Standardized Testing of the Non-Standardized Arabic-Speaking ELLs:

A Misalignment of Perceptions

by

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Dedication

To my husband, Farouk: You challenged me to reach this goal many years ago. Thank you for your help, support, encouragement, and love. You have always seen things in me that I do not see in myself.

To our girlie girls, Hiba, Anum, and Nama: This one is for you!!! Do not ever believe any dream is beyond your attainment. You are my proof. Know that determination and perseverance are invaluable. It is not inevitably the smartest or strongest person who comes out on top, but sooner or later it will be the one who works the hardest. You are my inspiration in all that I do. Thank you for your love and support throughout this journey. You bring meaning, purpose, and joy to my life. You are the three best things that have ever happened to me. I love you forever and always.

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A quote from Socrates will conclude my acknowledgements, "True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us."

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Abstract

The rapidly growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) has brought new challenges to schools throughout the United States. Research has also demonstrated a disparity in achievement between ELLs and the general student population in association with the increasing accountability demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001). The investigation conducted in a charter school serving students of predominately Arabic descent showed not only a misalignment between students and staff views of testing, it also demonstrated that despite all our best efforts, the school continued to yield to the pressures of standardized assessments. Teachers, administrators and students from a metro area in the Midwest participated via archival data, staff questionnaires and staff and student one-on-one interviews. The purpose of this research was to explore standardized testing practices on ELLs, specifically those of Arabic speaking backgrounds, and to analyze the role standardized tests play on the instructional time needed for Arabic-speaking ELLs to acquire CALP. Non-native English students take time, which can range from five to seven years, to become proficient in the academic language. In the current study it was found that teachers forfeited countless hours of much needed instructional time, in order to accommodate preparing for, and administering of, these assessments. Moreover, while attempts were made to minimize emphasis on testing, the school succumbed to the ongoing demands of external stakeholders. Consequently, Arabic-speaking ELLs were not receiving the instructional time necessary for them to acquire the English language proficiency which was equivalent to that of their English speaking counterparts.

Keywords: case study, English Language Learners (ELLs), standardized assessment, perceptions, instructional time, accountability

Chapter 1: Introduction

I have walked in the shoes of an ELL--shoes that grew tighter as I explored a culture that was so vastly different than my own in terms of not only language but also religion, customs and traditions. I tried to make sense of idioms that held no meaning to my foreign ears. I identified with items that did not exist in the culture I had become a part of. I started first grade in Canada at a time when ELLs were few and far between and technology was non-existent to bridge the chasm between the old world I had come from to the new one I was a guest of for a long while. I came to school with no English and was placed in a class where the teacher, through no fault of her own, was inexperienced on to how to help and support my needs as an ELL. As such, I was offered no classroom accommodations. Repeatedly my report cards and notes home emphasized that I was copying from my peers and simply not getting it. Constantly my dad would write back that I was a newcomer to the country and to education. My dad would, over and over again, also stress that I did not have a grasp of the language nor had I been acculturated to school norms having missed out on kindergarten.

Added to this were the pressures of being the eldest in the family. Despite the fact that there was understanding on the part of my parents about my lack of English, the expectation was that I was going to learn the language sooner rather than later and help my siblings. The summer following first grade was inundated with workbooks and storybooks. With the support of my mom who spoke little to no English, I had to teach myself to succeed in English. When my first second grade report card arrived, I had pulled off straight A’s. I still remember the day. There was a snowstorm howling outside our windows but my mom was relentless. My mom insisted to

my dad that we needed to head to the shopping center in order to buy me a gift. We came home with a doll decked out in a bridal gown. To this day, both my first grade report card and the doll remain as evidence of having faced my ELL challenges head on.

But my story does not end there. I was additionally tested in fourth grade when my parents put me in a French immersion program owing to the impending political climate changes of the province at that time. I was now required to become proficient in French. My experience was even more trying because the teacher was not sympathetic at all. However, the desire to better myself and prove to her that I would prevail, led me to pursue French even when it became an option in college and university. I now have a minor as well as an endorsement to teach in French.

Grounded in my own experiences, I have continued to view the world through the eyes of an ELL though I have long ago vested myself of the baggage that is commonly associated with the label. I chose to devote my teaching and administrative career to working with ELLs--to be the voice of those children who have for far too long remained in their silent period. Consequently, when given the opportunity I made it my mission to have my ELLs be heard. The seeds of the research were sowed in my last position as a curriculum/assessment coordinator. It was there I witnessed first-hand the demands placed by standardized tests on the newcomers, the basics and the high intermediates.

At my last site, along with the homeroom teacher, I was responsible for proctoring the tests. Based on my observations I was able to experience the issues and concerns that the Arabic-speaking ELLs faced with respect to testing. Since I was the lead proctor for both the Performance Series (PS) and the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) tests, a lot of my time was allocated to administering or overseeing assessments. I also conferred with the

teachers, observed their students' behaviors pre/post-tests, and analyzed the test data as it came in. Finally and more importantly, I garnered the Arabic-speaking ELLs' and teachers' viewpoints. Being right there in the mix provided me with the opportunity to capture a view of reality presented to very few outside of the school environment.

The philosophy behind the testing was to monitor the growth of our students, especially the ELLs. However, as Abedi (2002) claimed, since "one out of seven children in the U.S. speaks a language other than English at home" (p. 1) and it takes anywhere between five to seven years to attain proficiency in academic achievement (Cummins, 1979; Hakuta, 2001; Lenters, 2005), emphasis should be placed on increased direct instruction and class time. Since the population of the school was composed of predominately Arabic-speaking ELLs there should have been more support for these students. As a school on the whole, allotting fifty percent of the school year to standardized testing robbed ELLs of the time necessary for learning to occur. Seeing as I was the curriculum and assessment coordinator for almost four years at my previous school, it was here the seeds of contention were first planted. I continuously questioned and voiced my concerns of requiring Arabic-speaking ELLs to undergo test after test. I often asked when teaching and learning were going to be given the opportunity to do what they were intended to do. I repeatedly stressed that we were setting our students up for failure and fail they did. Few blamed the language issue, most impugned the staff. The authorizer compared our school to others with little to compare them on except for the fact that we were a school as well. As one year rolled into another more and more demands were being placed on our students. It finally came to a head when we were told by our management company to assess our summer school students on the PS. I refused and told them that if they wanted to test I was not going to be responsible for it. At the end of that same summer during staff orientation a presenter shared

information about how the second grade PS scores was going to be used to predict the success of a student in high school and beyond. If a student did not attain the scores that were based on normative data (of which our Arabic-ELLs were no part of), they would not be on a trajectory to receive at least a twenty-one on the ACT. In those moments I made a decision. A decision that within the hour, brought forth my resignation. I finally broke free of the shackles that had held me hostage over the years.

The increasing population of students who come from homes where the main language is not English (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011) along with the demands of NCLB (No Child Left Behind, 2001) are drawing attention to the achievement gap of English Language Learners (ELLs). The students are required to master content in English at the same time as attaining a specific level of English proficiency. The ELLs' population expansion rate is about 170% while the general school population growth rate is slightly above 10% (Francis, 2006). Due to this population explosion more attention is being paid to ELLs. For the most part, the achievement gap is centered on the instruction and assessment of ELLs. The problem of assessing ELLs is additionally augmented by the following: (a) increase of standardized assessment for all students; (b) linguistic demands of standardized assessment and ELLs need to acquire conversational and academic English; and (c) accountability issues.

Testimony to Congress has shown that the academic performance levels of ELLs are considerably lower than those of their peers in almost every test of achievement (National Education Association, 2008). A recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011), for example, also demonstrated that only thirty percent of ELLs scored at or above the basic level in reading, compared with seventy percent of non-ELLs. In addition, ELLs have a higher probability of dropping out of high school and of making lower

salaries, on average, than their non–ELL peers after graduating from high school (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). NCLB demands that students take and perform well on state tests so that educational equity is achieved and high academic standards are maintained. Standardized testing has been on the rise since the latter part of the 20th century. The stress on assessments has been further heightened in the 21st century as politicians, business leaders and others have promoted the notion that the United States' economy will continue to weaken unless student achievement and school progress is monitored through testing (Bonstingl, 2001; Edyburn, 2013). As a result, "responding to the understandable demands for more accountability, almost every school in the land is morphing into a test-taking factory" (Reich, 2000, p. 1) with more frequent and more rigorous testing. As such, I contend that with more time testing and less time learning, ELL students are being short-changed because the tests are depleting valuable instructional time.

By NCLB's own definition, an ELL's struggles with the English language "…may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments" (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2011). NCLB acknowledges exclusions and accommodations, however standard accommodations are neither fully explained nor well-defined (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). Title I of NCLB allows states to set their own timeline for assessment in content areas. Then again, states are mandated to test ELLs "in a valid and reliable manner" and must also offer "reasonable accommodations" (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2011). Guidelines provided by the U.S. Department of Education indicate that these accommodations might include extra time, small group administration, flexible scheduling, simplified instructions, audio-recorded instructions in the native language or English, or imparting additional descriptive information. In some states, the tests allow newly arrived immigrants to be exempt from the reading portion if they have been in the United States

for a year or less. Yet, ELLs who have been here just a few days more than a year are held just as accountable as their native peers following this time period (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1979; Hakuta, 2001; Lenters, 2005; Ortiz-Marrero & Sumaryono, 2010). NCLB also mandates that states attach their assessments to a broad range of other consequences for schools. In terms of accountability, as constructive as it may be to include ELLs in high-stakes tests, numerous issues do occur.

Challenges facing educators include concerns about what is really being tested: are high stakes accountability tests measuring the students' academic knowledge and skills or their language skills? Menken (2000) maintains that when ELLs take standardized tests the validity of test results is reduced because the scores are likely to mirror the students' English language proficiency and may not accurately gauge their content knowledge or skills. There is a need for more attention to be directed in the area of validity as results have demonstrated significant discrepancies in the achievement of ELLs and non-ELL students. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports that test results continue to show a huge achievement gap between ELLs and the total population (United States Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2006).

The issue of how language proficiency, as it correlates to academic achievement, is significant to the educational development of ELLs. These children may be subjected to a wide range of language communication patterns in both home and school. The question of how to envision language proficiency and the manner in which it is linked to academic achievement is key to addressing the concerns of language development in ELLs. Cummins (1979) in his seminal piece coined the terms basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) to illustrate the two distinct levels of English needed for

effective communication in and out of school (Cummins, 1979). By making an underlying distinction between the BICS and CALP he found that it can take anywhere from five to seven years to attain CALP. This fact has continued to be supported by others such as Hakuta (2001) and Lenters (2005). Ortiz-Marrero and Sumaryono (2010) additionally noted that ELLs are required to attain academic language proficiency during their first year in the United States at a rate that reflects the increasing demands of the society they live in (Ortiz-Marrero & Sumaryono, 2010). As such, they concluded that ELLs are at risk in the present climate of accountability and standardized testing due to the needed CALP, which is the type of mastery that standardized tests use along with the academic language necessary to approach school curricula. Given that ELL students need more time to develop English language academic skills, ELLs should be afforded greater opportunities to practice with the content language and be provided with increased time for focused academic language development to occur, in order to succeed in standardized testing.

Generally on standardized tests, ELLs are assessed on their content knowledge using the academic language where they are yet not proficient (McKay, 2005). In addition, even though the debate of content-area standards is relevant to their use for all students, the standards do not attend to such instructional concerns that address the ways in which to teach content material at the same time as students are still learning a second language, nor do they focus on assessment issues such as how English language learners can show what they know when tested in English (Katz, Low, Stack, & Tsang, 2004). Katz et al. (2004) also found that English language proficiency is necessary to allow educators to determine the appropriate time to move students into English-only instruction and English-only assessment. Finally, Katz et al. (2004) further concluded that testing results do not precisely reflect how ELL students operate in classroom environments.

Darling-Hammond (2007) noted that NCLB was meant to improve educational achievement and diminish the racial/ethnic achievement gap. Its policies included having schools focus on improving test scores, mandating better qualified teachers and offering educational choices. However, Darling-Hammond (2007) argued that the multifaceted conditions of the law have failed to realize these goals. Instead they have triggered countless inadvertent negative outcomes, which often damage those the law was designed to assist. Darling-Hammond (2007) further asserted that these included a narrowed curriculum aimed at the low-level skills usually replicated on high stakes tests and the unacceptable assessment of ELLs and students with special needs (Darling-Hammond, 2007). With this in mind, one can argue that the narrowed curriculum reduces instructional time in content area subjects and impacts the acquisition of CALP.

Delpit (1988) investigated the "culture of power" and claimed that, "…the culture of the school is based on the culture of the upper and middle classes – of those in power" (p. 283). The culture of power, in the form of the United States government, lurks behind NCLB and in so doing determines who is successful and who is not, based on tools such as standardized tests. A case could be made that it is this power that establishes standards, expectations, and provides opportunities. And so, due to the conditions set forth, ELLs, like the children of color cited by Delpit (1988), are unfortunately not offered entry to the culture of power because their home language is neither respected nor as she claimed, are school and societal language/norms taught or communicated to them (Delpit, 1988).

The academic achievement of ELLs is a huge concern in the era of standardized testing because as they are being challenged to achieve in their classrooms, they are also being expected to use English as an instrument for learning content matter. However, it is possible that access to

the acquisition of CALP is limited because of the demands of standardized testing on the instructional time needed to acquire CALP. Even though ELLs become proficient in BICS within a short time, they struggle with the CALP necessary for successful academic performance in standardized testing situations, which is further magnified by the limited time afforded to the ELLs to acquire CALP.

Purpose of the Study

At my previous school, beginning in September, the first group of students would arrive in the computer lab at 8:30 in the morning for the PS reading test. They were followed at 9:45 by another collection of students. With one class coming and one class going, like an assembly line, this was the pattern until around 2:00 in the afternoon daily, Monday to Thursday. Friday's testing was only in the morning as the school had half days on Fridays. For third to fifth graders, the first week was all about reading and the next week was for math. Second graders began the PS test at the end of September while the first graders started taking the NWEA in the afternoons. The kindergarteners' first day for testing was early October. There were four parts to this test so the students came into the computer lab on four different days for more than half an hour. The final day of testing was the second Friday in October -- a whole month since we had first started the assessment period. A few days earlier, like all of the state's students, our school began the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test which culminated towards the end of October. My experiences and perspectives gave voice to the story and were behind my personal reasons for wanting to conduct the case study.

Because of the increase of ELLs in schools, their need to master proficiency in BICS and CALP, and NCLB mandates for the inclusion of ELLs in standardized testing for accountability goals, the purpose of this research was to explore standardized testing practices on ELLs,

specifically those of Arabic-speaking backgrounds and to analyze the role standardized tests play on the instructional time needed for Arabic-speaking ELLs to acquire CALP.

Instructional time is lost due to students taking standardized tests (Shepard & Dougherty, 1991; Zellmer, Frontier, & Pheifer, 2006). Discussions on CALP frequently arise when the subject of language acquisition occurs given that it takes anywhere between five to seven years to attain proficiency in academic achievement (Cummins, 1979; Hakuta, 2001; Lenters, 2005). Since the majority of studies on ELLs have been carried out with Spanish-speaking ELLs, there have been limited investigations on standardized testing especially with the Arabic-speaking population. Moreover, the decision to include Arabic-speaking ELLs in the study stemmed from the fact that major differences exist between the Arabic and English writing systems. For example, Palmer El-Ashry, Leclere, and Chang (2007) concluded that Arabic and English share specific positive and negative transfers that may facilitate or impede the language acquisition of the learner. The need to study the Arabic-speaking students derived from the understanding that these types of disparities can present additional challenges for Arab-speaking ELLs such that they may require more time to acquire CALP. In addition, by sharing my comments, I facilitated how the interpretations of the findings had been shaped by my own background, how my experiences have influenced the research, and what strategies were used to attend to these potential problems (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Research Questions

The rise in the number of ELLs in schools, the emphasis placed on attaining proficiency in BICS and CALP, and NCLB demands for inclusion of ELLs in standardized testing and accountability purposes helped generate the research questions for the study. The research questions were: (a) According to staff and student perceptions, what is the impact of

standardized testing on Arabic-speaking ELLs? (b) According to staff perceptions, what are the consequences of testing on instructional time?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The current literature review explored the impact of standardized assessment specifically in the sub-areas of accountability pressures, pedagogy/instruction, test preparation, instructional time, and ELL achievement rates. Also explored were the areas of language as a barrier for ELLs; two dimensions of language acquisition: conversational (BICS) and academic (CALP); the needs of ELLs and the challenges faced by Arabic-speaking ELLs.

Impact of Standardized Assessment

The issue of standardized testing and how it impacts accountability pressures, pedagogy/instruction, test preparation, instructional time, and the achievement rates of ELLs has been studied extensively. For instance, the narrowing of the curriculum to ready students for standardized testing; the changing of teaching strategies so that testing is superseding instructional priorities in the classroom; the large amount of class time being spent on test preparation and testing; ELLs not being afforded equal educational opportunities to strive for academic achievement to have parity with non-ELLs because a majority of the ELL's educational time is spent on test preparation. As such, the research provides a clear indication that standardized testing can seriously impact classroom instruction.

Accountability pressures. Accountability demands increase pressure on teachers. Research cautions against the use of standardized testing as a means of accountability (Fairtest, 2012; Neill, Guisbond, Schaeffer, Madden, & Legeros, 2004; Pitoniak,Young, Martiniello, King, Buteux, & Ginsburgh, 2009). NCLB and accountability also exposes concerns with standardized testing because "…one-size-fits-all teaching aimed primarily at test preparation …works against efforts to give all children a high-quality education" (Neill et al., 2004, p. 1) and that "the key

purposes of accountability are to inform the public – to give an accounting – of the status of the school or system; to provide information that can be used to improve education; to promote equity…" (Neill et al., 2004, p. 22). Because all subgroups are required to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) "…schools with integrated student bodies are far more likely to fail than schools that lack diversity" (Neill et al., 2004, p. 11) and "under Title I, ELLs are one of the mandated subgroups whose test scores are used to determine whether schools and districts are meeting the goals for AYP based on state-level performance standards established for their students" (Pitoniak et.al., 2009, p. 2).

Pedagogy/instruction. The ability of teachers to adapt strategies of effective instruction for ELLs to meet the concurrent goals of English-language development and content acquisition is important because time is of the essence. A number of studies have probed the ways in which testing impacts teacher planning and instruction. Instruction for ELLs is more than just "…good teaching…It is teaching that is tempered, tuned, and otherwise adjusted to the correct 'pitch' at…which English language learners will best 'hear' the content (i.e., find it most meaningful)" (Gersten & Baker, 2000, p. 461) and through their "…initial understanding, promote construction of a foundation of factual knowledge in the context of a general conceptual framework, and encourage the development of metacognitive skills" (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2004, p. 256). Delivering content-based instruction has had positive effects on ELLs when it emphasizes learning core content subject areas (math, science, and social studies) through language and is advantageous for all levels of English proficiency (Abrams & Ferguson, 2005; Garrett & Holcomb, 2005; Gersten & Baker, 2000).

Presenting specific instruction with manipulatives and visuals (Lee, Silverman, & Montoya, 2002) and guided practice in math problem-solving boosts the amount of active

engagement in academic learning (Gersten & Baker, 2000). Well-defined and detailed language objectives are essential so that language learning is not sacrificed for only content learning. In essence, "instruction for English-language learners should work to blend oral language engagement and intellectual (or cognitive) engagement" (Gersten & Baker, 2000, p. 460) and teachers must apply teaching strategies that will meet students' language proficiency demands while simultaneously accelerating their academic progress (Mohr, 2004).

Teachers in low socioeconomic status schools were more influenced by testing than teachers in high socioeconomic schools (Herman & Golan, 1993). In districts attending to mostly economically disadvantaged students as opposed to those serving a largely advantaged population with both groups having a similar number of ELLs, testing shaped teachers' instructional strategies such that teacher's instructional plans incorporated all or most of the test content and objectives. Teachers also stated that they made modifications to the curriculum sequence in order to accommodate the tests (Herman & Golan, 1993).

Classroom instruction that corresponds to the content found on standardized tests while disregarding subject areas that are not on the test restricts the range of instruction and student learning (Herman & Golan, 1993; Zellmer et al., 2006). Therefore, research indicates that student performance on standardized tests reflects the pedagogy/instruction students receive.

Test preparation. The continued and intensified weight placed on test preparation is related to the emphasis teachers place on improving student performance on standardized tests (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003; Shepard & Dougherty, 1991; Shepard, 2002). Shepard and Dougherty (1991) surveyed teachers in two high-stakes school districts on their perceptions of the impact that testing had on instruction as well as their practices for test preparation. One district had a 70% minority population while the other one had 37% percent. Almost 75% of the

instructors would stress more on basic skills instruction, vocabulary lists, word recognition skills, and paper-and-pencil computation than they would if there were no mandated tests. In addition, content that was not emphasized on the tests had the least priority for instruction such that, 50% of the teachers stated allotting less importance to subjects that were not tested (e.g., science or social studies).

Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, Yarbrough and Davis (1999) stated that 80% of the elementary teachers surveyed revealed that they spent more than 20% of their total instructional time preparing for final tests. In addition, 28% noted that students devoted more than 60% of instructional time preparing for tests. Teachers at an urban elementary school in Chicago spent 23% of their time on non-instructional activities including when their "…instructional focuses shift[ed] heavily to standardized test preparation" (Smith, 2000, p. 669). Moreover, when prepping for the assessments "… the teaching and learning of new material and skills slows or comes to a stop for weeks, even months, at a time…many classrooms never regain the forward pace of teaching and learning…"(Smith, 2000, p. 669) they had earlier achieved.

Another survey of reading teachers in Texas concluded that the educators dedicated eight to ten hours per week practicing with their students for the Texas state test (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001). Despite the fact that the increase in high stakes testing caused a "…proportionate rise in the amount of classroom hours devoted to test preparation" (Mueller, 2001, p. 204) at the expense of other curricula, about 91% of ELLs failed segments of their 1999 state test (Mueller, 2001). Moreover, the demand to raise scores and increase student performance compelled teachers to allocate considerable amounts of instructional time to preparing for tests so that the teachers in high-stakes situations related that they spent "…more class time preparing students for the state test than did their counterparts in low-stakes states" (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 25).

> The time required for the ITBS [Iowa Test of Basic Skills] and the state-mandated criterion-referenced tests, the time teachers elect (or principals require) to prepare pupils to take the tests, and the time spent in recovering from the tests amounted to about a 100-hour bite out of instructional time in the schools…(Smith, 1991, p. 10)

Smith's (1991) results are still relevant today since the time taken up by testing substantially decreases the role of teachers to address the needs of pupils, especially their ELLs. For example, in Michigan, the ELLs are tested twice in English language development: The English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) and for those ELLs in the country for at least a year, the English language arts test measures their language and reading skills on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) (Michigan Department of Education, 2012, p. 7). Decades later, the problem of reduced instructional time continues to persist (Zellmer et al., 2006)

Instructional time. The very resources that are fundamental to implementation of the standards of NCLB —instructional time and the time staff need to service students in order to increase student achievement—have been redirected away from teaching and learning to be expended in test preparation, administration, and reporting (Zellmer et al., 2006). Establishing students' academic English proficiency is vital for instructional placement; however, it is evident from the research conducted by Cummins (1979) that academic English language proficiency takes time for ELLs to attain. Cummins (1979) essentially integrated CALP and the threshold concept as proposed by Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) where the first language is related to the development of proficiency in a second language. In effect, Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) and Cummins (1979) indicated that lower and higher thresholds of proficiency should be acknowledged, with the former being to some degree sufficient for nonacademic purposes (BICS) and the latter being a necessity for academic success (CALP).

Another issue of time is the limits on services that students are provided Title III services—no more than three years. Therefore, a child who is identified through the a state's language proficiency test as requiring services (either ESL or bilingual) is sheltered for some time, but usually this time is not enough and ELLs are mainstreamed before they are ready which further complicates their potential to acquire CALP. Instructional time and learning are directly related and since focus shifts away from learning to testing, the impact on ELLs has been detrimental during periods of assessment because additional instructional time is vital for ELLs to increase and support achievement gains (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007).

The results of a survey conducted by the Wisconsin Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (WASCD) indicated that disadvantaged students, including ELLs, were subjected to almost fifteen days--equaling to three weeks-of interrupted instructional services during their state testing period such that "across a student's 12-year span in a district, that could result in as many as 36 weeks, or a full year, of disrupted services for the disadvantaged students who are at the greatest risk of not meeting NCLB objectives" (Zellmer et al., 2006, p. 2). The elementary teachers reported an average of 7.4 days of instruction being disrupted by the testing of ELLs. Furthermore, in a separate open-ended question about the most significant challenges of NCLB testing requirements, the largest percentage of teacher responses were linked to the loss of instructional time and the time it took to administer the tests (Zellmer et al., 2006).

A longitudinal study of five school districts addressed several factors including the conclusion that instructional time must be used efficiently so as to insure that "…students receive maximally comprehensible instruction for an instructionally optimum time period…" (Thomas & Collier, 2002, pp. 304-305) in classrooms where ELLs are not segregated, but where all students

work together and where instruction is guided by "…students' cognitive, academic, and linguistic developmental needs" (Thomas & Collier, 2002, p. 305).

Students are tested repeatedly, especially in inner-city schools serving primarily children of color. To some extent, this is done to assess requirements for federally funded programs due to economic, social, and language differences that exist among many urban youth. Furthermore, additional testing is performed to determine placement into specialized programs. Therefore, when those additional assessments are combined with state testing, "…curriculum-based performance, end of-course, and writing tests, the perception emerges that a lot of testing is taking place" (Smith & Stevenson, 1992, p. 78). In essence, the Smith and Stevenson (1992) concluded that "there is too much testing... All the testing we do takes away from the amount of instructional time available...amount of testing done takes away from the amount of time available for instruction" (Smith & Stevenson, 1992, p. 71).

The need to capitalize on instructional time is key to improving the content academic language proficiency of ELLs. In some states, ELLs are usually presumed to become adequately fluent in English to take high stakes tests in the year following their first year in the country (Michigan Department of Education, 2011, p. B-3). Simply having an intermediate level of understanding in the English language will not improve test scores because ELLs require the academic English language and content skills to contend with their native English-speaking peers (Solórzano, 2008).

ELL achievement rates. The number of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 4.7 to 11.2 million between 1980 and 2009 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011) and ELLs have consistently scored lower on standardized tests than their native English-speaking counterparts (Durán, 2008). Given that schools with

larger populations of ELLs typically lag behind in the AYP race there should be more support for ELLs so they can meet the requirements of standardized tests, as set out by NCLB and standardized test developers ought to keep in mind the ELLs from the beginning "rather than as an afterthought" (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004, p. 18).

Proponents of testing must focus on what students are capable of when classroom teaching emulates testing. The lessons that are not measured on standardized tests will allow advocates of these tests to understand that these assessments are not evaluating students' extensive achievement abilities but to a certain extent emphasizing an insignificant piece of students' true educational achievement. Consequently, there is a disparity between test results and actual learning (Shepard, 2002). Thomas and Collier (1998) argued that "the average native English speaker gains about ten months of academic growth in one ten-month academic year" (p. 26) and that ELLs must outgain their native speaking counterparts by accomplishing 1.5 year's growth in English for six consecutive school years. Consequently, so that they acquire skills that are proportionate with those of native English speakers, ELLs must make "…nine years progress in six years" (Thomas & Collier, 1998, p. 26).

Evidence also comes from the eighth grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011) where 71% percent of ELLs and 22% of non-ELLs, scored below the basic level in reading achievement. In addition, while 35% of non-ELLs were at or above the proficient level in reading, only 3% of ELLs attained a similar level of proficiency. The achievement gap between ELLs and their native counterparts in U.S. public schools has been more or less constant since 1998 (Akasha, 2013). Though evidence does suggest that the gap is narrowing somewhat (Akasha, 2013), reasons such as the challenges with acquiring a new language are frequently cited to account for the achievement gap between ELLs

and non-ELLs. Basically, while the causes continue to be investigated and studied, the gap still exists (Akasha, 2013).

Two Dimensions of Language Acquisition: Conversational and Academic

Differences between academic and conversational language proficiency account for the discrepancies in the need to listen, speak, read, and write in content areas at school and the ability to carry on conversations. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) brought awareness to the distinction between academic and social language ability. They found that although Finnish immigrant children in Sweden frequently seemed to be fluent in both Finnish and Swedish they continued to demonstrate levels of verbal academic performance in both languages significantly below grade/age expectations. Resulting from Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa's (1976) study, Cummins (1979) presented a distinction between "surface fluency" (Cummins, 1979, p. 199) and "…the dimension of language proficiency which is strongly related to overall cognitive and academic skills" (Cummins, 1979, p. 198). In addition, and due to his own investigations, Cummins (1979) termed two types of English language proficiency: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cummins found that whereas for the most part students learned ample English to participate in social communication in approximately two years, they usually needed five to seven years to attain the type of language skills necessary for successful achievement in content area classrooms. The language skills of ELLs are frequently assessed on their ability to understand and reply to conversational language. ELLs who are proficient in social circumstances may not be ready for the academic, context-reduced, and literacy needs of general education classrooms. Appraising their language proficiency on oral and/or social language assessments becomes an issue when the ELLs do well in social conversations but not well on academic tasks. Cummins'

(1984) study of psychological assessments administered to language minority students indicated that teachers and psychologists time and again presumed that children who had achieved fluency in English had overcome all difficulties with English. However, ELLs often functioned inadequately on English academic tasks as well as under psychological assessment conditions.

Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). BICS delineates the social, conversational language used for oral communication. ELLs can grasp social language by the following: studying speakers' non-verbal cues (i.e., gestures, facial expressions and eye actions); viewing others' reactions; manipulating voice signals (i.e., phrasing, intonations, and emphasis); examining pictures, concrete objects, and other contextual cues which are evident; and requesting statements to be repeated, and/or explained. Since social interactions are generally embedded in the context, they regularly take place in a significant social context and cognitively they are not very challenging. Conversational language skills are often acquired "…within two years after exposure to English" (Cummins, 2008).

Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). CALP is the context-reduced language of the academic classroom. It can take five to seven years for ELLs to become proficient in the classroom content language (Cummins, 1979) on account of the following: the absence of non-verbal clues; lack of face-to-face contact; usually abstract; high literacy demands (e.g., narrative and expository text and textbooks are written above the language proficiency of the students); and need for cultural/linguistic knowledge. In addition, research has demonstrated that ELLs with no schooling in their first language can take seven to ten years to attain the age and grade-level standards of their native English speaking counterparts (Collier, 1989). Challenges also occur when teachers deem a student proficient in a language when the student expresses appropriate social English.

Language as a Barrier for ELLs

Standardized tests, as presently created, are unsuitable for ELLs since their prolonged use for high stakes judgments such as instructional planning, retention and graduation can have long-standing negative effects on ELLs (Solórzano, 2008). Since ELLs are being included in all standardized tests, it is essential that concerns associated with the tests be seriously contemplated in relation to their use (Solórzano, 2008). For example, Solórzano (2008) evaluated academic achievement tests in relation to their norming samples and validity to ascertain their effectiveness on assessing ELLs. Frequently used language proficiency tests were investigated with regard to definitions of proficiency, technical quality, alignment with standards for language classification and reclassification, and their academic predictive validity. Finally, Solórzano (2008) offered suggestions for dealing with the issues linked to high stakes tests and ELLs. The recommendations encompassed: (a) developing an opportunity to learn index that provides ELLs with an equal chance to learning; (b) inclusion with accommodations to overcome obstacles to understanding the tests; (c) establishing a threshold/criteria of English fluency before testing in a second language; and, (d) creating tests for ELLs and/or re-norming existing ones for each purpose.

Traditionally, ethnic and racial minorities, students with disabilities, low-income students, and ELLs have trailed their native English speaking counterparts on test scores owing, to some degree, to circumstances that may not be directly linked to their academic success yet do impact their performance results (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). Various issues "…such as parent education, poverty, and schooling conditions contribute to the existing performance gap between ELL and non-ELL students" (Abedi & Gándara, 2006, p. 43). Nevertheless, language issues have a larger impact on ELL student achievement than any of the other influences. In effect, ELLs

function behind non-ELLs in nearly all school content areas and the achievement gap between the two groups is greatest where there are higher levels of language demand (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). Seeing as ELLs do not have a solid understanding of the English language, learning together with standardized assessment is impacted by their limited English proficiency. When measured up to their mainstream peers, English language learners have a deficit in syntactic awareness skills in reading (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). What is more, Abedi and Gándara (2006) asserted that the process necessary to acquire new language skills is demanding and necessitates time and effort. Consequently, it takes a long time for ELLs "…to become proficient enough in English to understand teachers' instructions and test questions in a language with an unfamiliar structure and vocabulary" (Abedi & Gándara, 2006, p. 43). Standardized achievement tests that have been created for the majority of students do not allow for the special needs of English language learners and can be key in their frustration and a significant factor to the performance gap between ELLs "…and non-ELLs as there is no evidence to suggest that the basic abilities of ELL students are different from non-ELL students" (Abedi & Gándara, 2006, p. 44).

Under NCLB, states must show AYP toward state learning standards for all groups of students – including the ELLs (Pitoniak et al., 2009). Also, all states are required to assess the English language development of their ELLs. State language proficiency assessments usually determine social language (i.e., BICS) and do not measure a student's level of academic language proficiency (i.e., CALP). Therefore, the intrinsic bond between language and knowledge poses a challenge in the creation of appropriate language proficiency and content-area knowledge assessments for ELLs.. Additionally, some may have inadequate or no test-taking or assessment background in their first or second language (Pitoniak et al., 2009).

Solórzano (2008) additionally maintained that simply having an intermediate level of understanding in the English language will not improve test scores. The reason behind his contention is that ELLs require the academic English language and content skills to compete with their native English-speaking peers. Scarcella (2003) further elaborated with her definition of academic English as "a variety or a register of English used in professional books and characterized by the specific linguistic features associated with academic disciplines" (p. 9).

Research (Menken, 2000; Solórzano, 2008) has repeatedly shown that academic vocabulary is one of the strongest indicators of how well students will learn subject area content. Assessments of content-area knowledge and abilities are also essentially tests of language proficiency since "…any assessment of an English language learner's content-area knowledge administered in English may be greatly influenced by the student's English language proficiency; testing done in English is first and foremost an English language proficiency exam, not necessarily a measure of content knowledge" (Menken, 2000, p. 5). ELLs are liable to be lacking in the necessary skills when taking tests in a language when they are not completely proficient. As a result, scores may reflect their deficient language skills and not really their content-area abilities.

Existing English language development assessments are deficient (Bailey & Butler, 2003). English language assessments must go past measuring general, social language and also encompass academic language proficiency. The assessments must incorporate the complete range of English language skills demanded in an educational environment but it is actually the linguistic elements of the language that are being measured with achievement tests more so than the grade level content standards (Bailey & Butler, 2003).

The language background of ELL students could be a factor "…of measurement error in the assessment for English language learners (Abedi, 2002, p. 231) such that "…the correlation between standardized achievement test scores and external criterion measures was significantly larger for the non-ELL students than for the ELL students" (Abedi, 2002, p. 231). In essence, until ELLs have achieved CALP sufficient to do the grade level content assessments, it seems objectionable "…for achievement testing in English to be used for student and school district performance accountability" (Docken, 2005, p. 21). The development of CALP, as the formal written and spoken language vital for all students to succeed in classrooms (Anstrom, DiCerbo, Butler, Katz, Millet, & Rivera, 2010), makes it questionable to assess ELLs. Furthermore, subject area achievement tests function as language proficiency tests rather than subject area tests (Munoz, 2002). In this manner, even while students may have acquired BICS, they remain inexperienced and unskilled with the linguistically multifaceted organization of test questions so that most standardized, subject area based tests are "…administered in English and normed on native English-speaking test populations, they may inadvertently function as English language proficiency tests" (Abedi, 2002, p. 232).

Teachers of ELLs must recognize that simply because students speak fluent English (BICS), it does not mean that students have the necessary CALP to achieve successfully in the content area classroom (Bielenberg & Fillmore, 2004). This may be the reason why too many ELLs are not making the much needed progress (Mohr, 2004). Students need to know how to express what they know academically in order to take content-specific tests. They must be able to talk about a topic in an essay test and use words like "examine" and "cause" in a science project so as to demonstrate learning at school. Therefore, to be successful in the classroom, to achieve good grades on classroom tests, and to do well on any standardized test, ELLs have to

master proficiency in basic social language as well as academic language. Though language acquisition cannot be hastened (Oritz, 2004) and, the fact that many ELLs do not reach the important language acquisition level of academic language for a number of years (Moore & Zainuddin, 2003), they are still required to be academically proficient after one year and take part in state assessments that could influence their advancement and graduation (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Needs of ELLs

Student needs should drive not only what is taught but when and for how long. The learner must be considered when planning for and implementing instruction. In the case of ELLs, instruction has to be delivered to the students in a way that is comprehensible (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). Teaching practice ought to be structured in a manner that addresses ELL needs. The routine of acquiring new language skills is challenging and entails time and effort because of a variety of factors including ELLs' coming from differing socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds as well as learning English at different rates (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). Since ELLs begin school considerably behind non-ELLs in their English language proficiencies they necessitate extra time and instruction to attain similar academic levels as their English speaking peers (Abedi & Gándara, 2006; De Avila, 1997). In essence, the need to reinforce academic language and foster teachers' cultural sensitivity to the backgrounds of their students as well as the amount of instructional time afforded ELLs are critical for classroom learning to occur (Palmer et al., 2007).

The impact of instructional time on classroom learning is a function of the time a student spends on task and the time he/she requires to finish the task (Carroll, 1989). Carroll's (1989) model of school learning suggests that students require different learning times and that real

learning is contingent on the amount of time a student spends actively engaged in the learning process measured up against the amount of time the student needs to learn so "it cannot be assumed that all students will learn at the same rate or to the same extent" (De Avila, 1997, p. 4). Time is needed to acquire language proficiency, which is estimated to be two to five years for oral fluency or BICS (Collier, 1989; Cummins, 1979; De Avila, 1997) and several years for English-language proficiency or CALP (Cummins, 1979; Hakuta, 2001; Lenters, 2005).

Carroll's "Model of School Learning" articulates the learning process. Time needed--for each student to learn and master the academic material--varies depending on the quality of instruction, the opportunity and learning ability of each student. Time actually spent is the time students have and are willing to spend learning. The basic premise of Carroll's (1989) model is that since time impacts learning, the expectation of a fixed level of learning from students must be adjusted to allow adequate time for learners to attain that level of learning. Moreover, given that the "time needed" fluctuates for each individual so, too, must the "time spent" be adapted to produce similar outcomes, suggesting time must not only be adequate, but flexible. Because students can attain proficiency as a result of the ratio of the amount of time students are actually engaged to the amount of time needed to learn (Carroll, 1989), "…an inverse linear relationship between expected growth in English language proficiency and initial proficiency" may exist (De Avila, 1997, p. 10) such that the expectation of one year's worth of growth is problematic and may in actual fact hinder student growth (De Avila, 1997). An ELL who may be lacking in his/her ability to understand instruction because of the language barrier requires an increase in the amount of time needed for learning to occur. Even though there are no systems in place that will gauge how long it will take a student to learn, it is evident that whatever learning is going to

arise will involve time (Carroll, 1989) and necessitate a process founded on varying expectations of the ELLs (De Avila, 1997).

Challenges Faced by Arabic-Speaking ELLs

While Arabic-speaking ELLs contend with challenges similar to those of other ELL groups they also face additional concerns. Their issues can be the result of the dynamics that come into play, including cultural and linguistic features. Consequently, in an effort to facilitate any struggles they may face in the learning process, it is essential to identify the difficulties encountered by Arabic-speaking ELLs. ELLs face obstacles if they are considered as "…one-dimensional on the basis of their limited English proficiency" (Short & Echevarria, 2004, p. 8). ELLs come from a wide variety of backgrounds, speak different languages, and have varying levels of education. While students of Latin-based background can identify English words with Latin roots, ELLs such as those who speak non-alphabetic and/or Latin-root languages, struggle because their languages do not share Latin roots with English and as such the ELLs are confronted by word processing issues that are quite different from those encountered by other ELLs (Ryan & Meara, 1991).

ELLs whose first languages have different orthographies than English (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, or Arabic) are further challenged (Grabe, 1991). The ELLs may be knowledgeable in alphabetic writing systems that use letters and print conventions that are unlike those in English but may be inexperienced with the individual letters and letter/sound associations found in English (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). In order to become skilled in reading in English, they have to learn the particular conventions of English even as they consistently acquire English language proficiency to ease reading comprehension.

The ease with which certain languages are learned is contingent on how dissimilar or alike they are in comparison to the languages the learner already knows (Walqui, 2000). As such that:

> …the basic intensive language course, which brings a student to an intermediate level, can be as short as 24 weeks for languages such as Dutch or Spanish, which are Indo European languages and use the same writing system as English, or as long as 65 weeks for languages such as Arabic, Korean, or Vietnamese, which are members of other language families and use different writing systems (Walqui, 2000, p. 1).

In addition to directionality concerns where the Arabic alphabet reads right to left (Burt, Peyton & Adams, 2003) and the Roman alphabet reads left to right, Arabic students who are already literate in Arabic, learning to read in English are likely to face issues with vowels, which are typically not written out in daily Arabic writings (Ryan & Meara, 1991). Learners who are literate in a language written in a non-Roman alphabet require "…instruction in the Roman alphabet in order to transfer their L1 [first language] literacy skills to English" (Burt et al., 2003, p. 13). Therefore, the approaches that the learners may have acquired to read Arabic may not function accordingly in English reading and spelling (Burt et al., 2003).

While building English proficiency ELLs must also learn to navigate within new cultural norms and learn new content and skills at the same time as they are acquiring a new language. Teachers must be cognizant and familiar about their ELLs' home languages along with their culture. A case study (Palmer et al., 2007) on a young Arabic-speaking boy, Abdallah, highlighted factors essential to working with ELLs, in particular, the dynamics of a boy learning a new culture. There are vast differences between English and Arabic, including concepts of print and orthography that could undoubtedly impede with the Arabic-speaking ELL's

acquisition of English. Moreover, teachers must be culturally sensitive to the needs of their ELLs. When teachers do not provide their students access to culturally relevant texts, their inattentiveness can impact the achievement of Arabic-speaking ELL's. As such, students whose native language is Arabic, for the most part, have a steep learning curve in acquiring English proficiency.

Conclusion

Previous research has undoubtedly established that language issues play a huge a role on the assessment results of ELLs and needless to say language challenges within an assessment bring about a widening in the performance gap between ELL and non-ELLs. However, limited to no research exists that expounds on the challenges faced by Arabic-speaking ELLs and their experiences with standardized assessment. There is a critical gap; one that indicates the need to begin to understand these groups of students who face additional trepidations and anxieties because their native language is so vastly different from the language of learning and assessment in the United States. The gap is also significant because of the demand for Arabic-speaking ELLs to acquire the academic aspects of English and perform well on assessments in a short, prescribed period of time while at the same they are acquiring the language of a culture that shares little in common with their own. Consequently, this study attempted to address this gap by describing the perceptions of the staff that prepare their students for and administer the standardized assessments. Regardless of the students' first language, the participation of ELLs has been limited in studies. The current investigation included the Arabic-speaking ELLs, who in their own words, brought attention for the need to further investigate what the impact of assessment means for them.

Given that NCLB mandates annual testing, the subject has been further exacerbated by the fact that too much time and too many resources are being spent preparing for and administering tests. Teachers cannot carry out their lessons with the skills and content necessary to promote CALP and therefore ELLs cannot be afforded the opportunities necessary to engage critically with the curriculum (Abrams et. al., 2003; Hoffman et. al., 2001; Mueller, 2001; Smith, 2000). I suspect the issues pose a challenge for schools with a preponderance of Arabic-speaking ELLs because they are being over tested and not provided with sufficient instructional time to acquire CALP, which is required in order for them to be successful in content specific standardized assessments.

Chapter 3: Methods

A case study design (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) was used to address the research questions: (a) According to staff and student perceptions, what is the impact of standardized testing on Arabic-speaking ELLs? (b) According to staff perceptions, what are the consequences of testing on instructional time? The study focused on the participant perspectives of assessing ELLs, the influence of assessment on instructional time as well as uncovering the experiences of the ELLs themselves.

Participants and Site

The study was conducted at a K-8 charter school in the Midwest where the researcher is also the current principal. The school opened its doors on September 3, 1997, under the authorization of a state university. It is the sole charter school under the supervision of its management company. Using the 2013 spring count there were four hundred and seventy-three students enrolled at the school. With nineteen classes, the average class size was about 25-27 students. Two hundred and ninety six were white and included those of Arabic descent. One hundred and six were African Americans, sixty nine were Hispanics and two were multiethnic. Two hundred and forty two were ELLs. One hundred and eighty seven were Arabic-speaking ELLs and fifty five were Spanish-speaking ELLs receiving Title III services. One hundred percent received free lunch. There were nineteen classes that included three kindergarten classrooms and two of each of first through eighth grades. Elementary (K-5), were all in self-contained classrooms while middle school (6^{th}-8^{th} grades) rotated to their subject area teacher in a separate building known as “the mods.”

Staff. Given that ELLs in 3rd-8th grade levels take the state tests, the state language proficiency test, and the district assessments, purposive sampling targeted all of the 3rd-8th grade classroom/content area teachers, ESL teachers, RtI teachers, Special Education teachers, the curriculum, assessment and discipline coordinators. A questionnaire was employed in the selection process and was used to screen staff and collect their demographics. Seven staff members completed the questionnaires but one chose not to continue with the interview citing that it was her first year as a teacher and therefore could not offer much in the way of constructive responses to the interview questions. However, the data form the initial questionnaire was included where relevant. Six staff members participated in the interviews.

All participants had either administered or analyzed standardized tests. The staff were comprised of seven females. Three of the staff members were content area teachers, two were ESL teachers there were two coordinators, one assessment coordinator and the curriculum coordinator. Experience in terms of teaching ranged from one year to fourteen years and one to seven years when it came to teaching ELLs. Michigan Department of Education certification included: English, health, integrated science, ESL, science (grades 6-12), elementary education, math (middle school), physical education (P.E.), English Language Arts (ELA), community and theater arts, Spanish, French and, math (Table 1).

Table 1

Staff Demographics

Participant	Certification	Instructional	Years Teaching	Years Teaching ELLs
Curriculum Coordinator	English/Health	Coordinator	14	1

Assessment Coordinator	Elementary Education/Math and P.E.	Coordinator	6.5	6.5
ESL Teacher	Spanish/French	Teacher	15	7
ESL Teacher	Integrated Science/ESL	Teacher		
4th Grade Teacher	Elementary Education/ Language Arts, Science	Teacher	2	2
Reading Teacher	Language, Literature and Writing/ Communication and Theatre Arts	Teacher	2	2
Science Teacher	Science/Math	Teacher	1	1

Staff participation was voluntary. Those who agreed to participate were asked to sign an informed consent and were ensured anonymity. A signed statement from the researcher assured those who took part or declined to do so in the study would not suffer any negative consequences nor would their participation and/or non-participation influence their evaluation and/or performance reports.

Students. Six Arabic-speaking 6th- 8th grade ELL students were selected because the group had taken the MEAP for three or more years. The following criteria were used for student selection: (a) those categorized as "high intermediate" (i.e., students who have near-sufficient or mostly developed English language acquisition in the areas of listening, reading, writing, speaking and comprehension as delineated for the state's students at the specific grade level); (b) from the "high intermediate" group, those having attended the school for three or more years; (c) from the same groups, students not performing at grade level as determined by teacher recommendations. High intermediate ELLs were selected because they were identified as the students who comprehended standard speech and were able to communicate orally, strong indicators of having attained BICS, but still needed support in understanding texts in the academic content areas (i.e., CALP). Arabic-speaking ELLs who were achieving at grade level were not included because through conversations with the committee it was decided that for the purposes of the current study it would be more feasible to investigate only the high intermediate group. All participants were identified as ELL and receiving Title III services through whole school/classroom SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol) instruction. Student participation was voluntary and parental consent was obtained prior to the commencement of research. Each student was assigned a pseudonym to protect his/her identity.

All students in the study were born in the United States and did not qualify as newcomers. Students had attended a school in the state as follows: a sixth grader for eight years, the other one for seven years. It was five years for one seventh grade student and seven for the other student. For the eighth graders it was six and nine years. The students had been identified in the state as ELLs and were high intermediate. One sixth and one eight grader had been classified as ELLs for seven years. A sixth and seventh grader were identified six years prior to

the study. The other eighth grader came to our school in 2009 and was given the classification and the remaining seventh grader came in 2011 and was identified as ELL. Students were eligible for Title III-ESL program support through the Alternative Language Program (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). The SIOP trained mainstream teachers provided SIOP lessons while push in was facilitated by the ESL teachers. Finally, parents' education levels ranged from third grade to first year of college. Three students' dads completed high school and two students' moms and one dad finished one year of higher education.

Data Sources

Data were collected from October 2012 to May 2013 and included: (a) archival data; (b) questionnaires and; (c) interviews. Together these addressed the research questions that aimed to determine the impact of standardized testing and the consequences of testing on instructional time. I recognized my views of assessment could have been sources of bias but they also provided insights and data to the research. To minimize bias, I kept detailed records, and followed the methodology precisely, and recognized my own bias through self-reflection.

Archival data. The study incorporated various archival data that were collected prior to the beginning of the case study. The data included: school achievement data, state and district assessment data, instructional time and, School Improvement Plan (SIP) academic vocabulary data. The careful analysis of these data was used to provide additional information to help attend to the research questions.

School achievement data. Achievement data were compiled in the 2012-2013 School Improvement Plan (Michigan Department of Education, 2012) . ELLs were performing below non-ELLs in math as follows: In 6th grade, the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs was 9%. In 7th grade, the gap was 5%, and in 8th grade, it was 6%. In reading it was the

following: In 6th grade the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs was 12%. In 7th grade, the gap was 4%, and in 8th grade, it was 26%. Multiple measures were used to identify the gap and included Reading/Math PS, StarMath, AIMSweb and MEAP.

State and district assessment data. ELL archival school data was accessed which was obtained from the Michigan Department of Education website. The district assessment data were also retrieved online through their respective websites. The data, which covered three years of state and district assessments for all 6th to 8th grade ELLs, were examined to address the research questions. State tests encompassed both a reading assessment as well as a language proficiency evaluation. School Demographic Reports identifying "not proficient" and "partially proficient" ELLs were used to evaluate ELL performance on the state reading assessment. Individual student reports from the state's language proficiency assessment were used to determine the "high intermediate" students. The district assessment was an online computer adaptive test that identified the proficiency levels of students in both reading and math. Scaled scores on the district test conveyed student performance by indicating performance across years on the same scale. Student results are reported as a scaled score and in a nationally-normed grade-level quartile of "below average", "low average", "high average" or "above average." For the current research, ELLs scaled scores that were "below average" growth and "low average" growth for reading were isolated because these were the students for whom there were three plus years of data and were identified as "high intermediate" on the state language proficiency tests.

SIP academic vocabulary. Students' knowledge of academic vocabulary was pre-assessed by giving students a quiz to use each vocabulary word in a sentence after it had been defined for them. The same format was used in science and social studies to ensure reliability and validity of the test results. Pre and post assessments were administered to all students in

January/February 2013. Though not specific to ELLs, data were collected to gauge growth in academic vocabulary over a five week time period.

Questionnaire. The structured questionnaire (Appendix A) with adapted/modified existing items from Shepard and Dougherty (1991) provided self-reported data about teachers' perceptions. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain staff perceptions about assessment and its administration to ELL students. The original questionnaire was adapted/modified to correspond to the current site's assessment practices and take into consideration the ELL population. The original questionnaire had many questions that were not relevant to the current study. Therefore questions pertaining to "frequencies for hours and days spent giving tests" (Shepard & Dougherty, 1991, p. 29) and "personal experience with standardized tests" (Shepard & Dougherty, 1991, p. 32) were borrowed while those relating to the "effects of standardized testing" (Shepard & Dougherty, 1991, p. 26) were altered to include the ELLs. Others that had to do with the kinds of tests administered were changed to accommodate the types we give at our school. Permission was granted to use the questionnaire/survey questions from the original authors via email. The questionnaire was taken by teachers and coordinators.

The focus of the questionnaire was on staff perceptions about standardized assessment, their views of the effect of standardized assessment on instructional time and staff insights into the administration of standardized assessment on ELLs. Other questions encompassed alternate assessment tools (i.e., performance based, teacher observations and student portfolios) for ELLs; ascertained the ways in which teachers assessed ELLs' performance in the classroom; how often they assessed using either multiple choice, short answer, oral questioning, student portfolios and teacher observations and; participants' perceptions of the impact of standardized testing on ELLs.

The questionnaire was piloted with a second grade teacher who was not included in the study. This helped to confirm that the questionnaire was aligned with the research questions. The teacher indicated that the questions were clear and she understood what they were asking so no changes were necessary as a result of the pilot. The questionnaire was composed of the following: (a) rating scale; (b) rank ordered; (c) close-ended and; (d) open-ended questions.

Rating scale questions. The rating scale addressed the following research question: What is the impact of standardized testing on ELLs. The topics included staff perceptions about assessment, the effect on instructional time, and its relevance to ELLs. Data were manually analyzed by creating a frequency distribution table. The frequency table was used to organize the information on how often the responses occurred. Here the data values, (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree, were rank ordered and the frequencies of each data shown in a table (Appendix B).

Rank ordered questions. The topic for the rank ordered questions consisted of the alternate tools of assessments (i.e., performance based, teacher observations and student portfolios) for ELLs and addressed the research question of the impact of standardized testing on ELLs. Due to having archival data that focused only on formal assessments, there was a need to cover all possible assessment types. A frequency table was created manually using the three categories of Performance Based, Teacher Observation, Student Portfolios and Other. A frequency table permitted the listing all the potential score values and indications of how often each score occurred. Furthermore, the mean was taken for each of the response categories and then the averages were rank ordered

Close-ended questions. The close-ended questions ascertained the ways in which teachers assessed ELLs' performance in the classroom and addressed the following research

question: What are the consequences of testing on the instructional time needed for Arabic-speaking ELLs to acquire CALP. Topics included how often they assessed using multiple choice, short answer, oral questioning, student portfolios and teacher observations. Each item was number coded and the data were manually tabulated in a frequency table in order to determine how often the responses emerged. Since close-ended questions are more specific, they limited the participants' responses and provided a uniformity of answers, which in turn made them easier to quantify, categorize and compare. These were used to confirm the findings of the other methods of research by triangulating the data.

Open-ended questions. Topics for the open-ended portion included the participants' perceptions of the impact of standardized testing on Arabic-speaking ELLs. The data were transcribed and manually coded to see what categories were related and to identify themes and emerging patterns. This was followed by a written summary of the information that had been garnered. The descriptive text incorporated comments/statements directly from the participants.

Individual interviews. Two sets of interviews were conducted. The staff protocol was comprised of ten questions that took roughly about thirty to forty minutes (Appendix C). The follow-up individual interviews extrapolated or elaborated on the questionnaire items. The student interviews lasted about twenty minutes and had nine questions (Appendix D). The interview protocols were scripts read to the participants by the researcher. The topics involved open discussions about participant perceptions, attitudes and experiences with standardized assessments.

Responses were audio recorded and then transcribed for analyses purposes. The interviews allowed the researcher to get at the story behind a participant's experiences/perceptions. The participants' own views and beliefs about their experiences with

testing, in-depth information around the question of assessing ELLs and the impact of assessment on instructional time were addressed in the interviews. In student and staff follow-up interviews, member-checking was done as the participants were given the opportunity to comment on the interviewer's interpretations as well as elaborate on their own original statements. The interviewer further probed or asked additional questions to acquire a better understanding of the situation surrounding the issues of the assessment of ELLs**.**

Data collection of the interviews also included handwritten notes to remind the researcher of points to follow up on without disturbing the flow of the conversation. The data were later organized in three-column tables (Appendix F) that included the participant pseudonyms, question numbers, responses, and codes. The data were segmented and when pieces were located they were coded by descriptive words (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011;Saldaña, 2009). After coding the text, categories were organized by similar codes, documenting certain statements from the respondents that substantiated the codes (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Saldaña, 2009). The list of codes was then condensed using axial coding (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Once the questionnaires and interviews were coded, along with the archival assessment information, the data were triangulated to see if similar responses were generated by all stakeholder groups. Then the overarching theme was isolated. Trends across data sets were noted. The questionnaire and interview questions solicited staff perceptions while addressing the effects of standardized testing on ELLs, focused instruction on test content and skills and the dedication of class time to teaching test items and test-taking strategies instead of directing attention to the acquisition of academic language. Student interview questions emphasized their perceptions of and experiences with standardized tests.

Chapter three presented an overview of the methodology for the case study and addressed the research questions that steered the study. The chapter illustrated the methodology and instruments employed, specified the criteria for participant selection, and detailed the data collection procedures and the system for data analysis. Chapter four will provide the results related to the research questions. Responses to the questionnaire and interview questions reflected the emerging theme that focused on the misalignment between staff and students' views of testing. Sub-themes were as follows: (a) types of assessments; (b) purposes of assessment; (c) value of assessment and; (d) the impact of assessment. Another theme, although unexpected, revealed that despite my intentions the school ceded to external pressures to engage in assessments.

Chapter 4: Results

When a visitor strolls into the school they will be facing doors that lead to the Commons Area. These entrances hold life size wordles of both the Mission/Vision statements. As well, supplementing them are 17x11 sized posters of the original texts with visuals to enable easy interpretation by non-readers and a quick snapshot of what the school is all about. If the visitors choose to turn left they will walk past the principal's office. If they opt to remain in the hallway, they will note that, bustling with activity and the endless ringing of phones or door buzzers, is the main office to the left. Here they will be asked to get a Visitor's Pass in order to go on with their tour of the Academy. In the Commons Area to the right, depending on the time of day, they will hear the echo of students' laughter and screeching as they participate in physical education classes. Continuing on towards the back of the building, passing a stream of lockers to their left, they will walk by the 5th grade to 1st grade classrooms as well as the library and staff lounge. If visitors had come to the building at the time of the study, they would have seen winter themed bulletin boards: One with polar bears "Fishing for News"; the other one with a cat and rabbit skiing while a bear ice skates. Here the title, "Winter Winners," showcases the weekly celebrations. Then there is the wall of world flags recognizing that "Friends come in many colors." Messages such as these are spotted all the way through to the end of the building. At the end of the hallway are the kindergarten classes where visitors may turn either left or right but left is highly encouraged as it will take them to the outside and towards "the mods" that house the middle school. A ramp leads to the doors that will provide entrance into this private and exclusive domain. The math class faces the Arabic class interspersed with lockers, followed by the science lab opposite the reading room, which is next to the writing class that is in front of the

social studies room. On the wall next to the reading class is a huge mission/vision quilt fashioned and pieced together by creative middle school students.

Located at a distance, easily accessible from the main road, and nestled between majestic houses of worship, are the two buildings that comprise the campus of the Academy. Combined with the surrounding property, they are situated on almost five acres of land. On any given day and contingent on the weather, one will catch the cacophony of youthful sounds coming from the playground behind the main building and adjacent to "the mods." Here, not unlike the rest of the campus, the visitor will be greeted and enveloped by a community of learners as well as all those who play a role in empowering and transforming these young lives.

In order to distance myself from the part I played at the school, I requested personal days to conduct the interviews and accordingly arrived at the school in a sweatshirt, jeans, and sneakers. I also signed in as a visitor and received a Visitor's Pass. As the instructional leader, I was very sensitive to the reality that despite informing staff that their participation in the study would not influence their final evaluations, there may have been some concerns on their part and it may have been reflected in their responses. The staff who had worked with me the previous year were also aware of my perceptions. Namely, the assessment overload on ELLs that in my view impacted the instructional time necessary for them to acquire CALP. Moreover, students' respect for my role as the building principal could have impacted their responses as well, though I perceived the candidness of the input from both groups did not seem to imply that my position was an issue. Finally, the first set of interviews was conducted in a room in another part of the building to further cement the fact that I was detaching myself with the intent to garner responses that would be valid and free of bias or preconceived notions. In spite of placing these safeguards,

it did cross my mind whether the participants were responding in accordance to my views and/or my title.

The teachers are assessed via an evaluation system that includes submitting an electronic portfolio showcasing their work in many areas including that of strategic planning and school improvement. Moreover, they have to demonstrate evidence of their students' academic growth. The latter has been the biggest challenge. As a school we were told by our authorizer that the growth had to be equivalent to one-and-a-half years' worth of academic growth. The rationale behind the expectation was that students were so far behind; intensive efforts were necessary to get them closer to grade level. Staff agreed that rigorous interventions needed to be put into place and concerns lingered around the accountability aspect of student growth. For the most part, contingent on the grade level, the following pieces of student achievement data were required of the teachers: Standardized Assessment and Reporting (STARmath), Dynamic Indictors of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Academic Improvement Measurement System (AIMSweb), IOWA Test of Basic Skills (IOWA), and Performance Series (PS for math and reading). Because the different assessments may have yielded conflicting and/or not comparable results for the students, one had to be cognizant that each of these tests tap into different skills so students may be showing more growth in one test as opposed to other tests. In the last week of the school year (week of June 10th), the atmosphere was weighed down with concerned teachers. As was expected, most students did not attain the expected growth on the PS and teachers who worked so hard, had to face an effectiveness rating well below what the actual reality was. For example, the Response to Intervention (RtI) teachers, who worked with the students in need of the most intervention were disturbed by the results because their students typically scored the lowest in their assessments. At teachers' final summative meetings I had some who questioned how they

were supposed to get their students to grade level when the students came to them so behind and other teachers cried when I shared their educator evaluation rating.

I had been with the group of student participants for two years of standardized assessments. For the PS, our authorizer would recommend we prepare our students for the test with a series of items on a checklist (Appendix H). The day before the state tests, my supervisor and I went around and talked to all 3rd-8th grade students about how to take the tests seriously. We used the MEAP Goal Sheet (Appendix I) that was created by the Michigan Department of Education in their MiMap school improvement tool kit (Michigan Department of Education website, 2014) and helped the students go through the document. I explained the MEAP was a precursor to the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) exam they would be expected to take as high school juniors. We touched on the ACT as well. We also visited with the students when the scores were released. We reviewed their MEAP Reports with them and walked them through a MEAP Reflection form (Appendix J) that asked, among other things, what their goal was for the MEAP for the following year and to check off the activities they needed to do in order to better meet those goals.

I had created the Reflection form at my old school site per my principal's request. In 2011-2012, when my current school was up for reauthorization, through focus group discussions with the students, the authorizer noted that students had not referenced standardized test results. My supervisor and the administration team discussed how to help students establish goals for themselves so that they could be aware of what the state testing entailed. The completed forms were placed in student files to be shared the following year at the pre-MEAP student meetings. I walked the students through each question and asked for suggestions on why they may have done better in some content areas versus others. Students referenced them in the study. A sixth

grader, who brought up the Reflection form on her own, said that "for reading I wrote that I have to do more reading at home." When asked about the MEAP reflections, a seventh grade student stated, "I want to do better than this year. If I got a 2 this year, I want to try to get a 1. If I got a 3, I want to make a 2 and so on." An eighth grader "wrote that if I stayed focused and on topic I could have got all 2's but I did not really try."

Staff recounted that testing influenced classroom content in relation to the absence of academic vocabulary. Archival data, as confirmed by the SIP and additionally validated by the staff, conveyed the lack of growth in the area of academic vocabulary. As Chair of the SIP Team, I had continually emphasized the need to develop students' academic vocabulary. The prior school year (2011-2012), we had determined that the cause for the gap in the content areas was the academic vocabulary and the decision was made that as a school we had to make the curriculum more accessible to the learner. Consequently, strategies were created specifically for ELLs that stated: For math: "Instructional staff will develop math academic language lists by unit for each grade level and "Instructional staff will design practice for students with new words using best practices techniques such as Frayer Model, and Marzano's 6-step method, which both include student-friendly definitions, visuals, and contextualized practice to build math academic language daily" (p. 7). For reading: "Instructional staff will use academic language vocabulary lists to build a common vocabulary base that increases comprehension in the four core subject areas" (Michigan Department of Education, 2012, p. 21). and "Instructional staff will implement the SIOP model, specifically picture vocabulary in order to increase student capacity of vocabulary knowledge" (p.21). In Science: "Instructional staff will develop science academic language lists by unit for each grade level" (p. 35) while in Social Studies: "Instructional staff will develop social studies academic language lists by unit for each grade level" (p. 45).

For example, during MEAP, Kindergarten to second grade does not test. However, they are not free to use the restroom on their own or whole class for fear of causing a disturbance in the hallways that could potentially cause the testing classrooms nearby to be distracted. Classes have to go in small groups thereby causing a longer restroom break and in effect taking more out of their classroom instructional time. Going to and from to the cafeteria have to be strictly monitored for the same reasons and ensuring that passing time is correlated as much with breaks in testing affects the instruction in the K-2 classrooms. Preoccupation with assessment and the role they play in teacher accountability are propagating the testing culture and further distancing the school from our Arabic-speaking ELLs For example, one ESL teacher indicated that "the effects of testing: other than the negative effects on the students, the schools that have a large number of ELL population, the way they are made accountable." The other ESL teacher contended that "emphasis is being placed on standardized test especially with NCLB that has made all these accountability mandates especially on ESL students." The teachers began the year of study with (a) standardized assessment data that revealed students were not achieving, (b) academic vocabulary data indicating students' lack of academic vocabulary, and (c) a directive from the charter school authorizer to decrease the achievement gap.

Seeing as how much time is really depleted when the school is under the testing umbrella, it was not surprising that testing more and teaching less has become the norm. For example, during PS or MEAP, the entire school routine was disturbed from literacy and math blocks, to lunch schedules, to staff duties, to specials' classes that included gym, art, technology, and Arabic. ELA and math blocks were introduced into the daily schedule because of the need to have more time for focused instruction and intervention. As there is only one computer lab, the computer teacher had to conduct instruction in the classrooms during each of the PS windows

since the test is online. The environment was not conducive since students did not have access to their own personal computers. Every day, testing had to be paused during the lunches (for more than four hours) because the computer lab and cafeteria are in close proximity and due to the noise level hindered the testing process. Students were pulled out of their classes when PS tests needed to be completed, accommodated for special education or ELL needs, and made up due to absences or invalid test scores. Assistance of specialists such as the RtI, ESL, Special Education staff that was better served in their areas of need, was borrowed to provide additional proctoring due to extended time, one-on-one support, translations, and so on. One ESL teacher remarked, "A lot of the ESL students could have benefitted from receiving services in the classroom with the teacher were pulled out missed all of that because they have to be subjected to these standardized tests." Therefore, instruction was yet again interrupted to be either re-taught to those who missed the lesson or re-configured from whole class instruction to group or individual work or some such pattern. New lessons had to be halted or slowed down. Given the time spent on assessment together with the additional conditions under which testing occurred, the cessation of assessment led to the expansion of the testing window and thereby robbed more instructional time from the Arabic-speaking ELLs.

For Day I of the Writing MEAP, the fifth graders were bussed to a field trip so their rooms could be used to test the seventh graders. Since we typically do not plan field trips during the state testing window, the trip was intentional for the purpose of administering the assessment. To make it more educational and relevant for the 5th graders as they would be taking the science MEAP, we had them visit a science hands on museum. Lunches for the remainder of the students were held in the classrooms which required more staff and coordination of the lunch procedures because students travelling to and from the cafeteria would have to pass the fourth and seventh

grade classes that were testing. To accommodate the MEAP Reading Day I and MEAP Math schedules, middle school students were dismissed early so that the younger grades could have their lunches at the times that were regularly scheduled for the middle school lunch. All in all, time that could have been otherwise allocated to instruction was being used to ensure the logistics of testing were in place and students were afforded equal opportunities to test.

In January 2013, the SIP Team, in an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the SIP strategies, compiled data on the school improvement strategies. For the one pertaining to academic vocabulary, over a five week period, the middle school teachers pre-assessed academic vocabulary and then a post-assessment followed once instruction was complete. While not specific to ELLs, for both the pre and post assessments, all twenty-six, sixth grade students, of which twenty-two were ELLs, did not show any growth in their acquisition of academic vocabulary as they remained at zero percent. Seventh grade initially had two percent of its students demonstrating proficiency in academic vocabulary and moved to seven percent after the allocated time period. Eighth grade began with nineteen percent grade level proficient students and dropped to sixteen percent. From SIP meeting discussions it was assumed that the strategies may not have been used with fidelity. Since the scores showed little to no growth, a unanimous decision was made to keep the strategy for the 2013-2014 school year in all content areas and to make the activities (i.e., the Frayer Model (Reading Educator website, 2014) and Marzano's Six-Step Method (Marzano & Pickering, 2005) more focused and intentional as they both included the practice of student-friendly definitions, visuals, and contextualized practice to build academic language daily.

During the study, lack of academic vocabulary was noted. The curriculum coordinator stated that "…if the ELL does not have enough…academic vocabulary, they're not going to be

able to fully produce what they know on that test." In addition, when questioned about how the different assessments impacted teaching, the coordinator said that with respect to DIBELS and AIMSweb "they don't have enough of the academic vocabulary enough of the word meaning to digest what the question is asking of them" When asked about the impact of testing on the ELLs one of the ESL teachers remarked that "these tests use a lot of academic vocabulary and ESL students do not have the understanding or the knowledge of these academic terms like compare/contrast, describe, apply." The teacher further indicated that the tests are challenging for the students because

> …the academic vocabulary that is in the test is harder for the students to understand. They do not know the words such as differentiate, describe, classify. And if they don't understand those words I don't think they can take the test

The other ESL teacher gave an example of her student's reaction to the MEAP writing prompt. The teacher shared

> …the student said, there is nothing I can do. For me, it is perfect. I cannot even write something like that. How do you want me to improve this writing? At the end, that is exactly what he wrote. He said: "I think this text is excellent and I don't see any mistakes. I can't even do this."

Staff were later questioned about whether they had seen any evidence of their ELLs taking tests in English before they had mastered the language, the ESL teacher said, "as they are gaining instruction, they are taking these tests" and when prompted about what she meant by instruction specifically, the ESL teacher replied, "instruction in learning the language, in getting access to some of the fancy academic vocabulary that has been exposed in these tests." The reading teacher additionally claimed that "…if you do not know the academic vocabulary, it does

not matter how smart you are or how well you can read…" Staff perceptions about the lack of academic vocabulary were reflected in their responses because some believed it impacted their teaching as that we were testing them when they were still in the process of learning the language.

The purpose of the current study was to answer the following research questions: (a) According to staff and student perceptions, what is the impact of standardized testing on Arabic-speaking ELLs? (b) According to staff perceptions, what are the consequences of testing on instructional time? The investigation included four teachers, the curriculum coordinator, the assessment coordinator, and six ELL students who were in the high intermediate range based on the state's language proficiency assessment. The data were comprised of: (a) archival data; (b) interviews and; (c) questionnaire data. The overarching theme that emerged from the data was the misalignment between staff and students views of testing with regard to the: (a) kinds of testing; (b) purposes of testing; (c) value placed on testing; and (d) impact of testing (Table 2); An unexpected finding that surfaced was also the misalignment between my intentions and the school's capitulation to the cycle of standardized testing.

Table 2
Misalignment between staff and students' views of testing

	Staff	Students
	NAEP EXPLORE MEAP ELPA Screener ELPA Running Records STARmath AIMSweb DIBELS Performance Series IOWA	ACT SAT EXPLORE MEAP ELPA STARmath AIMSweb Performance Series Chapter/Unit Tests

	*Performance Based *Teacher Observations *Student Portfolios *Other (Regular Classroom Assessments) *Paper and Pencil Questions *Essay Questions *Oral Questioning	
Purposes	To hold teachers accountable To diagnose Measure progress Guide instruction	To diagnose To plan
Value	Positive and Negative	Positive
Impact	Negative	Positive

*Questionnaire Responses

Theme: Misalignment Between Staff and Students' Views of Testing

There was a misalignment between staff and students' views of testing. Whereas staff for the most part saw testing as detrimental to their classroom instruction, the students conversely saw testing as a component of the ongoing instructional process. The findings reflected the differences of opinion between staff and students on what constituted assessment, the manner in which the purpose of testing was interpreted by the participants, whether testing had any significance, and the impact testing had on students and staff.

Types of assessments. Every year students are expected to perform on a variety of standardized tests beginning the first week of school and ending the last week of May (which is two weeks before the end of the school year). Though staff interview responses focused on standardized testing, there was the concern that the responses could have been the result of the questionnaire where the title and the bulk of the questions focused on standardized tests.

However, the participants were given ample opportunities to share their experiences with other forms of assessment such as performance based, teacher observations, student portfolios and other. Staff were also requested to indicate their assessment practices with respect to the different kinds of tests (i.e., paper and pencil, essay, student portfolios, oral questioning, and teacher observations) offered in the questionnaire. In their interviews, staff named only those assessments that qualified as standardized tests perhaps because the assessments impacted instructional time. The fourth grade teacher, though she did not list the chapter/unit tests, when asked how testing impacted learning time did state, "regular classroom tests fit in fine because they go with the lesson."

When presented with the types of assessments on the questionnaire, staff acknowledged them, but when asked in an interview setting to list the assessments they administered, they did not mention them even though they had already completed the questionnaires. In their interviews, staff and students listed the different kinds of assessments that the students were required to participate in at the school. Just as with the staff, students named the same tests. However, unlike the staff, students additionally referred to their chapter/unit tests and high school tests when asked to list the types of assessments they took.

Staff. In the first portion of the questionnaire, staff were asked their degree of agreement or disagreement with regard to standardized testing. Though the questionnaire bore the title, "Standardized Testing of ELL Students," teachers were given the opportunity to rate alternate tools of assessment. Most of the respondents ranked student portfolios to be effective or the most effective means of assessing their students. Teacher observations were the next and performance based were last. However, one teacher ranked, "regular classroom tests," which she wrote in the "other" category as her most effective means of assessing.

Moreover, the questionnaire's closed-ended questions denoted the staff's assessment practices in terms of testing their ELL students' performance. Staff were requested to select from a set number of responses that were prearranged and had identical response categories. All of the respondents indicated they used paper and pencil questions to assess at least once a week. Two out of seven utilized essay questions at least once a week, while two did so once or twice a month, two noted that it was used once or twice a year and one never employed it. All participants orally questioned their students as a means of assessing them at least once a week. Two of the seven staff members used student portfolios at least once a week. One noted that they used them once or twice a month and fifty-seven percent made use of them once or twice a year. All respondents indicated that they informally observed their students at least once a week (Table 3). The last two questions were specific about standardized tests. In contrast, respondents estimated they spent sixteen or more hours giving standardized tests while more than half noted ten or more days were interrupted due to standardized testing.

Table 3
Staff Identification of Assessments

Assessment Practices	At Least Once a Week	Once or Twice a Month	Once or Twice a Year	Sixteen or More Hours	Ten or More Hours	Never
Paper and Pencil Questions	7					
Essay Questions	2	2	2			1
Oral Questioning	**7**					
Student Portfolios	2	1	4			
Teacher Observations	**7**					
Standardized Tests				6	**7**	

In the interviews, all staff identified the following tests: Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA), and PS. Four also included the IOWA while the curriculum coordinator was the only one who noted the ELPA Screener. The reading teacher and assessment coordinator additionally brought up the 8th grade EXPLORE. Four listed STARmath and three named AIMSweb. Both the curriculum and assessment coordinators listed DIBELS. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) came up in the conversation with the fourth grade teacher (whose class was randomly selected by the Michigan Department of Education to take the test) and the assessment coordinator. The fourth grade teacher mentioned Running Records as well. Appendix E provides a brief description of the standardized assessments.

Students. Students were asked what different tests they had to take at school and depending on their grade level, their responses reflected the assessments they participated in. All stated that they took the MEAP and PS. A seventh grader also noted the SAT. The sixth and eighth graders and one seventh grader shared STARmath and AIMSweb in their responses. Both sixth, one seventh and one eighth grader listed some of their chapter/unit tests including those they took in their Arabic classes. The eighth graders brought up the EXPLORE. One eighth grade student could not name the test, he was able to describe that was for the eighth graders; the test he was explaining was EXPLORE.

Though staff and students equally specified assessments occurring at the school, the students however named others not listed by the teachers. The mention of SAT and chapter/unit tests was only present in the discussions with the students. Staff and students also differed in what they perceived to be the purposes of testing.

Purposes of assessment. While staff and students both viewed the goal of testing as diagnostic and consequently as a tool given so that their teachers learned about their students' level of knowledge and skills; staff also identified the purpose of standardized testing as instruments of accountability. Accountability, and the important decisions that may come in the form of punishments or rewards, was the notion of holding our school, staff, and increasingly students, responsible for individual performance. Students conversely indicated that assessments played a role in their lives long term and would benefit them. Per three students, testing facilitated the path through high school, college and to some extent, life-long goals. For example, an eighth grade student thought testing was a good thing and "helps you out in the future." Another eighth grader noted that EXPLORE was "…about like your career, your math skills and what you want to be when you grow up."

Staff. Whereas staff identified the purposes of assessment were to diagnose students areas of strengths and weaknesses, measure progress, guide instruction, respondents also maintained that testing held teachers accountable. Staff noted that one purpose of testing was for accountability because assessments held teachers and schools responsible for the results. In the questionnaire all agreed that the school was accountable to the state reading test and that the consequences of low state test scores were high. Six of the staff further agreed or strongly agreed that the consequences of low state test scores are high such that schools with a large population of immigrants are often identified as failures even though their students have shown progress. In the interviews, one of the ESL teachers stated that it was the MEAP that the, "…school is most accountable for" and "…the schools that have a large number of ELL population…they are made accountable." The teacher stressed that "focus should be on getting them higher levels in the proficiency of English first and then making them accountable for testing…" The other ESL

teacher said that, "emphasis is being placed on standardized tests especially with NCLB that has made all these accountability mandates especially on ESL." The fourth grade teacher additionally claimed that she understood "…that schools need to be held accountable and perform some kind of standardized tests to prove they are meeting the goals of the state." The same teacher also referenced her newcomer who

> was also held accountable for Performance Series math and didn't even know the numbers even in the English language… That score is going to reflect on me as a teacher and also on her as a student…it will show her progression over the years but I think at this point she should not have been held accountable…when she just came to the States

One ESL teacher declared, "in our school, we have almost 70%, if we have plenty of newcomers and they do not score well on the test that would affect the scores." The teacher additionally remarked that within a year, they will only reach basic or low intermediate level, which will not enable them to be proficient on standardized tests. In effect, the school will remain handicapped in the race for accountability.

Questionnaire responses revealed that six staff members disagreed with the notion that test scores were used in ways that supported ELLs' academic progress. Six also disagreed that standardized assessments provided information that helped ELLs learning. In the interviews, all staff suggested other purposes of tests included diagnostic and guided instruction. Four also indicated that testing helped in determining the progress students made. When discussing the different tests, the middle school reading teacher stated that AIMSweb is at the students' "…grade level and they try to figure out where the students are and what we could do help them reach grade level if they are not where they should be." An ESL teacher explained that the "ELPA results…show you what levels…you can target the weak areas accordingly." In contrast,

the curriculum coordinator declared that AIMSweb "…may not truly reflect the gains that a student has made and may not show areas of weakness where students need help" and also differentiated between the diagnostic and progress monitoring tests and labelled them as such. In her interview, the curriculum coordinator further noted that an effect of testing is "the ability for staff … and students to use tests as a consistently positive measure of their progress…"

In their questionnaire responses, the ESL teachers provided examples of how standardized testing helped them to improve the quality of instruction in their classrooms or for particular students. One teacher stated the following: "ELPA provides individual student reports…can be helpful to identify areas in need of improvement." The other one said, "…I retrieved the results of each student, identified the objectives that were met and the suggested objectives to work on…to modify instruction, and accommodate the needs of each student." Furthermore, both coordinators talked about individualized instruction versus whole class in their interview responses. The assessment coordinator declared that re-teaching in terms of the PS test results was "based on their individual goals, what they needed to work on…whole class instruction was more for MEAP and individualized came from PS." The curriculum coordinator addressed the notion of individualized instruction as she said that assessment "takes away from valuable instruction that is molded to fit a particular student." When prompted about how DIBELS impacted her teaching, one of the ESL teachers asserted that it "helps me design my lessons."

Students. Students were asked to identify the purpose of each of the tests they had listed. For the most part, similar to the teachers, students deemed that the purpose of testing was also diagnostic because teachers want to know where their students are academically with the purpose of bringing those students to where they need to be. Moreover, specific students also spoke to the

role that tests played in their future. The staff did not mention the high school assessments in either their questionnaire or interview responses.

A sixth grader said that the PS was "to help you with some stuff that you do not know about…like you may not know questions from a long time ago that you may know now." The student further identified what "…you may know now" as the ability to "analyze a story." An eighth grade student stated that for AIMSweb "if you do good on the reading or not she might take you and help you and you might get improved." One seventh grader noted that the STARmath "would help me with my math skills…. Tell the teacher what I have learned so far and what I need to learn more so that the teacher teaches me more of that thing." For MEAP the same student maintained that it was "for the state to learn what you have learned in the past year when you were in school and if you don't do so good it's not bad…The teachers will teach you more and it helps you learn new things." Another seventh grader said that MEAP was "so as a school they can put us at levels that we can read…So that the teachers can help us know where to help us."

The other facet that emerged out of the findings was one of the eighth graders and one seventh grader addressed the relationship between the standardized assessments, high school and their future. One seventh grader noted that "in high school, you have to take the SAT." An eighth grader asked whether the EXPLORE was,

> about the ACT in high school. Isn't the ACT you have to get 21 or higher? So to see what we would get right now and then to improve and to see what we would get on the ACT in high school

An eighth grader while identifying that the purpose of chapter/unit tests was "to help you succeed when you go to high school cause you are not going to know anything if you are not

going to take the test," in addition claimed that EXPLORE "is about like your career, your math skills and what you want to be when you grow up" and identified the MEAP as "…a state test so it will follow you into college."

Students were invited to describe what happened when they did well on a test. Answers included that "you get good grades," "you get awarded for it" "you do well in life" and "…it will help you in the future." When asked what would happen if the students did not do well on a test, responses were, "lowers your scores," "you don't do well in life, you don't succeed," "you will have to study harder, try not to talk in class and focus on the topic," "if I don't do well then I get a bad grade and I would have to talk to my parents about it and I would have to study a lot more."

The questionnaire and interview responses demonstrated that there was a misalignment between staff and students' views on the purpose of testing. Though the staff and students deemed it to offer both information and shape what teachers did and how students learned, the staff also saw testing for accountability purposes. In contrast, some students identified the purpose of assessments was to prepare them for high school, college and beyond.

The value of testing. There was a discrepancy between staff and students views on the value placed on testing and test results. Staff believed that standardized testing was neither helping schools nor effectively measuring the key learning objectives for their students. Alternatively, like they did for the purposes of assessment, students perceived testing as a means to facilitate their learning. The students unanimously thought there was nothing wrong with being tested and, in fact, they only viewed it as a means to an end—the end being the support they required to do better in school.

Staff. In both the questionnaires and interviews, staff placed limited value on testing. On the questionnaire, most staff responded that they did not believe standardized tests had any significance as measures of student performance. The fourth grade teacher wrote, "I don't believe standardized test scores provide an accurate picture of each individual student's learning abilities/capabilities." Moreover, whereas two agreed that standardized tests were a fair evaluation tool for all learners, five were of the opinion that they were not. While one remained neutral, six disagreed that test scores were used in ways that supported ELL students' academic progress and that they provided information that helped ELL students' learning.

On the questionnaire, it was only when asked directly to provide one or two examples of how standardized testing had helped them to improve the quality of education in their classrooms or for particular students, did the staff write for example, that the tests identified "areas in need of improvement" and enabled "…teachers to identify skill or knowledge gaps and focus instruction to fill them." In spite of this, there was no indication on the part of the staff of the assessments leading to improved educational outcomes for students. The assessment coordinator made it a point to write that "it has not helped to improve the quality of education in my classroom." In the same manner staff listed the numerous challenges faced by the ELLs and the negative influence the tests had on teaching and student learning. In general, the responses focused on the amount of time testing took away from learning and the stress the tests created for the students.

For the interview question asking staff to describe how their students responded to the different tests (Appendix E), the curriculum coordinator shared the following "AIMSweb: goes in one eye and out the other. MEAP: I think the students are never really sure what hit them. ELPA: I think the students are very often wondering what that is…" One ESL teacher asserted

that "especially for the newcomers, some of the students I felt get really frustrated and they are really scared when they take the ELPA." The other one shared, "For ESL students particularly it is very challenging for them to be subjected to these tests." The fourth grade teacher maintained

> MEAP: something we have to do. Students know this. STARmath: does not take that long and is usually once. We're testing too much, we should do the necessaries.
>
> STARmath: do not need to do if we are doing PS.

For the question on how much their students knew about testing, responses included: "sometimes they don't know," "Not much. Students need to know more" and, "… they don't know as much as they should." However, one teacher stated, "they know a lot about testing because they are being tested all the time."

The reading teacher additionally noted that even with the test prepping curriculum, DREAM (Drop Everything And MEAP), she felt that "…we are not teaching them new material…we're teaching them how to take all these tests." The reading teacher stressed that she had to teach to the test and "DREAM is a great example because we are going over passages and things like that with our students that will be helpful for them for the test" and "…we do at least four weeks of DREAM and we have DREAM at the end of the year." DREAM was the school-wide initiative to remediate low-performing standards and practice MEAP assessment tasks.

Students DREAMed to get ready before the MEAP. Spending a month each in the fall and spring and focusing exclusively on class work and homework assignments that replicated MEAP with attention to the low-performing Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) was not only getting the students prepped for the state test but also taking time away from instruction.

The reading teacher said

> I feel like every couple of weeks or every month or so we have another assessment where students are being pulled out or where I have to unfortunately, I have to teach to the test. DREAM is a great example…

Moreover, the PS packets that were created on the advice of the authorizer were based off the students' areas of weakness and replicated the kinds of questions students would face in their next testing session. Since the packets counted for a grade and students were not completing them for homework, many teachers began to use them in the class and substituted them for a portion of time that would otherwise be used for instruction in math or reading. The reading teacher for PS she stressed that "I feel like it's all that I do. Using the EdPerformance packets…" and questioned, "Is it to help the students get a better EdPerformance score or is it to help them with their grade level math and reading?"

Students. When asked what they thought about testing, two of the six students were of the opinion that it was a "good idea" or a "good thing." Students seemed to see the value in standardized tests because it demonstrated how much they had learned and to determine the ways in which teachers could help them. Responses included: "to see if you have improved," "to make you more smarter," "to see what I am learning in school," "…what you know and what you learned," "so the teachers can know where we are at," "so they can teach us more," "you test us so that you guys learn what we know and if we don't know a lot you guys would teach us a lot more."

With respect to the value placed on standardized testing there was a disconnect between the two sets of respondents. Staff were of the opinion that the assessments actually hindered the progress they were striving for in their classrooms. Student responses reflected that the assessments ensured whether the students were meeting their full learning potential.

Impact of testing. Staff frequently stated they faced many challenges in teaching ELLs due to standardized tests. The findings brought attention to the influence that testing had on classroom instruction, test preparation methods, time spent on testing, ELL's lack of opportunity to learn, and, the manner in which it impacted content, specifically with regards to the academic vocabulary. Furthermore, staff maintained that testing produced anxiety and fear of failure on tests. However, as previously noted students saw value in being tested because, per their responses, the tests presented students with what they should know and be able to do.

Test preparation methods. Staff communicated their test preparation methods that involved administering practice tests and teaching test-taking strategies, together with reviewing, re-teaching and tutoring. Though no one specified a time frame, there was mandatory re-teaching and tutoring that was established by the school for math and reading each morning for almost twenty to twenty-five minutes. Terms such as, "prep," "prepare," "getting ready," "teaching to the test," "teach to the test," or "teaching for the test" were shared on a number of occasions in both the questionnaires and interviews by all of the staff. Testing preparation activities also included references to DREAM.

The assessment coordinator claimed that MEAP and PS impacted her teaching the most since "…we take the low performing GLCEs and add those…to our warm ups or adding another unit to re-teach the low scoring GLCEs across the board…we do re-teaching based on a whole" and that "the sixth grade needed to work on this based on the lowest scoring GLCEs or Common Core standards for MEAP." The assessment coordinator also recalled that when she used to teach, students would "do problems they would see on the ACT or EXPLORE…" during her math class and that "we are teaching everything to the test." The curriculum coordinator additionally noted that testing "distorts curriculum by forcing curriculum to be bent in the

direction of a particular skill set and a particular genre." The coordinator also noted that "the minute a student has learned something, it's tested and quantified and then the student is re-evaluated and re-assessed" and that "teachers…teach to the test because MEAP requires a very specific skill set and it requires specific types of responses…attempt to give students those specific skills that enable them to respond to MEAP as a particular genre."

The fourth grade teacher stated that for the MEAP "…the first month [of the school year] until October strictly focuses on MEAP preparation…A huge focus of mine is the writing…we are going to for third grade MEAP, prep at the end of the year specifically for the writing." One of the ESL teachers asserted that "…during our teaching time before the MEAP…We are trying to teach most likely the questions that will be coming on the test." The reading teacher further remarked that she used "… the EdPerformance packets to prep students to make sure they can do the work at their level. I have to do tutoring to help the students" and questioned as well whether PS preparation worksheet packets were "…to help the students get a better score or is it to help them with their grade level math and reading?" The science teacher additionally stated, "I know the basics of standardized tests and I have started wording certain questions on assessment in a way that correlates with the test."

Staff reported that emphasis on the results of standardized assessments influenced the teaching that occurred in preparation for the tests because emphasis was on skills that would be tested. Test preparation encompassed a range of school mandated activities that were planned to prepare students to demonstrate their knowledge when they took the standardized assessments and thereby increase their scores. Staff also stressed that valuable instructional time was lost due to the test preparation activities.

Time spent on testing. The study solicited participant feedback on the number of times each test was administered annually, as well as enumerated the test-taking times. Using the assessment schedules for the 2012-2013 school year (Appendix G) it was calculated that 6th grade spent more than 805-835 minutes/student testing, 7th grade tested for greater than 983-1,013 minutes/student and 8th grade assessed over 910-975 minutes/student. In addition, the DREAM schedule as established by the curriculum coordinator, allocated twenty days in the fall (September 4-October 9) and twenty days in the spring (May 20-June 14) to the test preparation initiative. Staff declared that some issues with standardized tests were in part due to the ELLs' lack of opportunity to learn because time spent on test administrations decreased instructional time by the same amount.

The school had a total of 1, 179.5 hours based on a calculation of 6.7 hours times 176 days for the 2012-2013 year. The following was used to determine the percentage of the year used for test and test preparation activities: For example, for 6^{th} grade there were 805-835 minutes per the testing schedule in Appendix G. That calculated to 13.4 hours and then DREAM's forty days times about 6.7 hours/day which equaled to two-hundred and sixty-eight hours. The number of hours testing (i.e., 13.4) added to two-hundred and sixty-eight hours equaled 293.4 hours. This was divided by 1,179.5 to get about 24%. Using the information with regards to the number of instructional hours in the school year and the number of minutes per student being consumed due to testing and prepping, it is estimated to be about on average 24% of the school year based on teachers' perceptions of time spent on test preparations and testing. Staff questioned whether ELLs were afforded appropriate opportunities to demonstrate what they really knew. In essence, teachers perceived that loss of instructional time translated into limited support offered to the ELLs. Students' answers encompassed their perceptions of the amount of

testing they believed they were experiencing. Time spent on test preparation and administration reduced instructional time.

Staff. Staff frequently reported spending large amounts of time on testing. The fourth grade teacher claimed that for ELPA "…we missed a day of learning in the morning" and for NAEP, since it occurred around the time of ELPA it was "…losing another day of instruction." The NAEP state contact had given the school the date for NAEP administration. The fourth grade teacher related that "pulling from the class time, the interruptions…were the down sides." Table 4 demonstrates the timeline of assessments and Appendix G contains the actual schedules per test.

Table 4

Timeline of Test Administration

Month	Grades	Assessments	Duration (Hours)
September	3rd-8th	Performance Series Reading	55 minutes
	3rd-8th	Performance Series Math	55 minutes
	K-8th (New ELLs only)	ELPA Screener	1.0
	6th-8th	AIMSweb (Universal Screening)	3.0
	6th-8th	STARmath (Universal Screening)	2.0
October	3rd-8th	MEAP Reading	3.5
	3rd-8th	MEAP Math	1.5-2.0
	6th	MEAP Social Studies	1.5
	7th	MEAP Writing	7.0

	8th	MEAP Science	2.0
January	3rd-8th	Performance Series Reading	55 minutes
	3rd-8th	Performance Series Math	55 minutes
	6th-8th	AIMSweb (Universal Screening)	3.0
	1st-8th	STARmath (Universal Screening)	2.0
February	4th	NAEP	1.5
March	8th	EXPLORE	2.0
	K-8th (ELLs only)	ELPA	3.0
April	K-8th (ELLs only)	ELPA	3.0
May	2nd-8th	Performance Series Reading	55 minutes
	2nd-8th	Performance Series Math	55 minutes
	1st	IOWA	3.0
	6th-8th	AIMSweb (Universal Screening)	3.0
	6th-8th	STARmath (Universal Screening)	2.0

The curriculum coordinator stated that "a very large amount of teacher time is devoted to MEAP" and when combined with the district test, "the sum is about three months each." ELPA

likewise "requires a huge amount of time" where it "…is almost two full days for classroom teachers and then two weeks of testing for support staff and assessment staff to finish listening and speaking" that are "demanding in terms of time." The curriculum coordinator also maintained that for PS, it took "weeks…three months of time the kids are out of the class." The reading teacher estimated that "forty percent of our school year is testing" and that at least once a month there is going to be some sort of testing going on with my kids." The assessment coordinator similarly reiterated that "they are being tested every month" and that the district test was "three times a year and the kids do three days for each time so that is nine days for Performance Series per kid at least." Moreover, when further prompted for an estimate on the number of hours for the different tests, the assessment coordinator said that for the MEAP, they typically schedule "four hours…per day so that is like sixteen hours and we do it in four days…" while for ELPA it "was about four hours of testing and then we had to pull them out to do the speaking portion. I would say four to five hours of testing but it took a good month to get all the testing…per pupil." NAEP was "one day for ninety minutes" and EXPLORE "was one day for four hours…one hundred and twenty minutes of testing."

One of the ESL teachers wrote in her questionnaire, "During MEAP testing, I spent more than twenty-five hours testing ELLs…as a consequence, the testing period extended for more than two full weeks." The teacher was referring to the amount of time she spent assessing the students. When asked the interview question, "How do you see testing impacting learning time?" the same teacher also stated that "the testing time is taking away from instructional time" and she said that "during the MEAP…I don't remember how many hours, but it took plenty of instructional time that could be spent to teach instead of testing." The other ESL teacher said "it takes away students' learning time" and when prompted for further details, she asserted that "the

time could be spent on learning…instruction time is taken away because students get pulled for testing especially for ESL since we provide accommodations to ESL students we are pulling them away so it's taking a lot of their time that could be otherwise spent…like Michael (a fifth grade student) we spent four days for him just because he wasn't getting the grasp of the test… so those four days he could have done…something more constructive." The fourth grade teacher noted that for STARmath you "have to cut something out of your day…then your schedule is put behind…you're behind in your curriculum maps."

The assessment coordinator also commented that "it takes away from the learning time…the curriculum is rushed because there is not enough teaching days in relation to how much we have to get done." The reading teacher indicated that standardized testing

> impacts learning time because it takes away from what I really need to be doing…I'm behind at least three or four weeks and it's because of all the testing…all the re-testing, all the make-ups take away from my instructional time…each assessment impacts my teaching because they take away from all the teaching I need to do.

Respondents were asked to approximate the amount of time spent administering the different types of assessments recorded in Table 2. In the questionnaire, when staff were provided with choices for estimating how much time they spent giving standardized tests, the participants indicated between four to seventeen or more hours, while six to eleven or more days had been interrupted as a result of administering standardized tests. In their interviews, staff were asked how much testing was going on. With respect to MEAP, one ESL teacher said that she did not remember "how many hours, but it took plenty of instructional time that could be spent to teach instead of testing." The other ESL teacher indicated that "we take away a lot of time from our instruction to pull out students for the test." When asked about how much testing is going on

for MEAP she further noted "a week for each subject. When the ESL teacher was further prompted to identify how much time from the beginning to the end of MEAP testing, she replied, "…if we say four days for one subject then it would put us down to five weeks."

The fourth grade teacher said that "It's two weeks to take the MEAP test and then make-ups." NAEP was "all morning," STARmath "takes maybe half hour or an hour," DIBELS "like ten minutes." When asked how often the students take the STARmath and DIBELS, she responded "the first Wednesday of each month they do STARmath and DIBELS…we do them as a whole class at the beginning of the year, middle of the year and end." The teacher stated that since PS occurs at the "beginning, middle and end of the year…[it] can actually impact the class quite a bit." The curriculum coordinator addressed this as well when she said that the assessments for progress monitoring take "…away from valuable instruction…" and that STARmath took "one or two weeks of teachers in an out of classrooms…and taking hours of classroom time." The curriculum coordinator further claimed that "over half of our time is spent assessing…maybe let's say sixty to seventy percent of our time is spent assessing." Per the assessment coordinator, AIMSweb "…is done in about twenty to thirty minutes…we do it three times for all middle school grades…it takes a good week to do it…so it takes three weeks out of the year." STARmath was the "same three weeks."

Students. Students were questioned about the amount of time spent on testing. When initially asked, a sixth grader responded "one hour and thirty minutes." After some prodding the sixth grader was able to break it down further per test. At first, the other sixth grader noted, "one hour for each test" and then included some particulars on each test. One of the eighth graders was asked how much time he thought he spent on testing; he stated "I think a long time." The other eighth grader claimed "I do not really know but I bet it is a lot." The seventh grader said "a

lot" and when urged to provide hours, he declared, "like two days…five tests per week." In effect, the students did not really know how much time they spent testing.

Besides both groups of respondents maintaining that there was plenty of testing occurring at the school, the students had a difficult time estimating when asked how much they spent on testing. For example, more often than not, students spoke in terms of "days" when it came to MEAP, PS, ELPA and EXPLORE. With respect to the universal screening assessments, students were close in their judgments about the number of minutes. Staff, on the other hand, were offered choices in their questionnaires so they could pinpoint how many hours they spent giving standardized tests and how many days had been interrupted due to giving the assessments. In their interview questions staff were asked "how much testing is going on?" Some included the preparation time as well in their responses. For example, the assessment coordinator said, "the most prep is for MEAP but now this year we are doing all the PS packets so a lot more emphasis on PS." One of the ESL teachers wrote in her questionnaire, "standardized testing consumes considerable instruction time and requires planning/preparation from compliance to testing to shipment."

The students and staff both contended that a great deal of time was spent on testing. Staff additionally noted that test preparation activities such as DREAM also impacted the amount of learning occurring in the classroom. Staff further maintained that because both factors translated into less time afforded to ELLs to learn, the ELLs were being shortchanged in a number of areas including the one pertaining to the academic vocabulary that is the essential component for demonstrating success in schools.

As stated by the staff, challenges in teaching ELLs included the impact that testing had on classroom instruction, the means of test preparation, time devoted to testing, and ELL's lack

of opportunity to learn. Another issue reiterated throughout the questionnaire and interview responses reflected the affective relationship of testing.

Affective relationship of testing. As with the misalignment between staff and students' views about testing, there was also a misalignment between the two groups with respect to the issues of self-esteem and confidence. While the staff repeatedly conveyed how testing impacted the students negatively, the students, however, viewed assessment as a motivation for emotional responses that encompassed both positive and negative reactions. As such, not only did assessment impact students but also the processes by which the students aligned testing to learning experiences. Whereas the staff communicated perceptions of their students' experiences with testing and testing practices, the ELL participants shared their first-hand experiences, real-life impact, and feelings about being tested and testing practices. Students additionally relayed the role their families played with respect to their reactions to the students' test performances.

Self-esteem and confidence. Despite the fact that staff were overwhelmingly of the opinion that testing hindered their students' self-esteem and confidence, the students viewed assessment differently. The study afforded ELLs the opportunity to share their personal and subjective opinions and views regarding standardized assessments. The responses generated descriptions that were factors in not only recognizing students' experiences but also in identifying the impact that standardized testing had on the ELLs. A range of emotions, as experienced by the students, included but were not limited to: satisfaction, anxiety, and confidence level.

When staff were asked how their students responded to the assessments, focus was on "issues of self-esteem" and other like terms, such as "disconnected," "anxiety," "frustration," "feelings of inadequacy." One of the ESL teachers maintained that "ELLs receiving pull out

services were feeling disconnected…there was an issue of self-esteem…they did not want to be singled out." The teacher further shared her newcomers' experiences about taking the state required language test in that

> …they are really scared when they take the ELPA because for the first time when they come into the country they are newcomers and we put them in a room and its already all a culture shock…they get scared because they think if they can't do well on the test we're going to put them one grade lower or they are going to be expelled from the school

The assessment coordinator asserted that "…they are just very anxious. They don't want to participate as much because they feel they are going to be wrong and will be made fun of." The curriculum coordinator noted "if students get low scores, they either get low esteem or they decide not to care."

The other ESL teacher stated that testing "affects their level of self-confidence when they are taking the test and they see themselves as maybe failing or not being competent." The fourth grade teacher asserted that "I do not like to see them feeling like they are failing when they are trying so hard." The reading teacher said she thought that the tests "give students the idea that if they don't know how to take a test, they are gonna be a failure" and they "make them feel stupid because they look at this stuff and they see all their classmates doing it and they can't do it so that automatically means they are stupid to them…" The same teacher declared, "I've noticed it in the sense that they get very frustrated. Something that causes stress for them just because it is one more way for them to fail something in school…" The reading teacher shared her insight into ELLs taking tests in English before they have mastered the language by stating that it also "…puts pressure on them because they are realizing that it's taking them a lot longer and they

are having a harder time than their classmates. I can only imagine what that does for their self-esteem and their confidence."

Though it was only three teachers who commented that they tried to allay students' fears about testing, for the most part, attempts were regularly made to assuage student levels of anxiety. Occasionally, staff has brought students to me and we have had conversations on how all will be fine and we are simply asking them to try their best. The fourth grade teacher stated that for the NAEP she "…tried to get them excited, I tried to tell them what it was about and explain why but you could tell that going into it they were not excited, they didn't want to try their best." The teacher also exclaimed that

> with so much testing students stop trying so hard. You can see a decrease in the enthusiasm even if you give rewards or congratulate them or show encouragement, it doesn't work after a while. You have to find new inventive ways to get them excited…You can see kind of the sigh of breath come out when you say we're doing STARmath. They don't want to do it but they do it because we explain the reasons; we try to tell them why we're doing it, they understand but you can see that after you've done like four tests within two to three weeks they are done

One of the ESL teachers additionally explained that "If I know their native language I tell them it is OK" and the other gave the example of Michael where they "had to kind of talk to him about it."

When questioned on what the students thought about testing and how it made them feel, a sixth grade student who had included chapter/unit tests in her responses also indicated that it was a "good idea…because you can see what level you are." The student also said that it made her feel "good…because I could see if I am a high level or low." The other sixth grader noted that it

made her "…happy because if you get a good score you can pass sixth grade" and "mad because you get a bad score." One of the seventh grade students claimed that

> …testing makes me feel worried because if I get a bad grade then I can get punished or I would have to study more and my parents would have to go talk to the teachers and I would have to get more studying papers

Terms such as, "nervous," and "excited" appeared in the student interview transcripts to describe their feelings about receiving their scores. For example, a sixth grade student shared that she was "nervous because I don't know what I got." An eighth grade student claimed that he had "…butterflies in my stomach, I feel nervous" and for the MEAP he "…was kind of excited to go home and my Mom was kind of excited when she saw the scores," while a seventh grade student was "… kind of excited to get the scores…" for all his tests.

Role of families. From my limited exchanges with the parents over the time I knew them, they all had aspirations for their children to go to college and not have to struggle the way they themselves had. Accordingly, it was more than possible that there may have been discussions at home about the topic. I can see the manner in which parents may have told their children that the key to a successful life was found at college.

Though attendance is very low, families are afforded the opportunity and invited to the school for a presentation on the MEAP prior to the testing window in the fall. MEAP and its performance levels are not only defined for them, the following is also included: the areas their students will be tested on, who takes MEAP-Access and MI-Access, the accommodations provided to the ELLs, what happens at the school before, during and after the MEAP, and how families can help their students prepare for the MEAP. When the scores are released in late winter, the week leading up to another parent presentation is reserved for student MEAP

reflections. The parent meeting is scheduled to review scores for the entire school, results per grade, and the performance of ELLs versus the non-ELLs.

In the interviews, all students claimed that they talked to their families before and after a test. Discussions between family members and the students ranged from, simply being cognizant of the existence of the tests to helping their children prepare for testing to conversations on their performance. A seventh grade student professed that his parents "…know I have tests" but he only talks to his parents about the tests "…if I get a good grade…because when I get a bad grade…I am embarrassed to tell my mom and dad like they provide me with everything." The other seventh grader shared that, "…they can help me…Maybe a long story may improve my reading and she will try to test me…" while a sixth grade student stated, "I tell them I have a test and I have to study for it, get ready…"

When probed about how their families felt about the tests, all students' perceptions emphasized positive reactions when they did well and the need to study harder or be better prepared if their performance was not good. For example, an eighth grader stated that his parents recommend that he spend less time talking "…until it is the right time" and a seventh grader commented that "They make us go to sleep early. Make us eat good breakfast." The student's remarks were possibly the result of the MEAP Goal Sheet (Appendix I) that we used in our pre-assessment discussions with the students. The week before MEAP, my supervisor and I visited each "MEAPing" (a term I coined years ago when I used to administer the MEAP as a teacher) class to review the documents and help the students set goals for themselves. It is possible that the student told his parents and they reiterated the goals to him. A seventh grade student claimed that "When I do well on a test I would get…a good job from my parents. If I don't do well then I get a bad grade and I would have to talk to my parents about it and I would have to study a lot

more." The other seventh grader student maintained their parents think the tests "help us to get to our next grade." One eighth grader replied that "they kind of feel excited about it…they were probably nervous that I might have done bad." Following the release of the scores my supervisor and I re-visited the classrooms to complete the Reflection Form (Appendix J).

The affective relationship of testing encompassed both the components of self-esteem and confidence as viewed by the staff as well as the students. Students were additionally questioned in their interviews about how their families felt about testing and whether they spoke to them before or after testing. Student responses demonstrated the role their families played in the testing process. Per the answers, parents/guardians were interested in how their students were doing with respect to testing in general and their children in particular. There was evidence to suggest that families contributed to how students responded to both the processes of testing and the consequences that ensued as a result of the assessments.

Administrator's Intentions in the Face of Reality

I had left my last school on account of what I perceived to be too much testing and the demands for increasing the achievement of our predominately Arabic-speaking ELLs. I arrived at the current school with the understanding that we were in the process of re-authorization with the authorizer. While the reasons (i.e., abundance of testing and performance of ELLs) for my earlier departure emerged here as well, having the support of my supervisor has facilitated the experience and provided me with the motivation to attempt to bring about change. Even though my intentions were to make a difference, for the time being I too have gotten caught up in the same cycle of testing I had tried very hard to distance myself from when I exited the previous site. Because of the fact that we need to be re-authorized, I cannot disregard the authorizer's established boundaries and jeopardize the progress we have made. Until the day comes when we

are allocated enough years or my story stirs the pot enough, I will continue to provoke and disclose the narratives of our Arabic-speaking ELLs.

The culture of the school before testing is one of classroom/lesson prepping (i.e., DREAM for 3rd-8th grades), rearranging classroom/lunch schedules, altering staff duties, apprising and updating all stakeholders (i.e., staff, students, parents/guardians, school board, and authorizer) of expectations through goal sheets, conversations/meetings. During the active assessment window lunch schedules were frequently changed to accommodate testing classrooms. In order to prevent distractions in the hallways that could potentially disturb testing students, other students were often kept in the classrooms for lunch. In the case of 4th and 7th grades MEAP writing test, we sent our 5th graders to an educational field trip so we could house the testing students closer together and keep the remainder of middle school in their classrooms. On the first day of the reading and math MEAPs, middle school students were dismissed at the half day mark to offset the elementary lunch schedules. For other assessments, those students who were testing were fed at alternate times and provided extra snacks to adjust for the later lunches. Restroom visits of grades not testing were monitored more closely so as to limit the noise level in the hallways. Finally, in the post testing period my supervisor and I visited classrooms to reflect with the students on their scores and establish goals for the next testing slot. Parent meetings were also scheduled to review school and subgroup data. DREAM for the end of the year was re-instated and grades 2nd-7th practiced MEAP assessment tasks.

In spite of my best intentions to not be caught up in the chain of events that had prompted my resignation from my former position, I faced the reality of my new home being shut down if I did not succumb to the testing pressures. The demands compelled me to partake in activities that further diminished the much needed time my Arabic-speaking ELLs required to acquire CALP.

The activities included preparing students and their families for testing, altering the environment during test administrations, and providing post-test feedback in the form of reflections and meetings. Taken together, the events permeated the school climate to produce a culture of testing.

Conclusion

The chapter presented the findings for each of the two research questions: (a) According to staff and student perceptions, what is the impact of standardized testing on Arabic-speaking ELLs? (b) According to staff perceptions, what are the consequences of testing on instructional time? Data were summarized across staff questionnaires and interviews, and student interviews. The overarching theme that emerged from the analysis of data revealed a misalignment between staff and students' views of testing. Sub-themes encompassed: (a) types of testing; (b) purposes of testing; (c) the value of testing; and (d) the impact of testing. For the most part, a disconnect existed between the two groups of study participants. Aside from both sharing that there was a lot of testing, students perceived assessment in a favorable light unlike staff who had little to say in terms of the positive aspect of testing besides it helping them address areas of weakness for their students. One other theme that surfaced was the misalignment between my intentions and reality I faced at the school. Chapter Five will provide further discussion of the results, including significance to previous research and literature, analyses, and recommendations with respect to implications for ELL assessment practices.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Two key reasons lay behind the decision to conduct a case study on Arabic-speaking ELLs. Primarily, as a former ELL I had direct knowledge of the trials and tribulations faced daily by ELLs. Secondly, given my experiences with the testing of ELLs at my previous school, I used them to guide my practices at the current site. As the principal of the building where the research was conducted I was offered a perspective that not many can say was afforded to them. If I had visited another school, I would have interviewed the principal, but by the same token would have only received the information they wanted me to hear. Being a part of the experience, I can honestly say, brought to the forefront the nuances of the misalignment between staff and students' views of testing. As such, it was through the case study that the stories of our Arabic-speaking ELLs and those who work with them daily unfolded and were revealed within the pages of this report.

My arrival to the current school was at a time when it was on the brink of a transformation. The school was up for reauthorization with the state university. We managed to receive one year. The following school year we had to get reauthorized again and were afforded two years. It was enough to buy us time to introduce changes. As at my former site, the authorizer continued to mandate district testing that encompassed PS; which along with MEAP scores were at the core of the authorizer's decision making. However, while my current supervisor recognized the importance of test results, he was not swayed by them. At the expense of being shut down, he stressed the needs of the community we were serving. In of itself, it is this priority that has cushioned the fall of our Arabic-speaking ELLs and has kept me fighting for their cause. For the time being I cannot do much to reduce the pressures of standardized testing

but knowing I am supported allows me to buffer the experiences of our Arabic-speaking ELLs. It is in this manner that I was able to lay the necessary groundwork through the study with the hopes to have my voice and that of my staff coax those who must take notice and attend to their language challenges and needs so that the students can feel what success tastes like.

The purpose of this research was to reveal the implications for and consider the impact of standardized testing practices on Arabic-speaking ELLs, and to address the consequences of testing on instructional time. The final chapter will present an overview of the concepts of the investigation and the research questions. The section will also provide a discussion of the findings, interpretations, their significance, limitations to the study, and recommendations with respect to implications for assessment practices of ELLs.

A Case of Misaligned Perceptions

The investigation highlighted a degree of misalignment between staff and student insights into the types of assessment, their purposes, the value placed on them, and the impact of testing. There does not appear to be any literature available where the Arabic-speaking ELL participation is represented. Unique to the study and not unlike those of my Arabic-speaking ELLs were my own personal experiences that were embedded into the research.

The Arabic-speaking ELLs provided feedback grounded in their own experiences. Our Arabic-speaking ELLs have to build academic vocabulary however they are unable to do so due to the constraints of their language and the time necessary to afford them the opportunities to learn the language. The staff responses that focused on standardized tests reflected the testing culture that enveloped the school. The obsession with testing has turned our school's culture into one of test prep activities, assessing, data mining and reporting. With the school days being manipulated to accommodate the testing window and the high-stakes demands of testing,

instructional time is being shortened for all students such that DREAM is being incorporated and the content areas better used for teaching new material, are being depleted for assessment purposes. Even when specific classes were not testing there was an air of trepidation that shrouded the building.

Looking back I came into the school with rose-tinted glasses. Thinking I could change the culture of assessment, I unfortunately became part of the problem. Since it was only through reauthorization that the school could be viable, I fell into the very cycle of assessment that had had me fleeing from my former school. However, my continued presence at the current site is cemented for the sole reason that my supervisor shares my sensitivity to assessing our ELL population. Unlike the superintendent of the school that triggered the push to protect my Arabic-speaking ELLs, my supervisor's support has made me aware that being part of the cycle is necessary in order to break it from within. I must be entrenched in the testing experiences of my students to not only advocate for them but to help raise concerns of assessment to another level.

Perceptions of Accountability

NCLB does not acknowledge continuous growth as progress. To improve, schools had a small window of opportunity to meet AYP targets. However, when school demographics point to a large number of ELLs, in this case Arabic-speaking ELLs, the effort is destined to fail because newcomers arrive regularly. Under NCLB, the initial accountability conditions forced the issue of the achievement gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs because schools were now mandated to share the progress of ELLs, especially on standardized tests, with the level of detail never before required. Moreover, the authorizer, with the extra weight of district testing and reauthorization also added to this pressure. The state university in turn is accountable to the state and federal governments as well. As a result, the accountability pressures experienced and highlighted by the

staff, indicated the consequences for low test scores were a concern for them since standardized testing is used for decision-making in an era of accountability and the standards-based educational system.

Accountability, as perceived by the staff, for teachers, schools, and students was aimed at identifying those not succeeding, as failures. In fact, some of the teachers shared just that notion including the fourth grade teacher who stated as much when she claimed that "pulling from the class time, the interruptions, and hold the students accountable, those are the only down sides." Since the NCLB requirement is that ELLs be included in the group of students being evaluated then the educator's goal of being effective is futile because he/she is destined to fail due to the ELLs' lack of growth in the CALP. It takes time for Arabic-speaking ELLs (Grabe, 1991; Ryan & Meara, 1991; Short & Echevarria, 2004; Walqui, 2000), to become proficient enough in CALP to do well on standardized tests (Cummins, 1979; Hakuta, 2001; Lenters, 2005; Ortiz-Marrero and Sumaryono, 2010). As was evident in the concern shared by the fourth grade teacher, while her newcomer's score will demonstrate the student's growth, mandating ELL participation in standardized testing prior to mastering CALP hindered their successful performance on the assessments and thereby reflected poorly on their teachers. In view of that, ELLs who have not acquired CALP must not have their scores used to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness or lack thereof. For schools, bettering the academic results of theirs ELLs is proof of whether teachers are really addressing their responsibility of not leaving any child behind.

While staff concerns centered on the accountability issues and the manner in which these demands presented themselves with respect to classroom practices, consensus existed between the participants in terms of the diagnostic element of testing. Though the diagnostic role was

more clearly highlighted by the students, it was evident from all responses that the students and staff similarly grasped and appreciated the diagnostic element of standardized testing.

Participation of Arabic-Speaking ELLs

Unique to the investigation was the information that was generated when Arabic-speaking ELL students were questioned as to why they thought they were tested on the different tests they had named. The responses suggested that not only did students perceive the reasons behind being tested, they were also quite sure of the fact that their teachers were trying to determine their academic level for individualizing instruction in order to better assist them and hence better prepare them for the future. The students were encouraged by the future implications the diagnostic feature of testing offered. Some of the students, by bringing up the ACT and SAT tests or addressing the notion of high school, implied that the students were more cognizant than what the staff perceived. Besides the assessment coordinator who shared that students know a lot about testing, the remaining staff members cited that the students did not know much, which was in stark contrast to what students reported. The discrepancy may lie in the fact that staff, because they view testing via the giant lens of accountability, are simply affirming that their students do not comprehend the deeper repercussions and pitfalls that accompany standardized assessments.

Perceptions of Purpose

The purpose of testing was defined differently by the staff and students. Students included chapter/unit tests, and additionally shared that when they were assessed it was to determine what they had learned, how to address their academic needs and prepare them for the future. It is of interest as to why students listed chapter/unit tests. One assumption is that students recognized the role that chapter/unit tests played in their final grades and as such gave them the

same weight as standardized tests. Some of the students talked about good and bad grades. For example, a sixth grader said, "if you get a good score you can pass 6th grade." Staff, like in all schools, stress that student performance will be reflected in report cards and students understand the significance of report cards. Inadvertently when we say that the standardized tests scores do not count for a grade, we may be introducing the notion that they are not as important.

Another supposition could be that perhaps, as the assessment coordinator noted, students may know a lot about tests because they are tested all the time so assessments become just another thing to do. Even though students understood the importance of MEAP, they did not grasp it in the general scheme of things. From the staff comments, students may get "stressed out," are "intimidated" and they know it is "something we have to do" because staff place emphasis on it and stress its importance. However, students are not made aware that state tests hold schools accountable for results or that the school is responsible, in the case of PS, to the authorizer. As proposed earlier, since our students consolidated all tests under the umbrella of testing, they do not know the ramifications of a school that demonstrates poor performance.

Against the backdrop of standardized testing, teacher accountability is an exceedingly contentious issue (Docken, 2005; Fairtest, 2012; Neill et al., 2004). All staff recognized that it was their responsibility to teach their ELLs both the content and language they needed to be successful. However, while staff was frustrated by the amount of time and effort being depleted and the resulting loss of opportunity to help their students they were also concerned with the performance of their ELLs that would impact their final educator ratings. In conflict were the students' views of the tests as the vital means to helping them learn. Staff, by projecting some of their own testing issues and insecurities on to their students, may inadvertently be deaf to their students' perceptions. In essence, staff viewed testing as holding them accountable in their

evaluations while students saw it as a tool to help them. Because of the students' perceptions that tests were important and would impact or predict their success in life this disconnect is profound. In reporting the impact that standardized testing had staff were able to acknowledge the ability of the tests to determine areas necessary for student growth (Shepard & Dougherty, 1991). Whereas students saw the positive role of testing in their future, staff being compelled to get through the curriculum so the students could be successful on the assessments, perceived testing as impacting negatively on their instructional routines and procedures.

Perceptions of Time

The current research found teachers' instructional routines were impacted negatively in that a lot of time and effort was spent preparing for tests. Staff members maintained that standardized tests determined curriculum and practice, similar to other findings on the effects of standardized test preparations on curriculum and practice (Abrams et al., 2003; Jones et al., 1999; Mueller, 2001; Smith, 2000). DREAM (DRop Everything And MEAP), the school's state test prepping activity, was in essence paving the way to what Smith (2000) termed "the testing season."

Time is a much needed resource for ELLs (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Zellmer et al., 2006). The results of the study were similar to what is known in the field (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Zellmer et al., 2006) and does not seem to be influenced by the fact that the population of students in this research was Arabic-speaking. However, test preparation activities and strategies for MEAP, both at the beginning of the year as well as at the end, occurred in the form of DREAM. The acronym DREAM, in and of itself, implies that all pedagogical activities will cease and focus will be on preparing students for the state test.

Staff named larger blocks of time from what was actually required to take the tests. Teacher perceptions may have differed because there were continuous concerns about not getting through the curriculum due to the emphasis placed on testing. As frequently highlighted by the staff and corroborated by the students, there was a great deal of testing at the school. Taken together, at the beginning of the school year, DREAM, PS and MEAP, consumed a significant chunk of the instructional time that could have been better used focusing on academic language and thereby increasing the much needed English academic language proficiency of the ELLs. If as research (Cummins, 1979; Hakuta, 2001; Lenters, 2005) has repeatedly demonstrated and substantiated, it takes ELLs on average five to seven years to acquire CALP and for those not schooled in his/her first language, it can take seven to ten years, the total is significant. Our high intermediate Arabic-speaking ELLs, who had been ELLs from anywhere between two to seven years, were of the most need to develop their academic language, were being bilked of that critical learning period. Add to this the fact that they are Arabic-speaking and hence have that added burden (Collier, 1989; Collier, 1995) of a language vastly different from English; the students face an even longer process (Walqui, 2000). In essence, the state is setting them up for failure and slamming the door to the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1988) even before they have had the opportunity to take a peak. Data from the current study coupled with previous research indicate testing consumes valuable instructional time. There exists a critical need that time be used more efficiently to create effective learning experiences for ELLs so that they acquire the academic language necessary to be successful on standardized tests. Staff felt that providing the Arabic-speaking ELLs with optimum opportunities to learn, that translates into optimum time to learn, will positively affect their acquisition of CALP.

Staff were of the opinion that ELLs lagged behind their non-ELL peers and were not afforded opportunities to acquire CALP prior to being required to demonstrate proficiency on standardized tests consistent with the work of Durán (2008) and Pitoniak et.al. (2009). An ESL teacher exclaimed that "as they are gaining instruction, they are taking these tests…instruction in learning the language." Staff felt that any deviation from their schedules hindered the progress they could make through the curriculum in addition to interfering with the time needed with the curriculum to get their ELLs to master the academic language. Staff indicated time is needed to master the language. Staff reported that they lose time due to assessment and test preparations. The data showed that student growth in CALP is slow and/or non-existent. Therefore, it can be inferred that students are not attaining academic language simply because after all the testing, time is needed to compensate for the loss of time each year that can add up over the years and increase the number of years it will take for the cycle to complete itself and the student to be proficient.

Perceptions of Affect

Recognizing the affective component of the assessment experience from the Arabic-speaking ELL's viewpoint was critical to the study. On the whole, students found the silver lining in the school's assessment practices. Students took ownership of their tests in that they claimed they were being assessed to better prepare them for their future. Students did not seem deterred that they were being evaluated nor were they slighted by the amount of testing. Students were forward thinking in their responses especially when it came to why they thought we were testing them. Students shared a range of emotions that indicated that they made connections between how well they did on the tests and how well they would do in life. Responses were unique in that way possibly because of the bond between the home and school that was made

obvious when they addressed the questions about what they thought their family felt about tests. For example, one student even went so far as to say that if he did not do well, he was embarrassed to tell his parents because "…they provide me with everything." There is a likelihood that discussions in most of their homes may have their roots in comments such as the one from the student because for them assessments could be indicators of hard work and a successful life.

At the time of the study I had known the students and their parents for more than a year. I had a good relationship with both parties and all parents were very supportive of any decision the school made on behalf of their children. As in the case of most disadvantaged families, the struggles they face holding down a job and making ends meet are huge. However, the challenges faced by Arabic-speaking Muslim families are compounded due to culture, religion and language. Religion plays a huge role in the culture. In many ways, this combination is what makes it more difficult for their children to integrate. Families, while trying very hard to uphold the morals, norms and beliefs that bind them to their native land have children that are being bombarded by the demands of a society that does not place the same value to these factors. Although I am not of Middle Eastern descent, I do share the religion of my Arabic-speaking participants which narrows the communication gap that exists between me and their families with respect to language. More often than not, when parents address me about an issue, they use the pronouns "we" or "us" because our common religion dictates many aspects of our respective cultures. In addition, much like in my own, there is that level of trust that goes back to being of the Middle Eastern culture because families deem the school as the authority. Parents have told me and their children that we (i.e., the school) are the "acting parents" while their children are with us. Like my parents, most of the families at our school, believed that education was

important. As was evident in the student interviews, parents were available to help their children prepare or study for their tests. As such, even though parents were not English speakers and had limited education themselves, the home environment they created was conducive to learning and they wanted better for their children.

Students were quite discerning in their assumptions of the role of family in their assessment process as they were able to share their families' point of views. The awareness indicated that parents would respond accordingly depending on how the students did on the tests, and would offer to help them improve by helping them study more. From the responses it was evident that families encouraged their children to be successful academically which is consistent with the findings by Palmer et al. (2007).

Student interviews interestingly revealed the role that families played in students' insights of being tested. Students' responses suggested that parents supported and believed in the importance of learning much like my parents had. Moreover, it was in this manner that students perceived their parents conveyed their expectations for achievement. Students shared the fact that their family members were aware of their children being tested and the expectation was there that the students would do well but if they did not, students were cognizant enough to know their family's reactions. Per the students, their parents wanted them to do well and would be concerned if they did not.

The current investigation additionally disclosed teachers' perceptions of students' affective responses towards standardized testing which were unlike those of the students. For the most part, negative perceptions as evidenced by terms employed by the staff, prevailed in their responses in that they used words that focused on the anxiety level and the impact on students' self-esteem to describe what they identified to be students' feelings about the testing. Staff

perceptions revealed that standardized testing subjected some students to stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, low morale, worry, and pessimism. Having witnessed students in a testing environment, I feel their views are valid. Newcomers and basic/low students (who were not part of the study), because they still struggle with the English language, will exhibit such reactions more frequently. One of the ESL teachers shared her experience with a family of newcomers and stated that they were so scared about the test that they asked her if we were going to put them "one grade lower or they are going to be expelled from school."

Standardized tests are not created with ELLs in mind. Though my experiences of being an ELL drove this study, as a public school administrator I too am shackled to these tests, and can only stand by as our students continue to painstakingly take them. While it has become evident within these pages that there exists a misalignment between teachers and students with regards to standardized testing, it goes without saying that students remain unaware of the repercussions attached to schools who fail to make the grade. Much like the challenges I faced when I entered first grade, the students endure theirs with little to no end in sight. Language can bridge the barriers to communication but in order to do so those barriers have to be mitigated via more time to learn the type of language necessary to dismantle those barriers. Limiting access to academic language is in fact limiting the ELLs' road to success.

Limitations

As with any study, the current research was not without its limitations. The problem of purposive sample was especially obvious with respect to the questionnaires because it was a non-random selection of participants for the sole purpose of gaining their insights and feedback on assessing ELLs. In addition, a different population of ELLs may yield different findings because English learners are a diverse group and needs vary from one community to another. They have

various home language experiences, levels of language proficiency, socioeconomic status, academic expectations and experiences. Finally, perhaps students in the high intermediate range of language proficiency are not necessarily the ones who manifest the range of emotions to the extent described by the staff because they have attained a functional level of BICS. Each of these dynamics comes into play in their capabilities, demands and success in school.

In regards to the methods of data collection, the standardized open-ended interview offered less flexibility in relating the interview to specific individuals and conditions. Hence, the standardized phrasing of the questions may have hindered and restricted spontaneity, thereby limiting the openness and relevance of the answers. Participants' responses will be reflections of and limited to their own personal experiences and backgrounds. Creswell (2009) pointed out that the analysis of the data is sifted and examined through the personal lens of the researcher. For all intents and purposes even though I attempted to be objective it is almost impossible to neglect personal interpretation while analyzing qualitative data.

Significance

ELLs come from a wide variety of backgrounds, speak different languages, and have varying levels of education. As such, several studies have demonstrated that ELLs face difficulties. Since most of the previous research has focused on ELLs of Hispanic backgrounds the current study is significant because it investigated the Arabic-speaking students' challenges with acquiring CALP in an era of assessment. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Arabic-speaking ELLs was vital to the study. Research (Cummins, 1979; Collier, 1989; Collier, 1995; Anstrom et al., 2010) has repeatedly demonstrated that its acquisition is contingent on the amount of exposure and practice in the second language.

Unique to this study were the findings that staff and Arabic-speaking ELLs did not perceive assessments in the same way. While students saw them as a means to help them grow academically, staff stressed their accountability component. Moreover, student perceptions of their parents' responses to discussions of testing were revealing in that they were able to perceive their families' reactions. Finally, in spite of my best intentions to advocate for the Arabic-speaking ELLs' needs to be afforded opportunities to develop CALP, I was embroiled in the process as we shaped and maintained a school culture that effectively mirrored the testing customs and norms I had so purposely bolted from. With the threat of re-authorization hanging over our heads two years in a row, the likelihood of making the necessary changes to support our ELLs was constrained. However, through the case study the story will unfold. Someone will take note to help me initiate a new cycle. A cycle that will assist my Arabic-speaking ELLs as they take back their right to secure the academic language that will propagate this latest cycle.

Recommendations

For the most part, in order for learning to occur the process has to be seamless. Most students cannot learn when there are constant interruptions to their schedule. ELLs just by the mere fact that they are trying to play catch up with the language, need every opportunity and every moment, dedicated to helping them acquire the CALP that will facilitate their success with the English language. Arabic-speaking ELLs, because of their additional challenges in the areas of language (Palmer et al., 2007), command more instructional time to learn English and the academic skills that accompany it (Collier, 1989; Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1979; Mueller, 2001; Smith, 1991). I believe ELLs must be assessed less often so that more academic language learning can occur that will provide them further access to the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1988) they currently hover over.

There is justification to make recommendations for practice (e.g., professional development) or policy. Professional development must place the needs of the Arabic-speaking ELLs at the forefront. The accrediting agency can benefit from receiving training on the unique characteristics of Arabic-speaking ELLs especially the time needed for them to acquire CALP. The authorizer must recognize that ELLs are being deprived of much needed instructional time due to testing preparations and administration. It is important to set high standards for every student and make sure that all learners' needs are taken into account in educational reform endeavors. However, educators must also strive for a reasonable approach to interpreting and using test data so that well thought-out, educated conclusions are drawn, especially when these judgments carry high-stakes for ELLs and the schools that serve them.

I recommend that our authorizer limit the emphasis they place on district tests. I understand assessments are a monitoring piece necessary for them to hold their schools accountable. Nevertheless, there has to be an understanding of the time it takes Arabic-speaking ELLs to attain CALP (Collier, 1989; Collier, 1995). Instead of using three plus years as their compliance piece, why not go with what the research says about the acquisition of CALP, and monitor their growth instead of putting benchmarks that have not been normed on the ELL population? The authorizer uses the three plus year timeframe because they expect a student would have improved tremendously having been at the same school for that length of time. Three years would prove how successful the school's educational program has been. The authorizer claims that since the students have been ours, we cannot argue they came to us below grade level because enough time has been provided to get them to grade level. However, in their group of schools the Arabic-speaking ELLs are not accounted for otherwise the fact that BICS is about the only the language the ELLs have acquired in those three years would be recognized and the fact

that they still need almost another five to seven years to reach CALP levels (Cummins, 1979; Collier, 1989; Collier, 1995; Hakuta, 2001) would be contemplated. Without the support of the authorizer, our school cannot move forward. In actual fact, it could cease to exist. Like the cannon ball, as we drag the tests behind us, we are razing a path and in effect leaving our Arabic-speaking ELLs to face the wrecking ball. Seeing as the students do not belong to the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1988) they are in additional need of being supported and championed. The authorizer, because of their connections to the state, has to be the intermediary influence to help advocate for their cause. Through the state university the road can be paved for the Arabic-speaking ELLs so that their route to the acquisition of CALP is made smoother.

Implications

Completely eliminating all testing is both unrealistic and impractical because there is a need for assessment data to inform instruction. Though the current study was based on a single school that demonstrated its time being allocated to test preparations and administrations, implications should include investigating more extensively the relationship that exists between time spent on testing or its preparation, its resulting deduction from instructional time, and the fact that Arabic-speaking ELLs are being expected to perform like their non-ELL peers with an adequate level of proficiency without meeting their goals of English language proficiency prior to being assessed on standardized tests.

Conclusion

The results from the research are compelling. The themes that emerged were the misalignment between staff and students' views of testing and the misalignment between best intentions of an administrator and a school that emphasized assessment. Though the lists generated were relatively identical, students additionally included chapter/unit assessments in

their inventory. Two distinct reasons were proposed: chapter/unit assessments held significance because they were recorded in the students' report cards or assessments were such a routine at the school and thereby students did not distinguish between them. In terms of purposes, staff felt assessments held them accountable whereas students saw them as diagnostic and would allow the teachers to better plan for them. Staff saw little to no value in testing while students indicated that they could help prepare for their future. Finally, staff shared the factors they perceived to contribute to the negative impact of standardized testing and students revealed that it had a positive impact in their lives because of the role the assessments could play as they progressed through high school, college and careers.

The burden of accountability appears to be misplaced and the focus seems to value scores rather than students who have gained academic knowledge and skills (Fairtest, 2012). Popular authors like Dr. Seuss and Prelutsky (1998) were even aware of this problem as they addressed the issue of assessment in their book:

> To see who's learning such and such –
>
> To see which school's the best.
>
> If our small school does not do well,
>
> Then it will be torn down,
>
> And you will have to go to school
>
> In dreary Flobbertown (p. 21)

As such, another finding, while unintended, demonstrated evidence of our school succumbing to external pressures to engage in assessment. In my position I too have yielded to the authorizer, the state, and the federal government. I am responsible for propagating the culture of testing that had me running from my other site because our very existence as a school hangs on our students'

performance and achievement on standardized assessments. Regardless both the school board and authorizer are conscious of where my sympathies lie. The stakeholders are aware of ***my*** voice. I simply need them to pay attention to the message I am conveying so that they too can add their voices to create a chorus that will have others listening. Despite the fact that I did not bring with me the intention to cause any ripples, I am now on a mission to create waves of change. My Arabic-speaking ELLs' must attain mastery of the English language and let it be the beacon of hope to succeed in a world that is slowly closing in on them. The results of this study will be the flames to ignite the path of those who are blinded to the needs to our students.

The students in the study perceived that success on tests was their route to a realization of their goals. What they did not recognize or grasp was they would only get that through the acquisition of the language required and critical for them to be proficient on the assessments, specifically CALP. In much the same way, I am sure that despite what my second grade report card indicated, I was still in the process of acquiring CALP. However, somewhere along the way, the last piece of the puzzle was added to make the academic language picture complete. As a result, I graduated high school with bilingual language certification (French and English), gained admission to CÉGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel), a general and vocational college which is an intermediate post-secondary establishment unique to Quebec. I was granted the Diploma of College Studies that is required for university admission in Quebec. I applied to a highly competitive university and was told by peers, extended family members and friends of my parents that I would not be accepted because of my background. My admission letter was all the evidence I needed to prove that an ELL's school success hinges upon their proficiency of academic language. Looking back, I cannot identify when it was I had crossed the threshold to a world that without access to CALP would have been near to impossible to

penetrate. Nevertheless, I breached the glass ceiling and the remaining shards speared the effort to be the ELL who would be heard.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: Standardized Testing of ELL Students

You are being invited to participate in a research study on the subject of Assessing ELL students. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. Furthermore, there are no costs to you for participating in this study. The questionnaire will take about fifteen minutes to complete. The information you supply will help identify alternatives for measuring ELL students' achievement and capabilities. The data collected will provide the means to establish whether the need for further research ought to be considered before making decisions about ELL students, assessing their reading skills or drawing conclusions about specific districts. Your participation in this study is voluntary. As a result of completing and emailing the questionnaire by ***Friday, September 14***, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate.

1. Are you currently administering or analyzing assessment at the school?

☐ Yes ⟶ Please Go To **Question 2**
☐ No ⟶ Please do not complete this questionnaire if you are not administering or analyzing assessment at the school.

Please explain briefly why you are not administering or analyzing assessment:

_____

Thank you Anyway For Agreeing to Participate.

2. What is your job title? (Check all that apply)

☐ Title III Coordinator
☐ School Administrator
☐ Assessment Coordinator
☐ Content Area Teacher
☐ ESL Teacher
☐ Other (please specify _____)

Questions #3-15 pertain to your degree of agreement or disagreement with each item using the following scale: Circle ONE response for each item.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Disagree

3. Standardized testing determines curriculum and practice.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

4. The school is accountable to the state reading test.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

5. State test scores are consistent over time.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

6. State reading tests are based on recall of isolated facts.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

7. State language proficiency tests are based on limited skills.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

8. Standardized tests are a fair evaluation tool for ALL learners.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

9. Standardized test scores reflect real differences among ELL and Non-ELL students.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

10. Test scores are used in ways that support ELL students' academic progress.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

11. Standardized tests provide information that helps ELL students' learning.

1 2 3 4 5

12. ELL students score lower on standardized tests than Non-ELL students.

1 2 3 4 5

13. The consequences of low state tests scores are high. For example, schools with a large population of immigrants are often identified as failures even though their students have shown progress.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Standardized tests cause a disruption of education support services for ELLs.

1 2 3 4 5

15. Loss of instructional time and the time it takes to administer standardized tests are the most serious challenges of testing ELLs.

1 2 3 4 5

Question #16 pertains to other forms of assessment.

16. Please rank the following as potential alternate tools of assessments for ELL students. (Fill in your rank order in the spaces provided using the numbers 1 through 3 with 1 indicating most effective and 3 indicating least effective).

_____ Performance Based

_____ Teacher Observations

_____ Student Portfolios

_____ Other

Question #17 is about your assessment practices.

17. For **Items A-G**, indicate how often you use each of the following to assess your ELL students' performance? (Check one box.)

A. Paper and Pencil questions.

- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Never

B. Essay questions.

- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Never

C. Oral questioning of students.

- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Never

D. Student Portfolios.

- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Never

E. Teacher observations.

- ☐ At least once a week
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Never

F. Estimate how much time you have spent in your classroom this school year giving standardized tests.

- ☐ Less than 4 hours
- ☐ 4-6 hours
- ☐ 9-16 hours
- ☐ 17 or more hours

G. How many days have been interrupted this school year as a result of giving standardized tests?

- ☐ 2 or fewer days
- ☐ 3-5 days
- ☐ 6-10 days
- ☐ 11 or more days

The open-ended question # 18-20 will enable you to respond in any way you choose.

18. Give one or two examples of how standardized testing has helped you to improve the quality of education in your classroom or for particular students?

19. Give one or two examples of how standardized testing has had a negative influence on your teaching or student learning?

20. Do you think standardized testing has created challenges to teaching ELLs? Why or why not?

Last are demographic questions that will be used for classification purposes only.

21. Please indicate:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

22. By the end of this school year, how many years in total will you have been teaching?

_____

23. By the end of this school year, how many years in total will you have been teaching ELLs?

_____

24. What is your teaching certification in?

Major: _____

Minor: _____

Endorsement(s): _____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING OUR QUESTIONNAIRE!

Questionnaire Adapted and Modified from: Shepard, L. A., & Dougherty, K. C. (1991). *Effects of high-stakes testing on instruction*. Retrieved from:

http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED337468.pdf

Appendix B

Staff Perceptions of Standardized Testing

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Standardized testing determines curriculum and practice.		1	2	4	
2. The school is accountable to the state reading test.				5	2
3. State test scores are consistent over time.	1		4	2	
4. State reading tests are based on recall of isolated facts.*		2	2	2	
5. State language proficiency tests are based on limited skills.	1		4	2	
6. Standardized tests are a fair evaluation tool for ALL learners.	5				2
7. Standardized test scores reflect real differences among ELL and Non-ELL students.*	1			4	1
8. Test scores are used in ways that support ELL students' academic progress.		6	1		
9. Standardized tests provide information that helps ELL students'		6	1		

learning.				
10. ELL students score lower on standardized tests than Non-ELL students.		1	4	2
11. The consequences of low state tests scores are high. For example, schools with a large population of immigrants are often identified as failures even though their students have shown progress.	1		4	2
12. Standardized tests cause a disruption of education support services for ELLs.	1		4	2
13. Loss of instructional time and the time it takes to administer standardized tests are the most serious challenges of testing ELLs.	1	1	4	1

*Note: Only 6 responses

Appendix C

Teacher Interviews:

Because of NCLB (2001), the students who are just learning English are now held to the same expectations on the state test as native English speakers. In Michigan, state tests allow a newly arrived immigrant to be excused from the ELA portion if they have been in the United States for a year or less. Following this time period, they are held just as accountable as their peers. The following questions are aimed at getting your opinion on testing the ELL students. As with the questionnaire, your participation in this study is voluntary and your responses will not be reflected in your evaluation.

1. Can you describe these assessments for me?

2. In your description you talked about X examples of assessment can you tell me how each of them impacts your teaching?

3. In your description you talked about X examples of assessment can you tell me how students respond to each of these examples?

4. How much testing is going on?

5. How do you see testing impacting learning time? / What do you think are effects of the testing?

6. Do the ELLs in your class participate in the assessments you mentioned earlier? If yes, how do they do? Why? Tell me more.

7. Have you noticed the impact of testing on your ELL students?

8. How much do your students know about testing and their attitudes towards tests?

9. What is your opinion about the increasing emphasis and frequency placed on standardized test results for ELL students?

10. Have you seen any evidence of your ELLs taking tests in English before they have mastered the language? Please explain with examples.

Appendix D

Student Interviews:
Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. You are one of the students who have been chosen to take part in this conversation about testing. We have already received permission from your parents but if at any time you become uncomfortable and would rather not continue, please let me know and it will be okay. By your participation today, you are helping in my research project to find out your experiences with tests and how you feel about taking tests. Since you are the ones being tested, I know you must have some opinions. Therefore, I hope you will be honest and open with me. I will be tape recording the discussion, because I do not want to miss any of your comments.

1. What are the different kinds of tests you have to take in school?

2. What do you think the purpose of test 1 is? What do you think the purpose of test 2 is?

3. What do you think about testing? / How does testing make you feel?

4. How much time do you think you spend on testing?

5. How do you feel when you get your scores?

6. Why do you think we test you?

7. What happens when you do well on a test? / What happens if you do not do well on a test?

8. Do you talk to your family before the test and after the test?

9. How does your family feel about the tests?

Appendix E

Types and Descriptions of Assessments

Types of Assessments	Description of Assessment
AIMSweb	Administered three times a year, it is a district computer-based universal monitoring tool used by the Response to Intervention (RtI) team to determine the reading level of Middle School students.
DIBELS	Administered three times a year, it is a district universal monitoring tool used by the Response to Intervention (RtI) team to determine the reading level of elementary students.
ELPA	A statewide language proficiency assessment administered in the spring. Tests K-12 students eligible for ELL services, in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
ELPA Screener	A diagnostic tool to assess the English language of students who are new enrollees to a school and/or who did not take the ELPA in the school in which they enrolled during the most recent Spring administration of the ELPA.
EXPLORE	Prepares eighth- and ninth-graders for their high school coursework and their post–high school choices. Includes tests covering English, mathematics, reading, and science.
MEAP	A statewide test administered in the Fall to all 3^{rd}-9^{th} grade students. It measures their achievement in: math, reading, science, social studies, and writing. The results signal overall strengths and weaknesses of a school's curriculum, and can be used to adjust instructional practice in the classroom.
	The school was randomly selected to

NAEP	participate in this national test in the spring. It was administered to 4th graders in both math and reading.
Performance Series	A computer-based, adaptive district test administered in Reading and Math. Students are assessed three times in the year.
STARmath	Administered three times a year, it is a district computer-based universal monitoring tool used by the Response to Intervention (RtI) team to determine the math level of each student.

Appendix F

Interview Question Coding Chart

Question:

Teacher	Response	Code

Question:

Student	Response	Code

Appendix G

Performance Series Schedule
FALL 2012-2013

September

	Sept. 4 First Day of School NO TESTING Test Preparations	5 8:00-10:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	6 8:00-10:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	7 ½ Day 8:00-11:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math
10 8:00-8:55 8A Reading 9:00-9:55 8B Reading 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	11 8:00-8:55 8A Math 9:00-9:55 8B Math 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	12 8:00-8:55 8A Make-Ups 9:00-9:55 8B Make-Ups 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	13 8:15-9:20 5A Reading 9:30-10:35 5B Reading 12:30-3:30 8th Grade Make-Ups	14 ½ Day 8:15-9:20 5B Math 9:30-10:35 5A Math 10:35-11:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math
17 8:00-8:55 6A Reading 9:00-9:55 6B Reading 12:30-3:30 5A Make-Ups	18 8:00-8:55 6A Math 9:00-9:55 6B Math 12:30-3:30 5B Make-Ups	19 8:00-8:55 6A Make-Ups 9:00-9:55 6B Make-Ups 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	20 8:15-9:20 4C Reading 9:30-10:35 4E Reading 12:30-3:30 6th Grade Make-Ups	21 8:15-9:20 5B Math 9:30-10:35 5A Math 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups
24 8:00-8:55 7A Reading 9:00-9:55 7B Reading	25 8:00-8:55 7A Math 9:00-9:55 7B Math	26 8:00-8:55 7A Make-Ups 9:00-9:55 7B Make-Ups	27 8:15-9:20 3L Reading 9:30-10:35 3K Reading	28 8:15-9:20 3L Reading 9:30-10:35 3K Reading

12:30-3:30 4E Make-Ups	12:30-3:30 4C Make-Ups	12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups	12:30-3:30 7th Grade Make-Ups	12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups

October

1 8:15-10:00 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:00-3:30 3L Make-Ups	2 8:15-10:00 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:00-3:30 3K Make-Ups	3 8:15-10:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups	4 8:00-10:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:30-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups	5 8:00-10:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:30-3:30 NO TESTING

ELPA Screener Schedule
Fall 2012-2013

Assessment Dates	Cycle	Assessment Level	
August 15 -November 30	Screener Cycle I	Level I - Grade *K Level I - Grade 1 Level II - Grades 2- 3 Level III - Grades 4-6 Level IV - Grades 7-9	*Assess with Listening and Speaking Only

MEAP Detailed Schedule

READING Day 1 (Tuesday, October 9, 2012):

***Allow extra time at the end of EACH session for those students who require additional time.**

8:30-9:00	Grades	Distribution of test materials, complete answer documents, and read test directions.
9:00-10:10	3	Part 1
9:00-10:10	4	Part 1
9:00-10:10	5	Part 1
9:00-10:10	6	Part 1
9:00-10:10	7	Part 1
9:00-10:10	8	Part 1
10:10-10:40	**BREAK**	
10:40-10:50		Redistribute test materials and read test directions.
10:50-11:40	3	Part 2
10:50-11:40	4	Part 2
10:50-11:40	5	Part 2
10:50-11:40	6	Part 2
10:50-11:40	7	Part 2
10:50-11:40	8	Part 2

Middle School ½ day dismissal at 12pm
3-5 Lunch 11:45am-12:15pm

READING Day 2 (Wednesday, October 10, 2012):

***Allow extra time at the end for those students who require additional time.**

8:30-9:00	Grades	Distribution of test materials, complete answer documents, and read test directions.
9:00-10:30	3	Part 1
9:00-10:30	4	Part 1
9:00-10:30	5	Part 1
9:00-10:30	6	Part 1
9:00-10:30	7	Part 1
9:00-10:30	8	Part 1

M/S stays in class until 4th Hour
Elem has a regular schedule for lunch and afternoon

4th & 7th Grade WRITING Day 1 (Thursday, October 11, 2012):

***Allow extra time at the end of EACH session for those students who require additional time.**

8:30-9:00	Grades	Distribution of test materials, complete answer documents, and read test directions.
9:00-10:10	4	Part 1
9:00-10:10	7	Part 1
10:10-10:40		**BREAK**
10:40-10:50		Redistribute test materials and read test directions
10:50-12:30	4	Parts 2 & 3
10:50-12:30	7	Parts 2 & 3

Regular day except for 7th testing will be in Rooms A & B.
Large Snack w/ lunch after test (4th & 7th)
4 & 7 Lunch @ 12:30 in cafeteria
K-3 lunch in classrooms

MATH (Tuesday, October 16, 2012):

***Allow extra time at the end of EACH session for those students who require additional time.**

8:30-9:00	Grades	Distribution of test materials, complete answer documents, and read test directions.
9:00-10:00	3	Part 1: Calculators **NOT** allowed
9:00-10:00	4	Part 1: Calculators **NOT** allowed
9:00-10:00	5	Part 1: Calculators **NOT** allowed
9:00-10:00	6	Part 1: Calculators **NOT** allowed
9:00-10:00	7	Part 1: Calculators **NOT** allowed
9:00-9:45	8	Part 1: Calculators **NOT** allowed (Please **DO NOT** send students out of the classroom until **10:00** as 6th&7th Grade are still testing)
10:00-10:30		**BREAK**
10:30-10:45		Redistribute test materials and read test directions.
10:30-11:30	3	Part 2: Calculators **NOT** allowed
10:30-11:15	4	Part 2: Calculators allowed (Please **DO NOT** send students out of the classroom until **11:30** as 3rd Grade is still testing)
10:30-11:05	5	Part 2: Calculators allowed (Please **DO NOT** send students

		out of the classroom until **11:30** as 3rd Grade is still testing)
10:30-11:20	6	Part 2: Calculators allowed (Please **DO NOT** send students out of the classroom until **11:30** as 8th Grade is still testing)
10:30-11:20	7	Part 2: Calculators allowed (Please **DO NOT** send students out of the classroom until **11:30** as 8th Grade is still testing)
10:30-11:30	8	Part 2: Calculators allowed (Please **DO NOT** send students out of the classroom until **11:30** as 8th Grade is still testing)

Middle school ½ day dismissal at 12 pm
Gr 3-5 Lunch 11:30am-12pm

4th & 7th Grade WRITING Day 2 (Wednesday, October 17, 2012):

***Allow extra time at the end of EACH session for those students who require additional time.**

8:30-9:00	Grades	Distribution of test materials, complete answer documents, and read test directions.
9:00-10:10	4	Part 1
9:00-10:10	7	Part 1
10:10-10:40		**BREAK**
10:40-10:50		Redistribute test materials and read test directions
10:50-11:20	4	Part 2
10:50-11:20	7	Part 2
11:20-11:30		**BREAK**
11:30-11:40		Redistribute test materials and read test directions.
11:40-12:45	4	Part 3
11:40-12:45	7	Part 3

5th & 8th Grade SCIENCE (Wednesday, October 17, 2012):

***Allow extra time at the end of EACH session for those students who require additional time.**

8:30-9:00	Distribution of test materials, complete answer documents, and read test directions.
9:00-10:00	Part 1
10:00-10:30	**BREAK**

10:30-11:30	Part 2

6th Grade SOCIAL STUDIES (Wednesday, October 17, 2012):

***Allow extra time at the end of EACH session for those students who require additional time.**

8:30-9:00	Distribution of test materials, complete answer documents, and read test directions.
9:00-9:50	Part 1
9:50-10:15	**BREAK**
10:15-11:00	Part 2

4th & 7th grade will have lunch at 10:10-10:40am w/ snack at 11:20-11:30am and again after 12:45pm
K-3 lunch in classrooms

Universal Screeners (STARmath and AIMSweb)
2012-2013 Testing Schedule

September 10	September 11	September 12	September 13	September 14
January 7	January 8	January 9	January 10	January 11
April 29	April 30	May 1	May 2	May 3

Aimsweb takes approximately 6 minutes/student (~3 hours/class)
STARmath takes approximately 20-30 minutes/student (~9-14 hours/class)

Performance Series Schedule
WINTER 2012-2013

January

7 NO TESTING Test Preparations	8 8:00-8:55 8A Reading 9:00-9:55 8B Reading 12:45-3:00 Sp. Ed Reading & Math	9 8:00-8:55 8A Math 9:00-9:55 8B Math 12:00-1:05 5A Math 1:15-3:00 Sp. Ed Reading & Math	10 8:00-8:55 8A Make-Ups 9:00-9:55 8B Make-Ups 12:00-1:05 5B Math 1:15-3:00 ESL Reading & Math	11 ½ Day 8:15-9:20 5A Reading 9:30-10:35 5B Reading 10:40-11:30 Sp. Ed Reading & Math
14 8:00-8:55 7A Reading 9:00-9:55 7B Reading 12:45-3:00 8th Grade Make-Ups	15 8:00-8:55 7A Math 9:00-9:55 7B Math 12:45-3:00 5th Grade Make-Ups	16 8:00-8:55 7A Make-Ups 9:00-9:55 7B Make-Ups 12:45-3:00 Sp. Ed Reading & Math	17 8:15-9:20 4C Reading 9:30-10:35 4E Reading 12:45-3:00 7th Grade Make-Ups	18 8:15-9:20 4E Math 9:30-10:35 4C Math 12:45-3:00 ESL Reading & Math
21 NO SCHOOL	22 8:15-9:20 3K Reading 9:30-10:35 3L Reading 12:30-3:00 4th Grade Make-Ups	23 8:15-9:20 3L Math 9:30-10:35 3K Math 12:45-3:00 Sp. Ed Reading & Math	24 8:00-8:55 6A Reading 9:00-9:55 6B Reading 12:45-3:00 ESL Reading & Math	25 ½ Day 8:15-9:20 6A Math 9:30-10:35 6B Math 10:00-11:30 3rd Grade Make-Ups
28 8:00-8:55 6A Make-Ups 9:00-9:55	29 8:00-8:55 Sp. Ed Reading & Math	30 8:00-8:55 All Make-Ups 9:00-9:55	31 8:00-8:55 All Make-Ups 9:00-9:55	FEB. 1 NO TESTING

6B Make-Ups 12:45-3:00 ESL Reading & Math	9:00-9:55 Sp. Ed Reading & Math 12:45-3:00 All Make-Ups	All Make-Ups 12:45-3:00 All Make-Ups	All Make-Ups 12:45-3:00 All Make-Ups	

8th Grade EXPLORE
Wednesday, March 6th

8:30am – 8:45am → Pass out answer booklet, test booklet, pencil and calculator
8:45am – 9:15am → Test 1 **ENGLISH (30 minutes)**
9:20am – 9:50am → Test 2 **MATH (30 minutes)**
9:50am – 10:00 → **BREAK (10 minutes)**

- All students must stay in their seats. If anyone asks to use the bathroom, take their testing materials. **ONLY 1 STUDENT AT A TIME**

- Have all students put their calculators under their desk for the rest of the testing period.

10:00am – 10:30am → Test 3 **READING (30 minutes)**
10:35am – 11:05am → Test 4 **SCIENCE (30 minutes)**

MAKE SURE THAT YOU WRITE THE EXACT START AND END TIME ON THE FRONT BOARD. THE ABOVE IS AN OUTLINE TO HELP YOU STAY ON SCHEDULE.

ELPA Schedule
SPRING 2012-2013 (March 13-April 12)

11	12	13 K-2 Listening & Reading 3-8 Listening, Reading & Writing	14 K-2 Writing RtI team begin Speaking portion	15 Speaking
18 Speaking	19 Speaking	20 Speaking	21 Make-Ups	22 ½ Day Make-Ups
25 Make-Ups	26 Make-Ups	27 Make-Ups	28 Make-Ups	29 NO SCHOOL
APRIL 1 NO SCHOOL	2 NO SCHOOL	3 NO SCHOOL	4 NO SCHOOL	5 NO SCHOOL
8 Make-Ups	9 Make-Ups	10 Make-Ups	11 Make-Ups	12 Make-Ups

***SPEAKING: Students will be pulled out individually by the RtI team for testing.**
(Please note: Each student will take ~10-20 minutes depending on their level)

Middle School ELPA Detailed Testing Schedule

Spring 2013

8:30am – 8:45am → Pass out testing materials

8:45am – 9:30am →**LISTENING (45 minutes)**

9:30am – 10:15am →**READING (45 minutes)**

10:15am – 10:25 →**BREAK (10 minutes)**

10:25am – 10:30am →Pass back materials

10:30am – 11:15 →**WRITING (45 minutes)**

SPEAKING → 10-20 minutes/students

IOWA (1st Grade Only) 2012-2013 Testing Schedule

Monday April 29th from 8:45 - 10:25 (2 hours)
Tuesday April 30th from 8:45- 9:35 (1 hour)

Total of about 3 hours.

Performance Series Schedule

SPRING 2012-2013

April 29 8:00-8:55 8A Reading 9:00-9:55 8B Reading 12:00-1:05 5A Reading 1:15-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	30 8:00-8:55 8A Math 9:00-9:55 8B Math 12:00-1:05 5B Reading 1:15-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	May 1 8:00-8:55 8A Make-Up 9:00-9:55 8B Make-Up 12:00-1:05 5A Math 1:15-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	2 8:00-9:05 5B Math 9:15-10:20 2I Reading 12:00-1:05 5A Make-Ups 1:20-3:30 8th Grade Make-Ups	3 8:00-8:55 7A Reading 9:00-9:55 7B Reading 12:00-1:05 5B Make-Up 1:15-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math
6 8:00-8:55 7A Math 9:00-9:55 7B Math 12:00-1:05 4C Make-Up 1:15-3:30 5th Grade Make-Ups	7 8:00-8:55 7A Make-Ups 9:00-9:55 7B Make-Ups 12:00-1:05 4E Reading 1:15-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math	8 8:00-9:05 4C Math 9:15-10:20 4E Math 12:00-1:05 2I Math 1:20-3:30 7th Grade Make-Ups	9 Career Day NO TESTING	10 ½ Day 8:00-9:05 2J Reading 9:15-10:20 2I Make-Ups 10:30-11:30 3K Reading
13 8:00-9:05 3L Reading 9:15-10:20 2J Math 12:00-1:15 Make-Ups 1:15-2:20 4E Make-Ups 2:30-3:30	14 8:00-9:05 3K Math 9:15-10:20 3L Math 12:00-1:15 2J Make-Up 1:15-3:30 4th Grade Make-Up	15 8:00-8:55 6A Reading 9:00-9:55 6B Reading 12:00-1:05 3K Make-Ups 1:15-2:20 3L Make-Ups 2:30-3:30	16 8:00-8:55 6A Math 9:00-9:55 6B Math 12:00-3:30 3rd Grade Make-Ups	17 8:00-8:55 6A Make-Up 9:00-9:55 6B Make-Up 12:00-3:30 ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math

ESL & Sp. Ed Reading & Math		2nd Grade Make-Ups		
20 8:00-10:40 6th Grade Make-Ups 12:00-3:30 Make-Ups	21 8:00-10:40 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:00-3:30 Make-Ups	22 8:00-10:40 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:00-3:30 Make-Ups	23 8:00-10:40 ESL & Sp. Ed Make-Ups 12:00-3:30 Make-Ups	24 ½ Day 8:00-11:30 Make-Ups

Appendix H

Scantron's *PERFORMANCE Series*®

Teacher Planning Verification

Students who should take tests in 2 or 3 half hour blocks are (add comments and suggestions when helpful):

Name	Comments

In preparation for the *PERFORMANCE Series*® testing, I completed the following:

- ❑ Told students when they would be tested, at least one day in advance.
- ❑ Told students that we use this test to plan "your work" and evaluate "your progress."
- ❑ Told students to give it their very best effort, and to always carefully think through their answers.
- ❑ Told students this was not a timed test; that everybody has to work hard on this test; taking longer doesn't mean they are doing better or worse, it just means each student has to keep trying their hardest.
- ❑ Told students what to do when finished testing.
- ❑ Checked to see if any students were unable to perform at their maximum (sick, forgot glasses, upset, etc.). The following are students who should be tested at a later date, along with the reason:

Name	Reason

_____ _____ _____

Teacher Grade Date

Submit to Assessment Coordinator.
This form should be kept on site to verify interpretation of test results.
DO NOT SEND THIS FORM TO . IT MUST BE KEPT ON FILE AT THE SCHOOL.

Appendix I

Go For It!
Try Your Best!

MEAP 2012 Goal Sheet

I promise to come to school each day on time.

I promise to be well rested by going to bed early so I can think clearly.

I promise to eat breakfast so I can think clearly.

I promise to try to answer each question carefully and go back and check my work.

I promise to do my very best on the MEAP tests.

I KNOW I CAN DO MY BEST IF I TRY!

_____ _____

Student Name (First and Last) Parent Signature

_____ _____

Teacher Signature Date

I'M READY!

_____ I can explain why we have to take MEAP tests.

_____ I can tell why test taking is a skill I need to have in later life.

_____ I know how I will find out the results of the MEAP tests.

_____ I can list at least three test-taking strategies that will help me do my best:

1.
2.
3.

_____ I know what the test will look like.

_____ I know that everyone works at a different pace and that taking my time and being thorough is important.

_____ I have practiced reading the questions before I read the selections.

_____ I can pick out and highlight what the question is asking.

_____ I have practiced marking out unlikely answers.

_____ I know how to do at least three things to help me relax and focus during the test.

1.
2.
3.

_____ I have explained the MEAP test to my family.

_____ I feel ready to take the MEAP test this year.

_____ I will do my best on MEAP.

_____ _____

Student Signature Teacher Signature

Appendix J

MEAP 2012 REFLECTION FORM

Name: _____ Grade/Section: _____
Date: _____

My score was: On the lines below write if you were:

Advanced
Proficient
Partially Proficient
Not Proficient

- Reading _____
- Math _____
- Writing _____ (4th & 7th Grades ONLY)
- Science _____ (5th & 8th Grades ONLY)
- Social Studies _____ (6th Grade ONLY)

The area(s) in which I did best was (were) _____ because
_____
_____

The area (s) in which I need the greatest improvement is (are) _____ because
_____
_____

My goal for the next MEAP is to:
_____

In order to reach my goal, I must do the following: (Circle **ALL** that apply)

1. Read over the summer.
2. Keep a journal to practice writing.
3. Work on my Summer Packet.
4. Read the questions correctly during the test.
5. Read all the answer choices correctly.
6. Study for the test.

7. Add more details to my answers (*where applicable*).
8. Think about what the question is asking ***before*** answering.

Teacher Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Student Signature _____