

Common Core Assessments in the Era of High Stakes Testing: A Teacher's Perspective

David Baiz

About Me

- Currently an 8th Grade mathematics teacher in a public school in East Harlem, NYC
- Seven years of experience teaching for the NYC Dept. of Ed.
- Incredibly grateful to be here and be given the opportunity to work with and listen to such amazing math ed minds from varied backgrounds.
- Importance of Professional Communities

So about those high stakes tests?

- Teachers teach to the test and will continue to do so as long as high stakes testing exists.
- If this statement is true then it is the high stakes summative assessments that will ultimately determine what the standards look like in practice.

Talking to Teachers

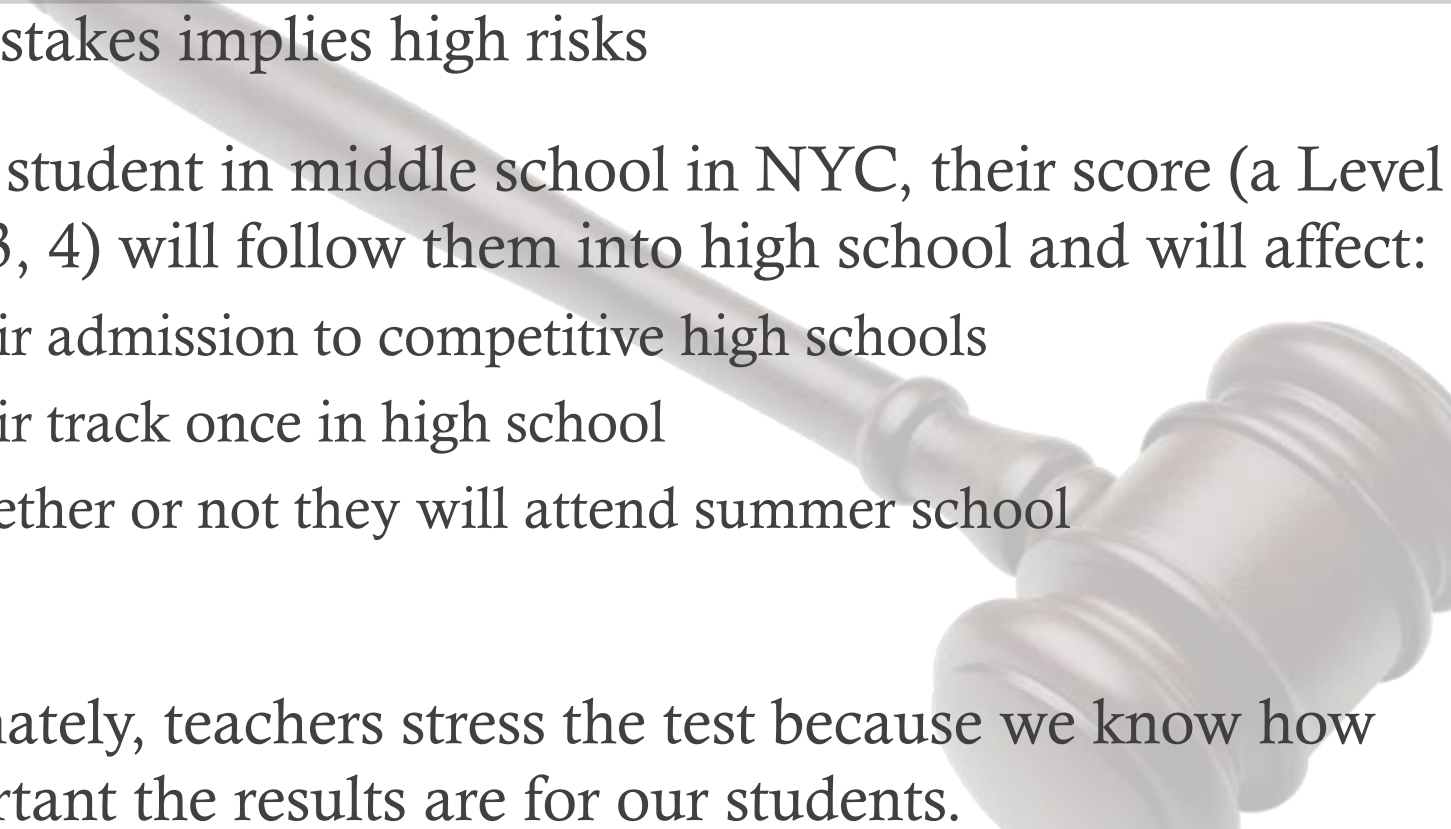
- Common Core Professional Learning Team Facilitator.
- The tension between innovative practice and high stakes summative assessment
- Where does mathematics literacy fit into high stakes testing?

Even invested teachers stress the test

- In my PLT, the teachers want to understand how best to teach to the new tests that are aligned to the Common Core.
- Teachers in the PLT ultimately see the high stakes tests as the **main** determinant to shifts in their teaching practices.
- Testing drives instruction



What's your math level?

- High stakes implies high risks
 - For a student in middle school in NYC, their score (a Level 1, 2, 3, 4) will follow them into high school and will affect:
 - Their admission to competitive high schools
 - Their track once in high school
 - Whether or not they will attend summer school
 - Ultimately, teachers stress the test because we know how important the results are for our students.
- 

So why is “teaching to the test” such a dirty word?

- Rather than engaging students in the standards for mathematical practice, test prep most often relies on:
 - Rote memorization
 - Tricks or shortcuts
 - Question recognition
- Bad test prep exists because it works!
- Bad test prep implies bad tests. If a test truly assessed mathematical practices, teaching to that test, would result in valuable mathematical engagement



What would it mean to teach to
a test with this question?

Which expression is a trinomial?

A $4x^3$

B $7x + 12$

C $3x^3 + 3x^2$

D $5x^3 + 3x^2 - 11$

Taken from the NY State Math Test, 2010

Solve the equation below for p .

$$3(p + 6) = 5p + 4$$

Show your work.

Answer $p =$ _____

Check your answer.

Show your work.

Taken from the NY State
Math Test, 2009

What would it mean to teach to
a test with this question?

Tug of War

Four oxen are as strong as five horses.

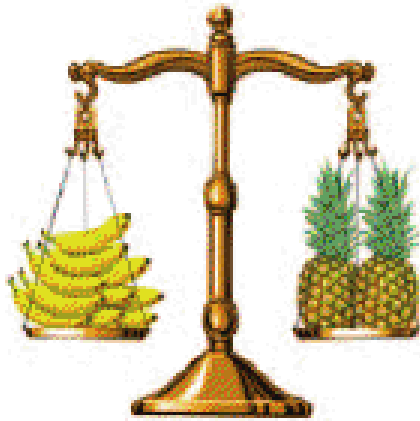


An elephant is as strong as one ox and two horses.

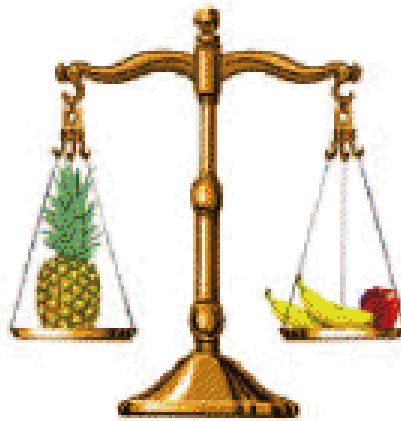


Who will win the tug-of-war pictured below? Explain how you came to your conclusion.





10 bananas 2 pineapples



1 pineapple 2 bananas
1 apple



1 apple

How many bananas will you need to balance the last scale? When you find your answer, share it with another student and compare each other's reasoning.

So how does this impact our work?

- Teachers will teach to the test, so we need to ensure those tests are aligned to our vision of a competent and capable math student.
- Assessments that value mathematics literacy give students the opportunity to see how math connects to their lives.

