

June, 1999: Dr. Stephen Klein Extended Excerpts

Rand Corporation Initial Evaluation of TAAS Testing Program

Discussing independent testing performed on Texas students to evaluate potential use of the TAAS test as a usable standard in national studies. Context of relationship between multiple choice tests and results in terms of socio-economic standing was discussed.

“...Then we took a look at the correlation between those same measures and the TAAS, and it blew up. Looks like somebody had hit this thing with a shotgun. Free and reduced lunch. Here is the mean math. TAAS scores. And the correlation is a .04. No relationship at all. Same Kids. Exactly the same kids two weeks later. We had individual scores...

“Now. This is not an outcome that we wanted to find at all because this poses real problems for us because we had hoped to use the TAAS scores. I don't feel comfortable doing that anymore given these results because I think the scores are suspect. There's lots of possible explanations for what happened. No one. But many possible explanations for what occurred here.

(Certain contextual discussion of methodologies relevant to TAAS administration)

“...California gave a test last year. The Stanford IX. To three million kids in California. I have bet the scores will be higher. They're going to give the same test or they gave the same test. I have bet my condo that the scores will go up on that on that bet. The scores will be higher. It's the same test. Is there anybody who doubts that the scores are going to be higher. The governor is going to be happy. Look it. I came in and less than a year the test scores went up dramatically. This happens in every other state...”

“The notion is yes you can probably teach students how to take a particular test or a particular type of test. It's not necessarily saying they're teaching exactly the same questions. Bu model questions that are parallel very closely the kinds of questions they're going to see on the test and you can limit instruction to that”

“And to the extent that occurs it occurs in some schools more than others. The interesting thing about this chart to me was it was occurring at the schools which are likely to have the largest concentration of minority students. The schools that are going to be really under the gun to push scores up and are the ones that are going to be toward the bottom end of the score distribution.

“So, all I’m doing is saying be careful out there for this push for accountability. You may be pushing people into behavior that you really don’t want to because it’s going to undercut your interpretation of scores...

(Both Texas and Kentucky educators there for the pep rally and vigorously challenged Dr. Klein. He didn’t back up at all PLUS there are nuggets that have direct relationship to psychometric tactics used explicitly during the TAAS testing era.)

“I am not saying that these people cheated or anything like that. I know that there’s something wrong. It’s not right. There nobody here who would say that there’s not a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and test scores. We see it in everything.

“What happens when that correlation goes away and then two weeks later it pops backup again with those same students? It’s not as if they learned something and then forgot it. That’s doesn’t happen. And it’s not <as if> the level came up or something like that. That’s what’s unique about these data. It’s exactly the same kids one for one. How could they suddenly do so poorly. So that’s why I’m suspect about the scores. It’s not the case of somebody coming and saying these kids really do excel. They really did learn a whole lot and on and so forth. But they did coming in with an alternative test should produce those same results right back again? It didn’t happen. That’s the part that concerns us...”

“...I didn’t speak to a system that achieved that result or not. I’m just saying I don’t trust the scores because I see relationships that are counterintuitive and counter experiential...”

One teacher said to me. Quite Frankly, well of course we’re teaching the kids this stuff. This is what they’re going to tested over. Why wouldn’t I team them that?