

Hanover Wellness Education News

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<http://www.hanoverschools.org>

Do Food Colorings Promote Health?

Some people eat with their eyes as much as they do with their mouth. In a supermarket fresh produce calls us with vivid colors and organic shapes. Brightly colored packages and images seek our attention over competing brands. Many food products are colored with bright synthetic dyes that turn unattractive mixtures of basic ingredients and food additives into enticing novelties. These colors can come from food, drug and cosmetic (FD & C) colors (also known as food coloring additives and dyes) such as Red #3, Red #40, Blue #1, Blue #2, Green #3, Yellow #5 and Yellow #6. Winter (2004) describes a color additive as a dye, pigment, or substance capable of coloring a food (or a drug or cosmetic).

A full report on Food dyes (Kobylewski & Jacobson, 2009) can be found on the food dye web page (see URL below) of the Center for Science in the Public Interest's web site.

<http://www.cspinet.org/fooddyes/>

Kobylewski & Jacobson (2009) state that FD & C colors are complex organic chemicals that were originally derived from coal tar, but now come from petroleum. Companies like using them because they are cheap, stable, and brighter than most natural colorings. Consumer preference for natural foods is leading some companies to either not add colorings or to switch to safe natural colorings, such as beta-carotene (a precursor to vitamin A), paprika, beet juice, and turmeric. These natural colorings are common in Europe. Red 40, Yellow 5, and Yellow 6—account for 90 percent of all dyes used. The FDA's data show a dramatic five-fold increase in consumption of dyes since 1955. That increase is an indication of how we have rely on processed foods, such as soda, cereals, candies, snack foods, baked foods, frozen desserts, and even pickles and salad dressings, colored with dyes.

Studies of the dyes currently approved by the FDA suggest that most of the dyes may contribute to health problems such as cancer, hypersensitivity, or neurotoxicity (including hyperactivity). Most of the research was commissioned, conducted, and interpreted by the chemical industry itself in its testing labs with its academic consultants. Most dyes fail the FDA's safety requirement "that there is convincing evidence that no harm will result from the intended use of the color additive (Kobylewski & Jacobson, 2009)."

Many natural colorings could be used in place of dyes: beet juice, beta-caramel, carotene, carrot juice, chlorophyll, elderberry juice, grape juice/skin, paprika extract, purple corn, purple sweet potato, red cabbage, and turmeric (Kobylewski & Jacobson, 2009).

The content of this newsletter is not meant to provide anyone with personal medical advice which you should obtain from your health care provider.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

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What is Muscle Fitness?

This month's issue of the Hanover Wellness Education News will focus on defining muscle fitness and how students can improve their muscle fitness.

What is Muscle Fitness?

Muscle fitness is the combination of adequate muscular strength and muscular endurance.

Muscular strength is the ability of the muscles to exert an external force or to lift a heavy weight. A fit person can do work or play that involves exerting force, such as lifting or controlling one's own body weight.

Muscular endurance is the ability of the muscles to exert themselves repeatedly. A fit person can repeat movements for a long period of time. Because of the integrated status of muscular strength and muscular strength they are often referred to simply as muscle fitness.

Progressive resistance training is a method of improving muscle fitness.

Progressive resistance training (PRT – also called progressive resistance exercise or strength training) is doing exercise against a resistance. PRT provides stress on the bones and promotes muscle fitness. Together with good diet, including adequate calcium and vitamin D intake, this stress on the bones reduces the risk of osteoporosis. PRT can improve bone density (also known as peak bone mass). As we age bone mass decreases. People who have a high bone density when they are young have higher levels of bone mass density from which to draw from as they age (Corbin et al, 2004). PRT increases one's ability to exert or resist force. Free weights, body weight, machines, or other devices (elastic bands, tubing) can provide resistance. Strength training is an essential part of all fitness programs. It can assist in increasing motor skill, fitness and injury prevention. PRT is a sequential and progressive method for exercising with a developmentally appropriate resistance that can be increased gradually.

Improved muscle fitness can provide:

- Greater musculoskeletal strength and endurance
- Stronger tendons and ligaments that support muscles
- Greater bone mineral density
- Improved body composition
- Improved blood lipid profile
- Increased metabolic rate – burning of more calories during and after exercise
- Decreased chance of muscle injury and sports related injuries
- Reduced risk of muscular imbalance and overuse injuries
- Reduced risk of lower back problems
- Better posture

- More efficient physical activity and sport performance
- Greater work capacity
- Quicker recovery after vigorous physical activity
- Improved ability to meet emergencies
- Improved self esteem and confidence

Progressive resistance training (PRT) is the best type of training for muscles fitness (muscular strength and muscular endurance). The term PRT is used because the frequency, intensity and length of time of muscle overload are progressively increased as muscle fitness increases. PRT is exercise done against a resistance.

What about strength training for youth?

PRT is appropriate and safe for ALL individuals if the equipment, program and supervision are appropriately matched to the person. Competitive weight lifting, maximal lifts and body building are to be AVOIDED by children and adolescents. Careful and proper observation, instruction and supervision are the most important elements in quality muscle fitness exercise for children. Wayne Westcott of the Quincy (MA) YMCA has conducted hundreds of strength training programs with children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 15 for many years without a single training related injury (Faigenbaum and Westcott, 2007).

PRT can be a safe, effective and beneficial method of exercise to build health muscles, joints and bones. The qualified acceptance of youth PRT by medical and fitness organizations has become almost universal.

If your child is ready to participate in organized sports (e.g., gymnastics, football, basketball, baseball, soccer) it is usually safe to begin strength training. This training program should not a scaled down adult strength training program.

General youth resistance training guidelines (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2008; Faigenbaum & Westcott, 2007):

- Strength training programs for preadolescents and adolescents are safe and effective if proper resistance training techniques and safety precautions are followed
- Youth should receive qualified instruction and supervision
- Begin learning exercise technique with no (or very little) resistance
- Ensure the exercise environment is safe and free of hazards
- Begin each session with a 5-10 minute dynamic warm up
- Perform 10-15 (if the resistance cannot be moved ten times with proper form the resistance is too great) repetitions on a variety of exercises for major muscle groups 2-3 times per week on nonconsecutive days
- The number of sets can be increased up to three
- Each repetition should last four to six seconds with a full range of motion with a one to two minute rest period between sets
- Focus on correct exercise technique instead of the amount lifted
- Strength training sessions should last approximately 20-30 minutes

- Cool down with low intensity activities and static stretching
- Preadolescents and adolescents should avoid competitive weight lifting, power lifting body building and maximal lifts until they reach physical and skeletal maturity

When inactive people begin a physical activity program they should start low and go slow by gradually increasing how often and how long activities are done

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Hanover Wellness Education News

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What is Core Muscle Fitness?

Many consider core fitness as a level of strength or endurance of the abdominal muscles. This is a narrow and incorrect view of the body's core. Your core is the lumbopelvic hip complex. The lumbopelvic area contains the hips, low back, and abdominals (Wilson, Dougherty, Ireland, & Davis, 2005).

The body could be described as a kinetic chain because its segments act as a system of links, where the energy generated at one link is transferred to the next. Movement depends on this chain and on efficient energy transfer from one link to the next. For example, the hips can transfer rotational energy up through the trunk to the shoulder in order to allow one to throw harder. Regardless of the skill, it is essential to have correct biomechanical positioning, or postural control, in order to maximize energy transfer.

Correct postural control requires a strong, stable core. A strong and stable core allows one to transfer energy effectively as well as reduce undue stress. An unstable or weak core, will not allow for optimal force or energy production and ultimately require compensation in other areas to make up for the lack of force production.

A weak core can result in injury. A strong core can reduce injury and enhance movement performance. Traditionally, children and youths lack proper postural control. For them to develop efficient biomechanical function of both the upper and lower extremities, it is necessary to maintain a strong and stable core. The musculature that controls the core is critical for trunk stabilization and efficient movement of the upper and lower extremities.

As children grow, they continue to experience changes in core strength due to the lengthening of their musculature as it adapts to postural changes. Core weakness predisposes individuals to injury (Zazulak, Cholewicki, & Reeves, 2008). In addition, traditional strength training is not designed to address core musculature weakness.

Postural instability is frequently seen in children, both in those who do not participate in sports and those who do participate. Typically, children with postural instabilities don't display upright posture.

Not all injuries are a result of core weakness or a lack of core stability. However, many injuries that are not caused by direct contact are due to body mechanics. These injuries can be linked to a lack of core stability.

Core stability could play a role in noncontact knee injuries. It has also been speculated that inadequate core stability may compromise the dynamic stability of the lower extremities, which could lead to increased stress on the soft tissue about the knee and thereby cause an

injury (Bendjaballah, Shirazi-Adl, & Zukor, 1997; Hewett, Zazulak, Myer, & Ford, 2005; Markolf et al., 1995).

Functional Posture

☐☐ Being able to maintain a stable core allows for instant adaptations to postural changes that occur with movement. In order to perform movements at functional capacity, we need to be able to support body weight through postural control. A functional movement is one that duplicates the movements required in the activity that one is training for or performing.

Sit-ups are probably the least functional of all activities because there are no activities that require lying on one's back and performing trunk flexion. The core is the initiator of all voluntary movements, making it important to train it functionally.

Few functional movements, especially sports movements, are preformed in one of the three planes. Almost all functional movements occur in more than one plane. People typically train muscles for their primary action and neglect what the muscle is doing during the functional, dynamic movement.

For example, some may employ push ups in order to develop upper body muscle fitness. However, this is not the best choice because this movement does not activate the whole body and the core. A more specific, functional movement could engage the lower extremities, the core, and the upper extremities. This would allow the person to strengthen those areas and work different segments in the kinetic chain permitting them to work together.

If athletes train the movement and not the muscles, they will begin to engage the core throughout all exercises. The core needs to be trained in isolation as well as within other movements.

Core-strengthening programs have been used in high level adult training for many years. The same health and performance outcomes are possible for young people. By increasing core strength, students will benefit from greater efficiency in body control and balance, reduction of injury, and improved stability through proper posture.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

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10th Annual Cedar School Screen-based Media Turnoff Week

Excessive recreational screen-based media time (e.g., watching video and television, playing video games and recreational computer use) displaces time that could be spent reading (potentially delaying literacy), doing homework, engaging in health enhancing physical activity and interacting with one's family. Excessive screen-based media time can have adverse physical, behavioral and psychosocial effects on children (Davis, 2008).

Physical effects

Video game use is associated with upper body musculoskeletal disorders (repetitive use injuries). Video games and television viewing are independently associated with obesity (Davis, 2008).

Behavioral effects

Screen-based media can influence children in undesirable ways. Aggressive thoughts can be more common while pro-social behavior can be decreased in the short term (Davis, 2008). TV shows are often filled with violent solutions to problems (University of Michigan, 2010). These violent acts often go unpunished and are accompanied by humor. The consequences of human suffering and loss are rarely depicted. Too much time watching television has been associated with higher rates of attention problems in children (Medlineplus, 2011).

Psychosocial effects

Excessive amounts of screen-based media may take the place of social interaction with friends and family, depriving young people of sharing ideas and feelings with others. This can prevent parents and caregivers from learning more about their children (Medlineplus, 2011).

Children can learn information from screen-based media that is inappropriate and incorrect. Violence, sexuality, race and gender stereotypes, drug and alcohol abuse can be common themes of television (AACAP, 2001). Many young people cannot tell the difference between the fantasy presented on video and reality. Some are influenced by thousands of advertisements for alcohol, junk food, and toys they view each day.

More facts about screen-based media.

The likelihood of poorer school performance increases with increasing weekday screen time (Sharif & Sargent, 2006). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2009) recommends that children limit TV watching to one to two hours of quality programming per day.

Screen based media rates (KFF, 2010)

8-18-year-olds spend:

- 4 hours and 29 minutes watching television per day
- 1 hour and 29 minutes using computers per day
- 2-11-year-olds spend 24 minutes using the Internet per day (Nielson, 2010a)
- 25 minutes watching movies per day
- Boys spend 1 hour and 21 minutes per day playing console video game and computer games per day

The average American watches 35 hours and 34 minutes of TV per week (Nielson, 2010b).

In order to create more time for physical activity and reading students (and parents and staff) may participate in the Cedar School annual Screen turnoff week from Monday, February 28 through Sunday, March 6, 2011. See the May Wellness Education News for guidelines and a log to record your progress.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

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10th Annual Cedar School Screen-based Media Turnoff Week

Hanover students (and parents and staff) who wish to reduce their screen-based media time may participate the Cedar School annual Screen turnoff week from Monday, February 28 through Sunday, March 6, 2011.

Table 1 provides an explanation of the challenge. Table 2 is a log for recording your physical activity, reading and screen time.

Table 1: The Screen-based Media, Physical Activity, and Reading Challenge (Screen turnoff week).			
Name _____		Class _____	
I am learning to increase my level of physical activity and reading and decrease my level of sedentary behavior and recreational screen-based media			
Instructions. Set your goal. Choose your level of commitment by circling level one, two, three or four for the time you will spend: using screen-based media, being physically active and reading. You may choose a different level for each aspect of the challenge. The screen based media that we ask you to limit or sacrifice includes: • Watching television, movies, DVD's and video • Playing video games • Using a computer for a non-educational/recreational purpose such as playing a video game Reading online (at a website like www.nytimes.com) would be an acceptable use of time. Using a computer for research, writing/typing and composing an email or a Word document would also be acceptable (educational). We defer to you, the parent or caregiver, to identify non educational/recreational computer time Participate in enjoyable physical activity Physical activity includes any moderate to vigorous physical activity that you will enjoy doing such as walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, exercise, playing a sport, dancing, gymnastics, strength training, stretching and so forth. Aim for at least one hour of enjoyable physical activity every day. Read Try to read at least 15-20 minutes each day. This can include the newspaper (on line or in print), a magazine, picture book chapter book and or comic book. Younger children can ask a caregiver to read to them.			
Level of commitment	Total screen time For the week	Total Physical activity time for the week	Total Reading time for the week
Level 4	0	Greater than or equal to 21 hours	Greater than or equal to 8 hours
Level 3	Less than 4 hours	Greater than or equal to 16 hours	Greater than or equal to 6 hours
Level 2	Less than 8 hours	Greater than or equal to 11 hours	Greater than or equal to 4 hours
Level 1	Less than 14 hours	Greater than or equal to 7 hours	Greater than or equal to 2 hours
Tips for Success 1. Identify reasons why it is important for you to achieve your goal of eliminating or reducing screen based media time. It will give me more time to spend: with my family, reading, exercising, playing, doing school work... 2. Identify obstacles that might keep you from avoiding recreational screen based media: other people in the house watching TV, bad weather might prevent outside activity, boredom, feeling tired. 3. Identify physical activities that you enjoy doing: playing sports, dancing, going for a walk, exercising, playing games with family and or friends. 4. Identify books and periodicals that you would enjoy reading (or having read to you). Picture books, chapter books, newspaper, magazine, comic book. 5. Identify friends or family members who will support you: Father, mother, brother, sister, friend, grandmother, grandfather. 6. Celebrate your success. You could celebrate a job well done by having a party for yourself, reading a book, or doing a favorite physical activity.			

What about Exergames?

Exergames are video games that provide physical activity. Exergames include such electronic devices as Konami's Dance Dance Revolution, Nintendo's Wii and Wii Fit, The Fisher-Price Smart Cycle, PlayStation's Gamercize, game stationary bicycles and the like. We recommend that exergames NOT take the place of physical activity performed in realistic settings. Whenever possible, physical activity should occur unconnected or untethered to electronic devices. These activities include: going for a walk, dancing, doing gymnastics, or playing sports. However, exergaming physical activity is better than no physical activity.

Table 2: Screen-based Media, Physical Activity, and Reading Challenge Log

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____								
I am learning to increase my level of physical activity and reading and decrease my level of sedentary behavior								
Instructions: Choose a goal representing the amount of time you will spend for screen time, physical activity and reading for the week. Record the number of hours and minutes that you participate in physical activity, watch screen based media and read in the appropriate box at the end of each day. Write the total amount of time you spent doing each behavior for the week in the proper box in the column on the far right.								
Activity Type	Monday 2/28 Total time	Tuesday 3/1 Total time	Wednesday 3/2 Total time	Thursday 3/3 Total time	Friday 3/4 Total time	Saturday 3/5 Total time	Sunday 3/6 Total time	Total hours and minutes
Screen Time	Screen time:	Screen time:	Screen time:	Screen time:	Screen time:	Screen time:	Screen time:	Screen time:
Goal level:								
Physical activity time	Physical activity time:	Physical activity time:	Physical activity time:	Physical activity time:	Physical activity time:	Physical activity time:	Physical activity time:	Physical activity time:
Goal level:								
Reading time	Reading time:	Reading time:	Reading time:	Reading time:	Reading time:	Reading time:	Reading time:	Reading time:
Goal level:								
_____ has successfully completed the requirements of level ____ for screen time, level ____ for physical activity and level ____ for reading. Signature of parent or caregiver: _____								

Hanover Wellness Education News

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“On most traditional tests, we ask students just a small fragment what they know and in a way they may not be able to tell us what they know.” Peter Sacks (1999).

What is Healthy School Testing?

A standardized test is a test that is administered, scored and interpreted in a uniform predetermined manner (Popham, 2005).

The standardized test has many limitations as a tool for measuring student learning. These include: measurement error; influences of non-school factors on achievement; using the results to make high stakes decisions; narrowing of cognition, English/language arts, and the school curriculum; teachers and schools gaming the accountability system; and the minimal value of the results of a single test.

Problems with the Standardized Test as an Accountability Metric

Standardized tests represent the tested curriculum in English/Language arts and mathematics. What these tests measure represents a small portion of what an educated person needs to understand and do. The standardized test has been described as a crude, highly inferential, statistical measurement with arbitrary time constraints that contains a hodge-podge of imposed, de-contextualized, contrived, incomplete, and secret proxy items poorly correlated with valuable real world accomplishment (Koretz, 2008; Wiggins, 1989, 1992, 1993; Gilbert, 1978). Such tests ask students to provide a small portion of what they know and can do in ways they may not be able to do so. Further, the skills vital for success in the labor market in the near future are difficult to measure with standardized tests (Blinder, 2009).

Tests Suffer from Measurement Error

Test scores on polished reports provide an illusion of accuracy. However, a large number of varied factors can result in students receiving scores that do not accurately reflect what they know, understand, and can do (Stiggins, 2005). A partial list of measurement error factors can include language barriers for ELL students, improper content sampling, item bias, poorly trained scorers, and insufficient time to complete the test.

Strong Influence of Non-school Factors on Student Achievement

Many variables other than the quality of the school can influence test results. The impact of non-school factors can be enormous (Koretz, 2008). These factors include the educational attainment and income level of parents, parent involvement in the child's

education (e.g., reading to their children, use of complex language at home, exposure to cultural experiences), student motivation, adequate preventive health care, proper nutrition (especially a proper breakfast) and rest, number of educated role models in the community, and the ability of students to put forth a sustained effort toward the achievement of learning targets (Koretz, 2008; Rothstein, 2011b).

High test scores for schools can be a result of socioeconomic factors and not because of the quality of teaching that the school provides (Koretz, 2008). In other words, high scores can hide poor instruction and low scores can mask quality instruction.

Overemphasizing Test Results Corrupts Schools

When we put pressure on schools to produce higher test scores each year (e.g., make adequate yearly progress) without complementary measures of student performance, education becomes distorted (Koretz, 2008; Shepard, 2000). Teachers will teach to the test to produce good results for what is measured at the expense of not learning what is not measured. Each year standardized tests sample from the many topics in math and English/language arts. Schools emphasize the topics likely to appear on tests rather than other equally important but untested topics. Schools also increase their use of test like problem styles and formats (Hamilton et al, 2007).

Schools can predict test content with little worry that the test will change. Specific test items vary each year but large variation in the format of the test does not happen. This is because it would be expensive and undermine statistical equating procedures used to ensure the comparability of the tests from one year to the next. Thus, many schools spend much time analyzing previous tests and predicting topics and question formats in order to teach to the test (Baker et al, 2010).

Cognitive Narrowing

In the standards-based test preparation environment teaching as simple transmitting of information increases while the promotion of conceptual understanding and critical thinking decreases (Shepard, 2000). Such an environment results in students becoming objects of the test rather than active learners who build skills and construct understanding.

Baker et al (2010) describe cognitive narrowing that takes place within English/language arts and math. Since it is less expensive and quicker to score tests that include only or primarily multiple choice questions, tests include no or few extended writing or problem solving items, and therefore do not measure conceptual understanding, communication, scientific investigation, technology and real-world application and many other skills. Some high level thinking and reasoning skills can be measured with multiple-choice exams but most cannot be. Thus, teachers who are evaluated by students' scores on these tests have reasons to teach toward the acquisition of procedural knowledge over higher levels of cognitive performance.

Narrowing of English/language Arts

In reading another form of curriculum narrowing occurs. Test makers attempt to avoid unfairness by developing short and simple texts that require students to interpret words. These types of questions simply require identifying the main idea, picking out details and getting events in the proper order instead of requiring inferential and critical reading abilities. Consequently, teachers drill students in these areas. Scores on “reading proficiency” will be inflated because they suggest better reading ability than a student may have (Baker et al, 2010).

Narrowing of the School Curriculum

The tested curriculum in English/Language arts and math has become the school's curriculum. McMurrer (2007) found that 62% of a nationally representative sample of school districts (and 75% of districts with at least one school identified as needing improvement) increased time for language arts and math. There was a 47% increase in time allocation in language arts and a 37% increase in math. These districts also decreased time allotted to science, social studies, art, music, physical education, and recess.

An overarching emphasis on student learning in tested subjects produces a “what gets measured gets done” (Peters, 1987; Spellings, 2005) or ‘what gets measured gets treasured’ effect on schools. This allows the untested essential skills, achievements and habits of mind to fall through the cracks of our accountability system (Wiggins, 1992). Students’ communication skills, depth of knowledge and understanding, reasoning, and performance abilities remain largely untested (Baker et al, 2010).

Hemmings (1980) describes this narrow education as training students for the race of life by exercising one leg and leaving the remaining parts of the body to atrophy. The result is a narrow unbalanced curriculum that produces learners who will never understand their true abilities nor who they are because the subjects where they perform best are not valued (Robinson, 2001). Our system of accountability through standardized testing puts a stamp on each child as capable, incapable, successful or unsuccessful. This results in many intelligent people completing school feeling as if they are not (Robinson, 2001).

Students who perform poorly on standardized tests, narrowly focused on English/language arts and math skills have much more potential for success in school and life than we have been able to measure (Gilbert, 1978). Schools need to publicly demonstrate that the skills students may have in music, visual and performing art, social studies, physical education, family and consumer science, foreign languages, and vocational arts are valued.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

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What is Healthy Testing?

“In all, educational testing is much like a powerful medication. If used carefully, it can be immensely informative, and it can be a very powerful tool for changing education for the better. Used indiscriminately, it poses a risk of various and severe side effects.”

Daniel Koretz, Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Education at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education (p. 9, 2010)

This month’s issue of the Hanover Wellness Education News continues the discussion (begun in the June, 2011 issue) of the limitations of the standardized test as a school accountability tool.

High Stakes Testing Results in Gaming the System

Since low scores can cause principals and teachers to be punished or rewarded some may cheat or “game the system” by excluding low performing students from a test, identifying disabilities in students (so they can receive test accommodations) or moving students to different schools. State departments of education may work the system by lowering the standard that represents proficiency or testing a small, predictable amount of state standards. In addition to “gaming” many schools, seeking a quick fix for scores, regularly adopt and reject educational fads (Shepard, 2000). Here, schools swing from fad to fad, leading students on a road to nowhere.

Teaching to the test and gaming the accountability system can result in enormous score inflation (Koretz, 2010). Score inflation is when test scores go up without a corresponding improvement in student learning (Shepard, 2000). Scores inflate because they represent small samples of large domains of learning. Inflated scores create an illusion of progress and achievement, and an overrepresentation of what students have achieved within a tested area (e.g., reading, math). For example, a parent may see a high score in math and believe that her child is advanced in all areas of math. However, the student may only be somewhat proficient in number sense and computation.

Koretz (2010) notes that something like score inflation could also arise in schools – Campbell’s law. Campbell’s law states that the more emphasis a quantitative measurement receives, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and alter the processes it is intended to monitor. He cites the example of New York cardiologists who occasionally do not operate on patients requiring heart surgery because they are afraid it may negatively impact their mortality statistics (Santora, 2005). Teachers could respond similarly by trying to avoid the students who need their help most.

The Results of a Single Test Tell Us Little

For almost one hundred years testing experts have recommended against using the results of a single test score to make major decisions. The father of the intelligence test, Alfred Binet, once noted that judging intelligence solely upon the results of a single test is “chimerical and absurd” (Binet & Simon, 1916, p. 243). He also stated that one test signifies nothing and the results of five or six tests may signify something (Binet & Simon, 1983). Marzano (2006) recommends using four or five (when in doubt look for more evidence) pieces of assessment evidence in order to provide a score for a specific student learning target. The Joint Council on Testing Practices (JCTP, 2004) states that test users should not rely on the results of a single test as the sole determinant of decisions about the test taker to make high stakes decisions (e.g., retention, promotion, graduation, closing schools, firing or rewarding principals and teachers). Interpretations of standardized test scores should be done in conjunction with other information (JCTP, 2004; Koretz, 2008).

E. F. Lindquist (1951) one of the developers of the first standardized tests, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), reminded us to consider test scores as a supplement and not a replacement for other evidence of student performance. An ITBS (Hoover et al, 2003) manual stated that it is inappropriate to use the score from a single test to assign students to special education, retain students in grade level, screen students for enrollment, evaluate the effectiveness of a school or identify the best teachers. The advice of these experts is routinely ignored by many of the users of standardized tests (Koretz, 2008).

Wiggins (1993) poses a question from baseball in order to show the folly of using a single standardized test as an accountability system. He asks if we could promote accountability and identify the quality of a baseball team or player by arbitrarily choosing one inning from one of 162 games, combine many diverse statistics (i.e., base running, fielding and batting) with a complex and secret formula, and identify a number to represent proficiency. If the player’s score was above or below that number should the team or player be rewarded or punished accordingly?

Instead, we should directly examine student performance by sampling it (authentically) several times over the entire season or school year. We have to examine the entire game and look past the numbers to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of the performers. For example, a good student (hitter) may receive less feedback and guidance from the coach (the teacher) and get fewer opportunities to show what she can do. Further, many individual (student and teacher) competencies cannot be isolated since they are usually dependent on the achievements of others.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

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What is Healthy Testing?

“One must learn by doing; for though you think you know it you have no certainty until you try.”

Sophocles 270 A.D. (Gasparski & Botham, 1998, p. 14)

“Tests should teach not just measure.”

Grant Wiggins (1998, p. 139)

“Students, like adults, do their best work when there is a clear opportunity for self-satisfaction – the feeling that comes from having mastered something or contributed something of obvious value.”

Grant Wiggins (1993, p. 138)

Using Performance-based Student Assessment to Measure Student Performance

In order to overcome the limitations of the traditional standardized test the United States should consider employing performance-based assessment to measure student performance. A number of states have introduced performance-based assessments such as open-ended questions, written explanations of problem solving tasks and experiments. Consequently, teachers in these states have required more writing and extended math tasks in classroom learning experiences and tests (David, 2011; Koretz, Mitchell, Barron, & Keith, 1996).

Standardized tests use proxy items to measure student learning and require teachers to infer the student’s true abilities. Conversely, performance-based tasks can be directly aligned with state learning targets and show direct evidence of the attainment of the learning targets we value most in all subject areas. Schools can hold schools and teachers accountable for valuable student accomplishments through performance assessment (also referred to as performance-based assessment, performance learning, authentic assessment, alternative assessment and authentic instruction). In such a system student engagement and motivation are increased since students are able to show off what they can do rather than pass a trial by question (Sizer, 1991; Wiggins, 1993).

Performance-based Assessment in Action

The use of performance-based tasks with explicit performance standards and criteria (i.e., a rubric) produces valid and reliable assessment (Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Wiggins, 1990). The performance standard and performance criteria show students, parents and others what mastery and understanding look like. In other words, a performance standard shows how well students need to perform to pass - “how good is good enough.” Performance criteria describe major

performance traits, in explicitly descriptive language, of what novice to expert levels of performance look like.

Performances and products should be integrated into a portfolio – a purposeful collection of student work that shows student progress or achievement in a given area. In this portfolio system students identify goals, select and reflect upon their work, self-assess against criteria, chart growth, and identify the next steps necessary for improvement. The portfolio acts as a passport to the next level of learning (Wolf, 1993).

Large Scale Performance-based Assessment

Performance-based assessment has worked in New York City. At the New York performance standards consortium (2003) students in 28 schools across the state produce: analytic literary essays, social studies research papers, science experiments, and applications of high level mathematics (Foote, 2007). The performances and products are scored by teachers (internal evaluators) and external evaluators (test experts, researchers, legal and business professionals). These juries or teams of judges monitor the performance assessment system and samples of student work. Students at these schools have lower dropout rates and higher rates of attendance and college acceptance than their public school peers (Foote, 2007). These evaluations can provide legislators, state and federal education departments, citizens and parents with credible evidence of student achievement. Meier (1998) notes that since juries decide matters of law they should also be able to determine matters of student learning.

In order to report achievement to groups outside the school performance tasks need to be validated and scoring needs to be feasible and reliable. Assessment results should be reported so that all customers are satisfied with the data (Wiggins, 1992). Performance testing has its issues. It is expensive and the performances and products take time for students to complete. It is challenging to compare schools from year to year or from school to school (Koretz, 2008).

Healthy Accountability Systems

A healthy school accountability system should include many diverse measures including performance-based assessment, standardized test scores (without high stakes decisions attached), student grades, attendance, promotion, graduation and dropout rates, percentage of students participating in honors/advanced and advanced placement courses, college enrollment percentage, post-high school employment and success, and standardized test scores. Accountability should begin with schools and teachers never accepting student performance or products that are substandard.

It is time to ask if we want cheaper testing that limits education or more expensive testing that engages students and promotes higher level learning. Standardized testing can act like the written test the department of motor vehicles uses to measure foundational and prerequisite knowledge. The true test, however, is the authentic demonstration of safe driving skills and adherence to the rules of the road through the demonstration of driving in real world conditions.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

September, 2011

<http://www.hanoverschools.org>

What is Academic Dishonesty?

Each day American students in preschool through graduate school see and hear about people who cheat, lie, steal, and demonstrate a variety of unethical behavior. When students see enough of this behavior they may see it as normal and acceptable behavior. Moreover, these unethical behaviors can also be part of competitive school environments. Here, students compete for rewards (high grades) that can earn them recognition, entrance to a prestigious university, and in turn, a credential that is redeemed for a high status and high paying job. In order to receive high grades many students will behave in dishonest and unethical ways. Thus, academic dishonesty is necessary (and normal) for many students.

Academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating and plagiarism) may be a response by children and youth to our unethical and competitive society. Bad behavior occurs at all levels of society and is normal for young people to see. Executives within the corporate world have recently modeled much unethical behavior. These contraventions have included fraud at HealthSouth (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2008), fraud and corruption at Enron, dishonest accounting at WorldCom, theft at Adelphia Communications, dishonest loans and bonuses at Tyco (Clarke, 2006), and the use of government money in dishonest ways at Wells Fargo, State Street Bank, and Citigroup (Huffington, 2009). Investment advisor Bernard Madoff created the largest financial scam in History (Sarna & Malik, 2010); while business woman Martha Stewart provided false statements to the government and conspired to obstruct justice (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2008; Markham, 2005).

The website Cheating Culture (n.d.) has documented the ways that normal Americans are regularly dishonest. Here is a partial list of our unethical behaviors: building contractor scams, debt relief scams, deceptive advertising, conflicts of interest by physicians, foreclosure fraud, hidden bank and utility fees, insider trading, insurance fraud, loopholes in laws, Medicare and Medicaid fraud, misconduct by scientists, mortgage fraud, pension abuse, ponzi schemes, predatory lending, resume padding, tax evasion, worker compensation fraud, and workplace theft. These omnipresent behaviors may be accepted by youth as normal. Further, many people may not view these behaviors as wrong. Young people may find it difficult to avoid these behaviors and behave ethically when few adults seem to.

Callahan (2004) described the business executives of the upper class (those who graduated from top colleges and work for the best companies) as the winning class. Robert Reich (1998) described all the rest as members of the anxious class; those who are struggling for success. Anxious people (and students) who aspire to the upper class often turn to cheating, lying, and dishonest behavior in order to succeed in school and in life (Callahan, 2004). Thus, unethical behavior becomes necessary for their success.

We live in a winner take all, survival of the fittest environment where the stakes are high (Callahan, 2004). The best companies and graduate schools look to the best colleges for recruits. In order to gain admittance to these colleges one must have been an outstanding record as a high

school student. If you don't perform well in high school that performance can lessen your chance for success. Many Americans believe that cheating and lying is necessary for success (Josephson Institute, 2011). Additionally, when the stakes are higher there is a greater chance that people will cheat (Davis, Drinan, & Gallant, 2009). Similarly, the more competitive the school environment the more cheating there will be (Anderman & Murdoch, 2009). Academic dishonesty is a necessary response to a competitive environment (Bracey, 2005a).

Adapting, improvising, overcoming and succeeding by any means necessary is what capitalism values (Bracey, 2005b). Bracey (2005b) stated that this message lies within the hidden curriculum of the school; doing what is necessary to succeed is taught, modeled and promoted to students by adults every day. In other words, school is a place where students learn how to operate in the real world. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) noted that there are even instructional manuals (Corbett, 1999) students can use to help them cheat more effectively. Academic dishonesty is the way many students normally and necessarily "succeed" at school.

The Josephson Institute of Ethics (2011) conducts an ethics survey of Americans each year. The Josephson Institute (2011) reported that 59% of high school students cheated in 2010 and one in three stated that they plagiarized content from the internet (para. 5). The Josephson Institute (2009) also concluded that each successive generation is increasingly likely to lie and cheat more than the last generation. Furthermore, the study found that young people who think dishonesty is needed are more likely to cheat and lie. Such dishonest high school students are more likely as adults to lie to a spouse, customer or boss and cheat for financial gain (Josephson Institute, 2009). People who believe lying and cheating are a necessary part of success (the report calls them cynics) are more likely to lie and cheat. The belief that lying and cheating are necessary is a significant and reliable predictor of adult dishonesty. The unethical behavior of a student is known as academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty takes the form of cheating and plagiarism. Cizek (2003) described academic dishonesty as cheating. He includes plagiarism on written assignments and cheating on written examinations in the following definition:

Cheating: Any action that violates rules governing the administration of a test or completion of an assignment; any behavior that gives one student an unfair advantage over others on tests and assignments or any action that decreases the accuracy of the intended inferences from a student's performance on a test or assignment (Cizek, 2003, pp. 3-4).

Lathrop and Foss (2000) provided a more basic definition of cheating, "if you had any help that you don't want your teacher or parents to know about, you probably cheated" (p. 6). Pope (2001) described traditional cheating as copying answers, using forbidden test aids, and plagiarism.

The October and November issues will examine plagiarism and cheating respectively.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

October, 2011

<http://www.hanoverschools.org>

What is Plagiarism?

The term plagiarism comes from the latin plagium which means kidnapping (Randall, 2001). Plagiarism is the act of taking someone's intellectual property, ideas, concepts, writing or words and presenting them as if they were your own words (Besenjak, 2001; Liebler, 2009; Nilson, 2010). It has also been called copyright infringement, misappropriation, faulty citation, literary theft, and copying (Marsh, 2007). Lathrop and Foss (2000), provided a simple meaning for plagiarism, "If you didn't think of it and write it on your own, and you didn't cite (or write down) the sources where you find the ideas or the words, it's probably plagiarism" (p. 6). Students can also plagiarize by not citing sources, manufacturing fictional sources, or reusing a term paper (Liebler, 2009; Nilson, 2010).

Plagiarism is a method of academic dishonesty that students that allows students to do little or no work and obtain a high quality grade. The worst offense of plagiarism would be to purchase a paper from a website that sells prewritten or custom designed essays, reports, term papers dissertations, and research papers. Essaywriter.org (2011) and Bestessays.com (2011) are two such sites. Plagiarism is something that adult professionals have modeled for young people.

Students may have learned about the many scholars who have been accused of plagiarism in recent years. Authors Doris Kearns Goodwin (1987), and Stephen Ambrose (2001) were accused of plagiarism (Christenbury, 2009) in their best selling books. Burlingame (1994) noted that former University of Massachusetts (at Amherst) professor and author Stephen B. Oates was accused of plagiarism for his biographies of Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King. Dr. King was accused of plagiarizing his doctoral dissertation while at Boston University (Carlisle & Golson, 2008; Pappas, 1998). Last, Vice President Joe Biden was accused of plagiarism at Syracuse University Law School and again while campaigning for president in 1987 (Josel, 2002).

When students plagiarize they may be thinking of it as a normal way of completing an assignment because everyone else is doing it (including peers). They might also view it as necessary for earning a top grade with little effort and time expended. However, this type of motivation denies the student the opportunity to complete the assignment independently. As a result of plagiarism the student might not be acquiring prerequisite knowledge, understanding, and writing skills needed for success in future assignments or in one's career.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

November, 2011

<http://www.hanoverschools.org>

What is Cheating in School?

Bracey (2005a) stated that cheating occurs when students feel pressure to perform in a competitive environment. Callahan (2004) noted that cheating occurred in the ancient Olympic games and in the ancient civil service examinations of China. Cheating continued during these high stakes and competitive civil service exams even though the punishment for being caught was death. Bracey (2005b) stated that students in modern China often cheat by using surrogate test takers (known as gunmen). Some students may try a variety of devious methods to achieve high test grades with little effort.

Cizek (1999) stated, "Methods used to cheat on tests are like snowflakes: There is an infinite number of possibilities" (p. 37). Cizek (1999) divided these methods into three categories: giving, taking, and receiving; using forbidden materials; and taking advantage of and circumventing the test taking process. These methods range from writing answers on one's palm to taking and sending digital pictures of questions and receiving answers within a text message. Liebler (2009) noted that the chances that a student will be caught cheating are very small and cheating on written assignments is more common.

As stated in the September, 2011 issue of the Hanover Wellness Education News, cheating is commonplace in our society. Many students regard it as a normal and necessary part of one's education. Students might plan to cheat on an exam since they would not see the need to do the work needed to equip themselves with the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to succeed on the test. Cheating (and plagiarism) denies students of these essential abilities. As students progress through school the tests and assignments become increasingly complex. The instructors and their tests and assignments assume that students are continuously building their skills and understanding. Since students are not developing their abilities, this lack of academic ability might require them to cheat throughout school and life in order to keep up.

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Hanover Wellness Education News

December, 2011

<http://www.hanoverschools.org>

What is the Let's Move Website?

Letsmove.gov (n.d.) is a joint initiative of The White House, the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States Department of the Interior, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the United States Department of Education.

It was launched by the First Lady, Michelle Obama, to find solutions to our nation's obesity problem within one generation. The project contains the following five components:

1. Creating a healthy start for youth
2. Empowering parents and caregivers
3. Providing healthy food in schools
4. Creating access to health and affordable food
5. Increasing physical activity levels

Facts from Letsmove.gov

Nearly one in three children are overweight or obese.

8-18-year-olds spend an average of 7.5 hours using entertainment media each day

Only one third of high school students achieve recommended levels of physical activity

Obesity can lead to the following health problems:

- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Asthma
- Sleep apnea
- Social discrimination

Let's move recommends that children and youth:

1. Participate in at least sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day
2. Plan and eat healthy meals
3. Reduce screen time

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