



A WORD TO THE WISE?

RAY FENTON, ANCHORAGE (ALASKA) SCHOOLS

I can clearly recall a clear and cold AERA day some years ago when one of our Midwestern colleagues tried to comfort me after what I thought was an usually self-serving series of data free presentations on how tests and standards were going to take us to a political nirvana of full funding and educational enlightenment. I listened to what he said because he had been a Junior High math teacher in my hometown and is a leader in our profession even though he lives in Iowa. He said something like: "The more testing that takes place the better it will be for those of us who believe that assessment is a key to understanding and improvement."

My past year has given me an unusual level of contact with our colleagues across the country and a chance to listen to their feelings and concerns. There is no longer much of a question about having statewide high stakes assessment programs. Most states now have some sort of program and from the White House to even Iowa there are efforts at systematic data collection and establishing systems for making judgments about programs and schools.

On the down side, some of our best colleagues have left our profession because of the political pressure to do whatever is necessary, ethical or not, to raise test scores. On the up side, the national struggle by NATD members and other men and women of good will to have assessment systems that do no harm to individual students and help school systems to improve and provide the best for every

student are showing some results.

NATD has been a special help to me because it has connected me with others who keep making the effort to make things better and keep the peace in the face of political bravado. I would like to see this NATD function expand so that all of us, even those of us who can not always take the time to make our annual meetings, can share this strength.

I have recently been thinking that we might just want to add a NATD voice to all of those who call for common sense and good practice in assessment with something that we could hang on our office walls to keep the focus on "do no harm" and "do good through good assessment." I am inspired by the good ideas of the Joint Committee on Testing Practice's *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* and the recent American Educational Research Association's well balanced statement on high stakes testing. I think NATD might go one step farther.

We can take the good ideas of our members and the other national groups raising to make up our own list of commandments of good practice for test directors. It would help to remind us and those with whom we work that only good assessment can be the key to understanding and improvement in education.

Want to help? Let me know. We can get started on this in Seattle if you think it is a good idea.

JCTP Update

*"Working together to advance,
in the public interest,
the quality of testing practices."*

NATD is now a proud member and has an active voice on the Joint Committee on Testing Practices. JCTP is composed of representatives from sponsoring organizations whose membership involve testing and assessment as a significant part of their work and/or whose members receive substantial training in the development, administration, interpretation, and use of tests and other assessment and appraisal measures. NATD has joined with the American Counseling Association (ACA), American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Speech-Language-Hearing (ASHA), American Psychological Association (APA), National Psychological Association (APA), and National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

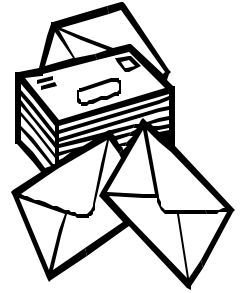
The first JCTP meeting was attended this past summer (Ray Fenton and Mary Yakimowski, along with alternate Steve Henry). Subsequent meetings held in Monterey and San Antonio also had NATD representation. Discussions and work completed focused on updating the *Code of Fair Testing Practices* to identify the responsibilities of Test Users and Test Developers. This updated *Code* will be in full alignment with the newly released second edition of the *Standards*.

This month, NATD members will receive a special announcement to provide feedback on the draft document produced. It is hoped that each NATD member will take the opportunity to provide feedback on this important document.

If There Is Strength In Numbers, NATD is Trying To Bulk Up!

JOSEPH O'REILLY, MESA (AZ) SCHOOLS

NATD has been reaching out to test directors so that we can be a more cohesive community and have a stronger voice in national assessment issues. The need for a community of test directors is probably obvious to us all. The job of test director is often a professionally isolated one. If you are lucky, you may have a colleague involved in assessment in one's office. But, more often, the test director's closest colleague is in another district.



The need to be involved in national assessment issues should be equally apparent. With presidential candidates in a nationally televised debate taking time to argue over how much testing should go on, you know that testing is a hot policy issue. The test directors who have responsibility for making assessment systems work need to have a hand in turning sound bites into workable policy.

NATD has been working hard to build community and strengthen our voice. A few years ago we created a web site and listserv for test directors. Last year we focused on inviting state test directors to join our organization.

Our latest effort is a mailing to the test directors in over 800 of the largest districts in the country inviting them to join. And, even if they don't join, we will be making them aware of the resources for test directors provided by NATD.

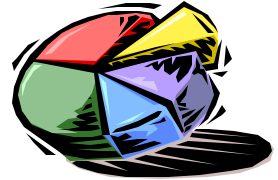
If you are in a large district, you probably received one of these letters. This isn't a mistake. We would like you to pass it on to a test director who might benefit from being a member of NATD. This will help him or her, and the organization as a whole.

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YOUR help is needed. You, too, can help build our membership. Please share our membership form enclosed within this newsletter to five friends you feel would benefit from being a member. It's \$20.00. A *wonderful* bargain.

ANALYZING, DISAGGREGATING, REPORTING, AND INTERPRETING STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

REVIEWED BY LINDA ELMAN, CENTRAL KITSAP (WA) SCHOOL DISTRICT



Working with schools both in my district and across the state of Washington, I am excited about the growing interest in using data for exploring student achievement. School personnel are excited about tools that allow them to disaggregate data on various demographic factors, and are eager to know how to work with the data. They frequently ask questions such as “How much difference is worth looking at, what’s the best way to look at these data, or more commonly, Linda, can you break my data down this way or that way?” So, I was eager to have the opportunity to read and review the Jaeger and Tucker work.

The book is short—only 65 pages, and I thought it might make a nice piece to use working with principals in my district. It might give them some of the tools they need to work with their staff in exploring assessment results. In fact, the authors state that the book is written for teachers, principals, and other building, district, and state staff. At the opening of the document is an index to topics of interest. This index identifies which pages deal with each of the various concepts explored such as “Identifying Questions,” or protecting confidentiality by not reporting groups that are so small that individual identities could be discovered. At the end of the book is a series of appendices that include directions for computing effect sizes, or computing confidence intervals around percentages or averages. The appendices themselves are very useful.

The central portion of the book is organized around three vignettes that illustrate a school district, a school, and a state exploring their student achievement data in line with and beyond the new Title I requirements. Each vignette begins with a set of questions that are addressed through the story. In

each one, a committee or staff team discuss how they are exploring their data, including describing the uses, advantages, and limitations of various graphic and statistical techniques such as using box plots or calculating standard errors to establish confidence intervals as they interpret their results.

Unfortunately, the body of the text is difficult to follow. The text is very dense. It consists of the records of the meetings of the various groups who were analyzing the data - *at meeting one this occurred, or at meeting two Dr. So and So said . . .*, etc. The message of the techniques used, the information gained, and the issues and problems addressed get buried in the prose. With few subheadings and only an occasional bulleted list, the text made it difficult to isolate the issues that are being addressed. And the language, while intended to be conversational, is often very difficult to understand. For example, one marginal highlight drawn from the text on page 35 reads:

“Knowing that an observed difference is unlikely to be equal to zero in the populations underlying the observed samples offers no more than a small degree of comfort and tells nothing about whether the observed difference is large or small in a substantive sense.”

While this excerpt is a little more intelligible in the context of the paragraph that surrounds it, it is not the kind of text that the principals and teachers I know would be comfortable reading. Equally frustrating is the placement of figures. Since the graphics are not

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Analyzing the Data

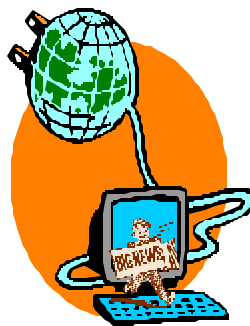
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generally embedded in the sections where they are being discussed, I often found myself leafing back several pages to find the right figure. Further, the figures are frequently placed in clusters that display different disaggregations of the same dependent variable, without explicit explanations near the figures explaining the similarities or differences. I found myself wishing that the authors had used the marginal space (often used for quotations throughout the text) next to the figures to highlight interpretations, or limitations in interpretations for that figure; or comparisons and contrasts among adjacent figures.

Finally, the book only deals with criterion-referenced assessment, although I can't find reference to that limitation in the introductory section. This may have kept the book short, but it does not advise those schools, states, and districts working with norm-referenced testing about the difficulties that lie in disaggregating those scores. (So CTBS averages NCE's and ITBS averages *standard scores* that are then converted via a look-up table to percentiles—does that really matter?)

In this day of increased accountability our schools are being encouraged (if not forced) to study their assessment data in ways they have never been asked to do before. We need good tools for test directors that help staff in our buildings look at their data through a variety of lenses. Those districts, too small to have a trained test director, need these kinds of tools even more. The Jaeger and Tucker book, in its current form, is unlikely to serve that need.

Jaeger, R.M., and Tucker, C.G. (1998) *Analyzing, Disaggregating, Reporting, and Interpreting Students' Achievement Test Results: A Guide to Practice for Title I and Beyond*, Washington D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers.



Breaking NATD News

Please keep posted on the NATD web site [<http://www.natd.org>] for continuously updated information.

2001 NATD/NCME Symposium

Test Security in a High Stakes Environment: Myth or Reality?

Session Day/Time: Friday Afternoon
4:45 6:15 p.m.

Session Location: Convention Center, Room 307,
3rd Floor

Moderators: Carole Perlman, Chicago (IL) Public Schools; Jim Myerberg, Montgomery County (MD) Schools

Presenters:
Gregory Cizek, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Michael Kean, CTB/McGraw Hill
Linda Frazer, Kentucky State Department of Education
Mary E. Yakimowski-Srebnick, Hampton (VA) Schools



Discussants:
Joseph O'Reilly, Mesa (AZ) Public Schools
Zollie Stevenson, U.S. Department of Education

Editor's note: The NATD organization is saddened by the death of Dr. R. M. Jaeger, one of the authors of the book reviewed by L. Elman. NCME has announced that a special symposium session will be held in his memory during the upcoming AERA/NCME meeting. Please check the NCME website for updated information.

CHEATING ON TESTS: HOW TO DO, DETECT, PREVENT IT

REVIEWED BY MARY YAKIMOWSKI, HAMPTON (VA) CITY SCHOOLS

You have been asked to speak on the issue of cheating. Or, you are interested in developing a policy statement with guidelines for use within your state or district to address the issue of cheating. Or, you have been asked to testify in a case regarding a testing “irregularity.” What should you do? Cheat. Yes, cheat. Rather than conduct a comprehensive review of literature available of the topic, go to one of the most definitive, comprehensive sources available, Greg Cizek’s new book called *Cheating on Tests: How to Do It, Detect It, and Prevent It*.

This 232-page book is balanced with theoretical, research-based, practical and legal information on cheating. It is supplemented with 16 pages incorporating over three hundred reference citations along with a subject index. It is within the narrative portion that you get the notion that Cizek has done a most comprehensive search of the information available on this topic. He has done his homework and not cheated as this is the first book ever published on this “secretive” topic.

Cizek begins by introducing and defining the problem of cheating. Studies conducted that explore the extent of cheating occurrences are noted. Readers begin to be able to answer questions such as:

- ⇒ What percentage of our elementary school students report that they have personally cheated on tests?
- ⇒ What percentage of our high school students cheat on a regular basis?

Cizek then focuses on the various methods used to cheat. While accepting that it is impossible to totally stop cheating, Cizek takes the reader through an exploration of the wide range of methods that may be used to prevent and detect cheating incidences.

He does this in a very open, honest way. He even goes to confession by sharing his own first-hand experience with cheating on the SRA program. Academic integrity and due process policies also are discussed.



This is a book that is a **MUST READ** for the test director, especially with today’s increased pressures for both examiners and examinees to perform well in this age of accountability. It is hoped that in the next edition Cizek will continue to expand his works by incorporate discussions on appropriate and inappropriate test preparation practices. Though many anecdotes are provided, it is hoped that additional ones tied to the seriousness of the issue (such as loss of certification credentials) will be explored in the next edition.

A book on this topic was long overdue. It is comprehensive, informative, entertaining, and provocative. It is one that should be widely read, not only by those with responsible for directing testing programs, but by those who are educational leaders responsible for instruction. Place this on your professional reading list.

Cizek, G. J. (1999). *Cheating on Tests: How to Do It, Detect It, and Prevent It*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

On Deterring Cheating (Cizek, 1999)

A certain seminary student was taking the final examination in Introduction to New Testament Studies, a course taught by a professor with a reputation for very difficult tests and stingy grading. While distributing the final examination, the professor announced to his class “You may look upward for inspiration, or downward for concentration, but not to the side for information”

UPCOMING NATD AND RELATED EVENTS

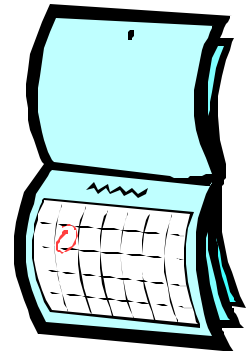
We hope to see everyone in Seattle in April. Please be sure to look for updates on the NATD website [www.NATD.org]. Here are some things to be sure to mark in your calendar to attend.

Monday, April 9

Renaissance Hotel, North Ballroom
Directors of Research and Evaluation (DRE) Meeting
8:00 A.M. Continental Breakfast
9:30-5 P.M. Meeting
Nancy Baenen, DRE President/Program Chair

Tuesday, April 10

Westin Hotel
Cascade Ballroom 2
NATD Breakfast
Hosted by NCS
7:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M.
NATD General Meeting
8:00 A.M.-12:00 A.M.
Ray Fenton, NATD
President, Presiding



NATD Officers and Board Members

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Dr. Ray Fenton
Anchorage School District
fenton_ray@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us

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yakimowski@aol.com

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Yonkers Public Schools
dhweval@bestweb.net

IM. PAST PRESIDENT

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Topeka Public Schools
shenry@topeka.k12.ks.us

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Santa Anna U.S.D.
mkolls@saussd.k12.ca.us

Dr. M. Kevin Matter (2001)
Cherry Creek Schools
kmatter@mail.ccsd.k12.co.us

Dr. Philip Morse (2004)
Orange Unified School District
philm.is.orangeusd.k12.ca.us

Dr. Gretchen Ridgeway (2003)
Dept. of Defense Education Activity
gretchen_ridgeway@odedodea.edu

Wednesday, April 11

NATD Dinner (By Invitation to members with confirmed RSVP)

Friday, April 13

Sheraton Hotel
35th Floor Cirrus Room Division H
Breakfast
7:30 A.M. (Ticket Required)
Division H Business Meeting
8:00 A.M.-10:15 A.M.

Friday, April 13

Convention Center
Room 307, 3rd Floor
NATD/NCME Symposium
4:45-6:15 p.m.
Test Security in a High Stakes Environment: Myth or Reality?

Friday, April 13

Pike Street Market
Annual Division H
Sing-A-Long Social
7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.



National Association of Test Directors Membership Application Form

US Department of Revenue Taxpayer ID# 222659646



Please type or print neatly.

Name: Dr. Mrs. Ms. Mr. _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____

E-Mail: _____

Check here to request that your directory information not be published on our NATD web site. _____

Membership Category: (please check one)

_____ Active Member: Responsible for educational testing programs in settings not primarily for profit.

_____ Emeritus Member: Active NATD member for at least five years and no longer employed on full time basis.

_____ Associate Member: Not directly responsible for testing programs and/or involved in test development primarily for profit.

Annual dues are \$20.00. Please make checks payable to "NATD".

Mail your check and completed application to:

*Dr. David Weinberger, NATD Treasurer
Yonkers Public Schools
150 Rockland Ave.
Yonkers, NY 10705 USA*



NATD Newsletter

The purposes of the NATD organization:

- ⇒ To share information about testing in educational settings.
- ⇒ To encourage the appropriate use of testing in educational settings.
- ⇒ To improve the applications of measurement to students and educational programs.
- ⇒ To encourage research in the area of elementary and secondary school testing and measurement.

