursuant to subsection 1.

SEC. 2. The provisions of section 1 of this act do not apply to any pupil who has been promoted to grade 9 or a higher grade before the effective date of this act.

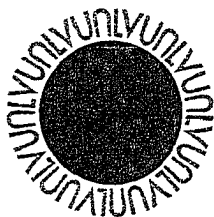
APPENDIX G

Letter Requesting that the Opinionnaire

Be Answered and Returned

and

A Copy of the Questionnaire



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS
4505 MARYLAND PARKWAY • LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89154 • (702) 739-3596

Please Help! By taking a few minutes to participate in a dissertation study conducted in conjunction with a Doctoral program at UNLV to examine the opinions of four specially selected groups (School District Superintendents, local Board presidents, third grade teachers and legislators).

The purpose of the study is to see if the minimum competency test program (testing reading, writing, arithmetic, in the 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th grades) is: 1) perceived as working; 2) if it is perceived positively or negatively and; 3) what effect it will have on future high school graduates.

Information gathered will be used by the State Department of Education to assist in future planning. This study will also be presented to the Education Committees of the Senate and Assembly at the next session of the Nevada State Legislature.

Your cooperation in providing this information is encouraged. It is vital that each district have the opportunity for input into the study's results. Without your response, the results will not represent all of the views of the four specially selected groups that are being surveyed.

Please help by filling out and returning the opinionnaire today.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Nick J. Horn".

Nick J. Horn

THE OPINIONNAIRE ASKS YOUR VIEWS CONCERNING COMPETENCY TESTS WHICH WERE MANDATED IN 1977 BY THE NEVADA LEGISLATURE. THE TEST COVERS BASIC SKILLS (READING, WRITING AND ARITHMETIC) IN THE 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th GRADES.

1. Do you think the competency tests are basically a good idea or basically a bad idea?
- ☐ 1) A good idea
☐ 2) A bad idea
☐ 3) Don't know
2. Do you think the competency test has had a positive effect on students' basic (reading, writing, and arithmetic) skill development?
- ☐ 1) Yes, definitely
☐ 2) Yes, probably
☐ 3) Uncertain, not sure
☐ 4) No, probably not
☐ 5) No, definitely not
3. In your opinion do the competency requirements provide an incentive for most students to acquire basic skill competencies as mandated by the State of Nevada?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know
4. Has there been any negative reaction on the part of parents to the implementation of minimum competencies for graduation?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know
5. Do you think competency testing is a good way to improve basic skills?
- ☐ 1) Yes, definitely
☐ 2) Yes, probably
☐ 3) Uncertain, not sure
☐ 4) No, probably not
☐ 5) No, definitely not
6. Are today's students required to demonstrate competency in skills which have not previously been taught?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know
7. Have the competency tests had any other positive or negative effects (other than on basic skills) on education in Nevada?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

If yes, what are these effects and why have they occurred? (If more space is needed, please use back of page)

PLEASE MARK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS;

- 1 For strongly agree
2 For moderately agree
3 For neutral--don't agree or disagree
4 For moderately disagree
5 For strongly disagree

8. The schools in my local area are now starting to put more emphasis on the basic skills.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

9. Today's students in my local geographical area are doing better than the rest of the State in meeting the competency standards at the various grades.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

10. The schools should continue to teach more of the basic skills instead of non-basic skill courses.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

11. Today's students in the State of Nevada are doing better than students in my local geographical area in meeting the competency standards at various grades.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

12. In your estimation, because of the competency test, will educators in the future be able to respond more effectively to community demands for "public accountability".

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

13. The competency test program should continue in the future.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

14. Because of the competency test program, future graduating seniors will have a better knowledge of basic skills than this year's graduating seniors.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

15. The competency test program will play a positive role in preparing students for future adult life roles, example: consumer, citizen, producer, life-long learner, and so forth?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

16. As a result of the competency based testing program, graduating seniors, in the year 1990, will have acquired the knowledge, skills and confidence in the basic skills necessary to function effectively in contemporary society.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

17. Competency testing in Nevada would be better if
(use the back of this page to respond, if necessary).

APPENDIX H

Summarized Comments of the Opinionnaire

Open-Ended Questions 7 and 17

Explanation of the Code:

- 11 Teachers, Southern
- 12 Teachers, Northern
- 13 Teachers, Rural
- 21 Legislators, Southern
- 22 Legislators, Northern
- 23 Legislators, Rural
- 31 Superintendents, Southern
- 32 Superintendents, Northern
- 41 Board Presidents, Southern
- 42 Board Presidents, Northern

Therefore:

- 13 - 17 Means a teacher from rural Nevada gave this response to question 17;
- 31 - 7 Means a superintendent from Southern Nevada gave this response to question 7.
- 11 - 17 Team of people administer the test to all students.
- 11 - 17 Agreement on what should be taught.
- 11 - 17 Not used to discriminate against poor blacks and non-whites.
- 11 - 17 Teachers teach for the test and fear being blamed for test scores. No motivation for teaching.
- 11 - 17 The instruments used (Stanford Achievement) were changed. Test not good measure of skills necessary at third grade level. Children who don't fulfill basic requirements of each grade level should be retained. As it is now, it's almost impossible to retain a student. I have known both parents and teachers to request retention and principal to veto it.
- 11 - 17 Reasonable attendance and test what you teach.
- 11 - 7 Improve quality of work and more serious attitude towards education for students, parents, and teachers.
- 11 - 17 The purpose of program made known to parents with follow-up program for poor students (proficient wise) and strictly adhered to.
- 11 - 17 Parents made aware of competency test at beginning of year.
- 11 - 17 Pressure on teachers for all students to perform well. Principals tend to rate teachers on how well class does.

- 11 - 7 They find a way to cheat.
- 11 - 7 Students were retained who scored below third stanine. School curriculum covered areas tested.
- 11 - 7 Teachers teach test, students aren't competent at skills on test.
- 11 - 17 Teachers teach for test only and miss "non-essentials" such as science and social studies.
- 11 - 17 Parents had less say in retention of lower grades. Parents "want to save face."
- 11 - 7 If tests are kept up to date.
- 11 - 17 Should be discontinued at primary level. District tests (CRT) are sufficient.
- 11 - 17 They include all areas in testing. Shouldn't omit science and social science.
- 11 - 7 Self-concept damaged (score poorly, skills taught out of sequence--because on test). Teaching geared to test.
- 11 - 17 Testing taken out of school administrators' and teachers' hands and done by independent testing team, thereby attaining accurate testing information.
- 11 - 17 If it were teacher made.
- 11 - 17 It were more stringent.
- 11 - 17 Competencies tested corresponded to child's future needs.
- 11 - 17 There was some consistency in the way the academic subjects are taught in the district.
- 11 - 17 Participating teachers and administrators recognize what the tests are to be used for--not teachers' evaluations.
- 11 - 17 More help provided those children showing a need. No extra programs established as a result. Third grade kids over tested!
- 11 - 7 Teaching out of context, teacher stress.
- 11 - 7 One month of school lost to CRT tests and competency testing. Pressure on teachers in low socio-economic schools. Areas are hampering effective teaching.
- 11 - 17 It was eliminated.

- 11 - 17 Come up with some kind of standards for children to learn and want to learn.
- 11 - 17 Kids who fail wouldn't get diplomas. Be tough with parents who try to intervene and school board sticks to its guns.
- 11 - 7 Teachers pressured into teaching skills on test to attain level that may be above ability of school. The development of thinking skills have been curtailed to allow time for rote memory skills. Teachers spend more time with basic skills at earlier age.
- 11 - 17 Testing was based on students' ability to solve problems by the use of logical thinking.
- 11 - 7 Too much time spent covering testing material. Other excellent learning experiences missed out; plays, spelling bees; memorizing poetry.
- 11 - 17 Teaches children with problems to quit instead of try. By 9th grade he's a failure. By age 17, out of school for good.
- 11 - 17 Pressure to prepare for test. Teachers held accountable for their success or failure. Tests of other nature too close together and weary 3rd graders out.
- 11 - 17 Test vocabulary, terminology, and explanation were field-tested more for primary grades.
- 11 - 17 What is the sense of giving the test if students that fail are promoted to the next grade anyway?
- 11 - 17 3rd grade test is too long. The children get very tired by the end of the test and don't try very hard. Take the test in booklets--not answer sheets otherwise they can't finish.
- 11 - 17 Test should be instructional and evaluative--not used as a threat to the classroom teacher.
- 11 - 17 1st grade teachers should begin to teach the necessary skills for the competency test--not just 3rd grade teachers.
- 11 - 17 The SAT is not valid for 3rd grade. Use a variety of tests and teacher observation not one test. When students are in smaller groups to learn what is expected--then testing may be valid.
- 11 - 17 Less pressure was put on teachers to "bring scores up."
- 11 - 17 We put too much emphasis on the test, it distracts from the main purpose. Teachers are pressured from August to the test in order to bring scores up. This is a ridiculous objective.

- 11 - 17 Administrative pressure makes teachers feel it a necessity to score high in all areas. This has lead to "teaching the test," rather than "teaching to the test." Cheating has made the whole system invalid. Administration should not view test results as a tool for teacher accountability, unless test is constructed in Nevada, is consumable, and follows basic skill development guidelines.
- 11 - 17 The test should be culture free.
- 11 - 17 I've heard too many teachers comment, "Now that the tests are over, I'm through with teaching." We should never be through with teaching.
- 11 - 17 Only if tests are based on skills taught within the curriculum.
- 11 - 17 Test is confusing, difficult to follow, and understand. The 3rd grade level starts with 3.5 so any slow students are defeated at the beginning. If you need a test, use the Clark County Reading and Math scores and not a national test that pertains to areas of the country that young school children have had no experience with.
- 11 - 17 The pressure placed on small children over a seven day period is fantastic. Start at the 5th or 6th grade, not grade 3.
- 11 - 17 ...if it were not used at all!
- 11 - 17 Curriculum guides reflected all the skills tested.
- 11 - 17 Test later in the year after more material has been thoroughly taught.
- 11 - 7 More teacher pressure, student retention and increase teacher accountability.
- 11 - 17 Test is not a true indicator of a student's competence.
- 11 - 17 Use booklets, not answer sheets. Long test very tiring. If we had competent teachers, we would need competency tests.
- 11 - 17 If it were used to help students, not rate or compare teachers.
- 11 - 17 The tests are a farce.
- 11 - 17 Repeat the grade if basic skills aren't mastered.
- 11 - 17 Test used should contain language basic to the geographic area.
- 11 - 17 Same format used each year.
- 11 - 17 Failure means automatic grade retention or graduation failure.

- 11 - 17 By the time the district gets through screwing around with the scores, everyone passes anyway. Teachers should fail those who do come below the average or norm.
- 11 - 17 The CT is not valid.
- 11 - 17 The poor kids are guessing by the time they get through the long test. SAT and CRT are given too close together. Kids get burned out and turn off because of the long test.
- 11 - 17 Entire test content based on school district curriculum.
- 11 - 17 Banks don't audit their own books. The same applies to schools.
- 11 - 7 Too much pressure put on admin, teachers, and kids.
- 11 - 17 Passing the test based on the students, not the teacher.
- 11 - 17 Civil liberty lawyers move to China. Busing money spent on education.
- 11 - 17 Test has no result on learning or passing or failing.
- 11 - 17 Use the results to pass or fail students to higher grades.
- 11 - 7 Test not teaching ability but student ability.
- 11 - 7 Teachers are evaluated by test scores of students.
- 11 - 17 Classrooms need monitors to stop cheating.
- 11 - 17 Remedial program is necessary to accomplish anything.
- 11 - 17 It's a wasted week; teachers know who the poor students are.
- 11 - 7 Tests reflect school standing in the district not how the student progresses.
- 11 - 17 Einstein flunked math; Lincoln wasn't tested; non-professional people function quite well without competency testing.
- 11 - 7 Teachers are threatened by the test--therefore, they teach to it.
- 11 - 7 We could do our job better with more support from the family.
- 11 - 17 The home must foster the value of education. Parents need to do their part.
- 11 - 17 Retention should be used of 3rd grade competencies are not met.
- 11 - 17 SAT is too long and grueling; some of my best students quit in the middle.

- 11 - 7 Strong pressures bring about cheating in all testing programs.
- 11 - 17 The test is invalid and useless because of the cheating on all testing programs. This is because of the pressure put on principals and teachers for high test scores.
- 11 - 17 April is too soon for the test.
- 11 - 7 SAT is bad for Nevada.
- 11 - 7 Pressure!
- 11 - 17 Have an easier to follow test format. March is too soon to test.
- 11 - 17 3rd grade test is ridiculous and not based on current curriculum.
- 11 - 7 Teacher stress.
- 11 - 17 Too much stress and pressure put on teachers to get high scores.
- 11 - 17 K-5 needs to teach basics and not various other subjects.
- 11 - 17 Discontinue SAT.
- 11 - 17 Use CRT but have team of testers monitor rather than the teachers.
- 11 - 7 Learning becomes a pressure tool for principal.
- 11 - 17 Harassment over scores--district wants to show off "get the scores up."
- 11 - 7 Students that need remedial are getting high SAT scores.
- 11 - 17 Thank you for including the teachers in this study. It's nice to know that someone feels that our opinion counts!
- 11 - 17 Teach using homogeneous not heterogeneous grouping.
- 11 - 7 In Nevada, you don't need education to make a good income. Are there different tests for different social groups--if not, it's racial prejudice. Repeating any grade would be surprising.
- 11 - 17 Take education out of the hands of parents and back where it belongs.
- 11 - 17 SAT is an intelligence test not a competence test. The comp. test in Nevada is a farce. The test in elem. is too hard and

in high and jr. high too easy.

- 11 - 7 Place more emphasis now placed on writing skills. Students do better work because of the tests. Unnecessary psychological testing is being done because school people are certifying kids as special ed if they feel they want to pass tests.
- 11 - 17 "If he had a few bucks set outside by the legislature to develop and improve our testing."
- 32 - 17 If the standards are not lowered to levels of competence just to accommodate a certain percentage of success note. A weak program is more than no program at all.
- 21 - 17 If teachers had to pass one.
- 21 - 7 It gives the schools accountability before the public and proves that teachers can teach and students can learn the basics.
- 21 - 17 a. Set objectives for the test. b. Teach to those objectives. c. Then, test and measure objectives accomplishment. These three steps would make for a better test.
- 21 - 17 If teachers were paid on a merit basis determined by scores of their students. If the state average is above average, give them a merit increase, if below average, lower their salaries or at least no increase. It's about time we make educators accountable.
- 21 - 17 More information made available on the individual school's instead of the district or state totals. This would allow more parental support for the program--if they know what is going on, which they do not at the present have.
- 22 - 17 If it started in elementary school.
- 22 - 17 If it could be personalized as much as possible for individual students.
- 22 - 17 If it were used to rate the school systems and teachers.
- 12 - 17 At this time, competency tests are not given to 3rd graders in Washoe County yet.
- 12 - 17 This test has never been administered in my (urban northern) district.
- 12 - 7 So far as I know, competency tests as such are not being used at this time in Washoe. SAT has always been given. The results from them come back too late to be used to determine

placement for the next year. It's still "teacher judgment."

- 12 - 17 Teaching basics should take precedence over swimming, music, bus schedules. Parents should set basic skills, academic discipline as top priorities for kids and be willing to give up some "rights" for their children in order to attain them.
- 12 - 17 The SAT is 5 days long and it's too laborious for 3rd graders. Drop all other tests and organize an all Nevada test.
- 12 - 17 If one teacher gave all the necessary tests, otherwise it would be an untrue score.
- 12 - 17 I have yet to see or use these tests in my classroom. I have been in this county 13 years.
- 12 - 17 If it were pertinent.
- 12 - 7 Teachers teach to the test which doesn't mean subject mastery or knowledge.
- 12 - 17 Testing reflecting the curriculum determined by each school district.
- 12 - 17 A state exam had to be passed and a certificate issued. Most high school graduates are only semi-literate and do not have basic math skills.
- 12 - 17 Educators set up strict programs and let the public know what is expected and tested. Also, the program should be highly publicized and explained.
- 13 - 17 Fit basic skills teaching more comprehensively.
- 13 - 17 More were done about the results (3rd grade level).
- 13 - 17 Given end of school when all skills been covered--especially in Math.
- 13 - 17 Disagree with testing younger children. Spacing tests would be better.
- 13 - 17 Need remedial program for kids deficient in one or more areas. Need follow-up to make up deficiencies. Stanford tests nebulous. Need tests to pinpoint exact problems.
- 12 - 7 Stop children from "socially" and get to "responsible individuals."
- 12 - 17 Follow up after administering.
- 12 - 17 The test books used follow the same pattern.

- 12 - 17 Need alternatives; i.e., trade schools less pressure on academic.
- 12 - 17 Discipline wasn't a problem. Extra activities eliminated.
- 12 - 17 If procedures and retention or promotion could be based on results.
- 12 - 17 Testing on skills given up to grade level only. Alternatives provided for those who fail.
- 12 - 17 The vocabulary was same as they are taught with.
- 12 - 17 More subjective areas to evaluate such a cursive writing and writing a coherent paragraphic.
- 12 - 17 Smaller class loads.
- 12 - 17 More writing skills taught.
- 12 - 17 Change test forms yearly.
- 12 - 17 More guidelines to use for tests for teachers.
- 12 - 17 Wording was at the grade level of those taking it. Also, the tests were devised to met our own needs and not the usual standardized tests.
- 12 - 17 High school students were required to study and learn basic subjects, then worry about application.
- 12 - 17 There was some continuity nationally.
- 12 - 17 Nevada would devise a tests of their own instead of depending on a national test. I feel the wording throughout the test is not geared to the child's vocabulary.
- 12 - 17 You still haven't allowed for students who never pass the tests. Where will we get extra teachers needed for this back log of students when needed? Lots of problems here.
- 13 - 17 Some degree of teacher input.
- 13 - 17 Used properly, found weaknesses before 12th grade.
- 13 - 17 Different than SAT.
- 13 - 17 Retained until proven. Competent for next level.
- 13 - 17 Tested what needs to be taught and if it determines what he knows.

- 13 - 17 A follow up with each teacher in each grade.
- 13 - 17 Given at beginning of year to see what skills need work on and follow up later.
- 13 - 17 It tested what we teach--local not national. Test measures, doesn't teach.
- 13 - 17 Teaches only basic skills and nothing else and it isn't a good test of basic skills.
- 13 - 17 Three day testing--children become bored. Method needs to be changed.
- 13 - 17 Fits geographical area. Need smaller class size. Tested on achieving level not grade level. Some good guessers. Not true knowledge.
- 13 - 17 The combination of Stanford Achievement and Competency tests go together. Some questions far too involved for average students.
- 13 - 17 "They had someone in State Department who knew what they were doing."
- 13 - 17 More money spent properly training prospective teachers.
- 13 - 17 Questions are suitable for certain areas.
- 13 - 17 Give both forms of test in 3rd and 6th grades--in Fall and Spring. No provision made for those recommended for retention based on scores but parental pressure were sent on.
- 13 - 17 Test administered by same person in each school.
- 13 - 17 Variables of testing minimized. Test given by trained proctors in common area.
- 13 - 17 Syllabus prepared for teacher to follow. Outline for test useful.
- 13 - 17 Tests checked to see if measuring what students have been taught.
- 13 - 17 Students realized necessity of good education to secure good job in future.
- 13 - 7 Positive - Teachers more aware of basic skills necessary for students to acquire. Negative - By 3rd day testing boring for children.

- 13 - 17 Different types of tests and testing methods could be used at different levels.
- 13 - 17 Very little influence on quality of education produced in classroom.
- 41 - 17 If the tests were harder.
- 41 - 7 Study habits and student awareness administered in the lower grades, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.
- 42 - 7 I've seen the test; the math portion is so simple, it's a disgrace. It really doesn't prove anything.
- 42 - 17 The test has helped to identify some real weaknesses in the schools. Weakness that shouldn't be tolerated in the areas of the basics. However, when school administrators say 90% it means nothing because at least 70% of the math problems were in the category of "gift" questions. 70% or better was a passing grade but the test proves little if anything because it's so easy.
- 42 - 17 The testing instruments that are in use should be evaluated to determine if the skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic meet the basic requirements mandated by the legislature.
- 42 - 7 The test will not be felt until the day some H.S. seniors are denied graduation because they failed the tests. Both the teaching profession and the school patrons will make their first really significant response AFTER that even occurs.
- 31 - 7 a. Because teachers are more accountable. b. Basics being emphasized more.
- 31 - 17 It was used for diagnostic teaching.
- 31 - 7 Holistic scoring of writing samples has been learned by a number of English teachers. The technique has some application for instruction.
- 31 - 17 If the schools had the time, resources and personnel to concentrate on the basics instead of having this millstone added to all the others that society and the legislature have placed around educators' necks. We are supposed to teach kids values because no one else wants to or knows how. On every afternoon and evening of the week, we are expected to offer entertainment for the community in the form of ball games, concerts, dances, plays, and contests. We have advisory councils for every special interest, but some day, somebody has to draw the line identifying what the schools can and should be expected to do. My only question is: What will they think of next?

- 31 - 17 Instead of arbitrary minimum standards the focus should be placed on determining levels of knowledge.
- 31 - 7 Test is so easy at high school level that the public thinks our standards are too low.
- 31 - 17 If the public knew that it's the basic floor not what we expect students to achieve. The test is far too easy to assure success.
- 32 - 17 The concept has merit for teachers as well as students.
- 32 - 7 Students are more conscious that they will be held accountable for certain basic skills before they are allowed to graduate.