

Michael Zatloff, Anatoliy Stepanenko***

METHODS REPORT: STANDARD TESTING IN AMERICAN STUDIES

This article is devoted to semester standardized testing in American Studies that is administered regularly to the entire 11th form in Cherkasy First City Gymnasia. It makes an attempt to explain the importance and urgency of such testing. This Methodological Report sums up the testing results, contains the test summation of standard testing, points out to its advantages and drawbacks.

The subject of using semester standardized testing in American Studies, treated in this article, is important and urgent because this kind of testing fully corresponds to the demands of the external standardized testing in English and ensures integrity, equality, and fairness in the evaluation process of students. Standardized testing allows all students of like disciplines to be tested and evaluated equally. Each student must pass the same test as administered by the school, not by various individual teachers. Deviations in teacher administered testing can result in wide variations in fairness in the final assessment. This lack of standard jeopardizes the integrity of the educational process.

Preparation for standard testing presupposes the following steps:

1. Standard Test preparation and methodology training for all staff (will insure 'Standards' for school Faculty)
2. Standard Testing implemented in all subjects (as part of normal semester curriculum)
3. Standard Testing mandatory for all entire Form Administered Tests (such as final semester testing)
4. Award system implemented for Student Achievement based upon performance evaluation on Standard Tests (promotes recognition and motivation for students)
5. Coordination among Teaching Staff to ensure that Standard Testing is conducted within an Agreeable Set of Evaluation Parameters (school administration must oversee all Standard Testing to insure conformity, integrity, and compliance).

So, if the process is well-organized, it may bring the following benefits to all the participants of standard testing:

1. Schools may evaluate students based on Test Assessment to determine certain students' competitive equivalents such as class rank, scholastic awards, and various other students' benefits.
2. Teachers will be evaluated by virtue of how well their students (specific groups) perform on school-administered tests. These school-administered tests are proposed on a semester basis as a standard final evaluation.
3. Students will all be graded based on the same evaluation scale because of these standard tests. Thus, students will have minimal negative effects from possible variants and deviations from different teachers and their associated teaching methodology.
4. Standard testing will allow these students to compete more effectively with students from other leading schools in Ukraine. Students will have an edge especially when Standardized Testing is the method of evaluation.

* старший вчитель англійської мови, Перша міська гімназія, Черкаси

** старший вчитель англійської мови, Перша міська гімназія, Черкаси

5. Students will also benefit by having Diplomas, which reflect more accurately to the equivalence of European and American Standards. Thus, students will be more qualified to participate in opportunities for Educational/Exchange programs abroad.

6. Students also will have better Higher Educational opportunities by virtue of receiving a Diploma, which reflects the highest possible integrity in Educational Assessment.

This Methods Report is a summation of standard testing that was administered to the entire 11th form (3 classes) here at First City Gymnasia (FCG) during the timeframe of December 19th, 2008 – December 21st, 2008. A standard test of 25 multiple-choice questions was given to the students of American Studies. In an effort to insure fairness and credibility, two test variants were utilized.

EXHIBITS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

First City Gymnasia Semester Test

American Country Studies

Group # 11 _____

Date __/__/2008

Name - (English) _____

Name - (Ukrainian) _____

Please answer the following questions by choosing the best response from the available answers.

Mark only the letter of the correct answer on your answer sheet.

EXAMPLE

Which of the following was NOT a ship with Columbus on his 1492 voyage?

a) Nina b) Pinta c) Santa Maria d) Greenhouse

Of course, the CORRECT answer is d.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:

Please direct ALL questions to the teacher. NO talking/communicating is allowed during this control. Violators of above policy WILL be subject to discipline.

GOOD LUCK!

Test Variant #1

(Front side)

1) The first Europeans we believe who discovered America were the:

a) Indians b) Mongols c) Vikings d) English

2) Christopher Columbus was born in:

a) Portugal b) Italy c) Spain d) America

3) Most anthropologists now believe Native Americans came from:

a) Greenland b) Egypt c) Greece d) Asia

4) The Indians primary 'cause of conflict' with European settlers was:

a) Religion b) Culture c) Property rights d) Prejudice

5) Which was not a chief nation to establish colonies in what is now the U.S.A.?

a) England b) Portugal c) France d) Spain

- 6) The first permanent English colony was started at Jamestown in:
a) 1565 b) 1607 c) 1620 d) 1664
- 7) George Washington was born in 1732 on a farm called:
a) Augustine b) Virginia c) Mount Vernon d) Wakefield
- 8) Young boy George Washington enjoyed swimming in the following river:
a) Delaware b) Potomac c) Dnipro d) Mississippi
- 9) Washington served as President from 1789-1797 and his successor was:
a) Hamilton b) Jefferson c) Adams d) Bush
- 10) The Treaty of Paris recognizing the U.S. as a nation was signed in:
a) 1776 b) 1783 c) 1789 d) 1812
- 11) The Constitution, brief and concise, consists of all the below 'except':
a) Preamble b) Articles c) Dissertation d) Amendments
- 12) The first ten amendments make up what is called the Bill of _____:
a) Adjustments b) Trust c) Rights d) Clinton
- 13) The Government of the United States is composed of the Executive, Legislative and _____ branches:
a) Judgmental b) Justice c) Judo d) Judicial

(Back side)

- 14) How many Senators serve in the United States Congress?
a) 100 b) 435 c) 50 d) 535
- 15) The U.S. President can deny a bill from becoming a law by issuing a:
a) Command b) Recount c) Veto d) Proposition
- 16) The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice and _____ Associate Justices.
a) eight b) ten c) twelve d) fifty
- 17) Abraham Lincoln was the _____ President of the United States of America.
a) 13th b) 14th c) 15th d) 16th
- 18) Abraham Lincoln served one term (1847-49) in Congress as a _____.
a) Republican b) Democrat c) Whig d) Socialist
- 19) How many total states seceded before and after Lincoln's Inauguration Day?
a) seven b) eleven c) three d) four
- 20) The U.S. Civil War is known as the War Between the _____:
a) Abolitionists b) States c) Sections d) Rebels
- 21) The Fugitive Slave Act of _____ helped Southerners to recapture slaves.
a) 1820 b) 1850 c) 1857 d) 1863
- 22) The first State to secede from the Union was _____.
a) South Carolina b) Missouri c) Arkansas d) Virginia
- 23) The _____ Amendment (1865) guaranteed freedom for African Americans.
a) 10th b) 11th c) 12th d) 13th
- 24) The _____ Amendment (1870) guaranteed African Americans the right to vote.
a) 14th b) 15th c) 16th d) 17th
- 25) In 1895, a rebellion broke out in _____ against the Spanish.
a) Guam b) Puerto Rico c) Cuba d) Philippines

Test Variant #1 Key

- 1-c, 2-b, 3-d, 4-c, 5-b, 6-b, 7-d, 8-b, 9-c, 10-b, 11-c, 12-c, 13-d, 14-a, 15-c, 16-a, 17-d, 18-c, 19-b, 20-b, 21-b, 22-a, 23-d, 24-b, 25-c

Test Variant #2**(Front side)**

- 1) The U.S. Civil War is known as the War Between the _____:
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- 2) The Fugitive Slave Act of _____ helped Southerners to recapture slaves.
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Test Variant #2 Key

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Since standard testing assumes the equal administration and fairness for all students based on 'one standard', we thought to test all students at the same time. Testing all the students at one time assures each student the exact same environment, time, and conditions. In addition, testing over multiple days allows test information to flow out to untested students that could adversely affect the fairness and credibility of the standard measurement.

Unfortunately, due to the following two constraints: no room available for 70 students capacity, and no suitable time available for gathering all 70 students together, we were unable to test all students during one session. Thus, students took the test within their normal groups. As a result, the testing was conducted over a three-day period consisting of eight standard test lessons.

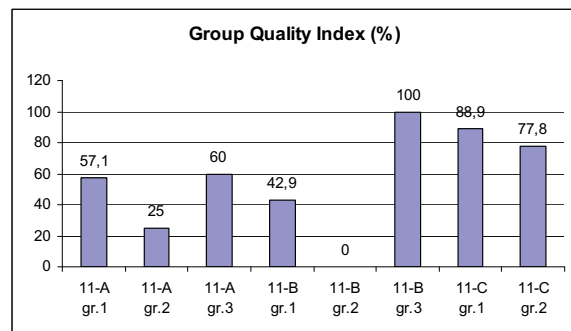
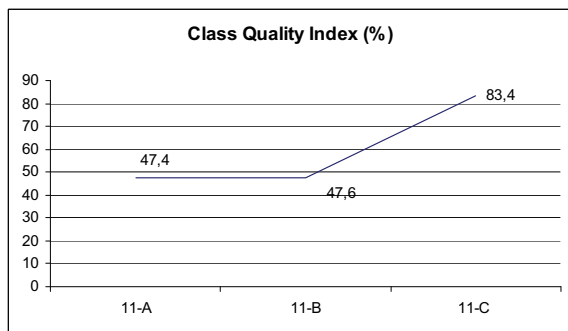
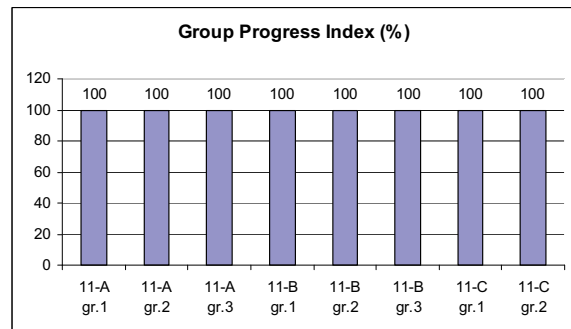
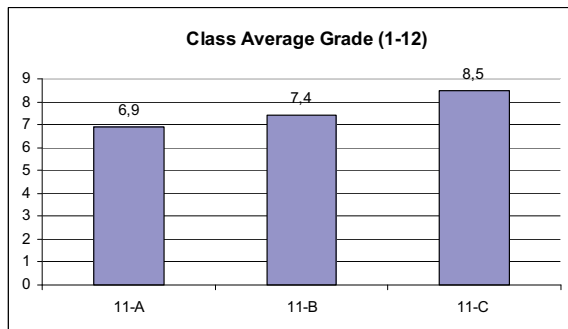
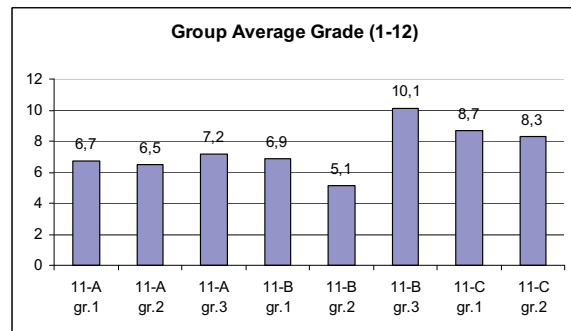
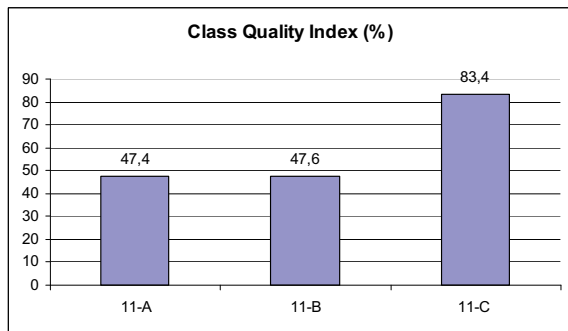
Here are our findings and explanations. 65 out of 70 students were tested. This 93% attendance is significant because it represents much higher than usual student attendance. Standard testing for the entire form usually gets students' attention. Students in general were somewhat surprised at the official nature of the test. In our opinion, students will be significantly more prepared for their next American Studies Standard Test next semester. No make-up test was given due to time constraints. Testing will be administered earlier next semester with a make up option offered for the following week.

Two test variants composed of the same questions were administered. This was done so that students would have different test questions from those students sitting next to them. In an effort to insure fairness, all questions were identical, only differing in selection order. Overall, of 65 students tested, 16 students had 5 or less incorrect answers. A review of these students resulted in the following finding: an equal amount of 8 students each tested with either variant A or variant B. Thus, we have no significant finding that one test was easier or more difficult. We conclude, test variant A and test variant B, both were highly correlated.

The 'mean' number of wrong was 8-9 questions. 32 students scored 8 wrong or less while 33 students scored 9 or more wrong. Since approximately 25% of students scored only 5 or less wrong, no 'curve' or 'adjustment' was added to the overall results. The 16 students who scored only 5 or less wrong received Test grades ranging from 10-12. The next set of 16 students having 6-8 wrong received Test grades ranging from 8-9. Thus, half the students did 'very good to excellent', receiving Test grades ranging from 8-12. The other half of students tested scored between 9-15 wrong and received Test grades ranging from 4-7. Based on this even distribution of grading, the Test was considered fair with a normal 'Bell Curve'. Thus, no adjustments were made for the overall final Test grade. (Please note: if student did well on the Test, additional weight was factored in for their semester grade based on this Test. If a student did poorly on this Test, less weight was factored in for their semester grade. Thus, students were given some 'mercy' here based upon their inexperience in taking Standardized Tests.)

A significant number of students who have apparently mastered retelling topics and usually grade out to 10-11 when tested orally, performed well below their grade average on this written Test. On the other hand, some students outperformed their oral skills based on their results on this written Test. Thus, when measuring student retention of specific knowledge, as well as, intelligence level in any given foreign language discipline, standard testing apparently will serve well to balance Teacher observation. Thus, we conclude that standard testing will benefit us in the overall evaluation of foreign language students.

Another significant finding was that our 'Economic Students' performed better overall on this standard test than the other students in the 11th form did. Of the 16 top students who scored only 5 or less wrong from the entire test group of 65 students, 6 were Economic students. (Please note that these 6 students are from an Economic group comprised of only 10 students.) We conclude here that because these students of Economics have studied with M. T. Zatloff for an additional year, as well as, have taken western-style Standard Tests in Economics 6 times already during the past 16 months, they were well experienced with this testing method. This finding is significant because it gives positive indication to us here at FCG that as we continue the process of standard testing, our student body will gradually perform better over time.



To sum it up, let us conclude that semester standard testing in American studies or in any given foreign language discipline is beneficial to all participants of the process, including school, staff, and students, as it can serve apparently well to balance the teacher's observation when measuring students' retention of specific knowledge, as well as, intelligence level and can ben-

efit the teacher's overall evaluation of foreign language students. Moreover, it is quite evident that semester standard testing must be implemented as it can insure the integrity and reputation of the school to the highest degree as well as the utmost fairness and accuracy in evaluating students' performance. Thus, it may be also considered as an important step in students' preparing for the external standardized testing in English.

References

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