

Testimony Before the Minnesota House Education Policy Committee, March 11, 2009.

Dr. William Sanders, a gentleman who spoke to this House Education Policy Committee several years back regarding value added assessments, has been quoted as stating the following: “When you talk about accountability standards you are not talking about education standards. You are talking about political decisions. As a statistician, if you tell me what percentage of kids you want to fail, I can tell you where to put the cut scores.”

An example of how this played out in one state is Arizona. In 2002 the State of Arizona was going to implement their high stakes graduation exit exams, called the AIMS tests. However, they moved the implementation date back to 2006 because so many students were failing the tests. In the spring of 2005 they were still in a quandary because one-third of the juniors had not passed one or more of the AIMS tests. There was talk of issuing two diplomas, one for those who had passed the tests, one for those who had not. There was also talk of tutoring the students who had not passed the tests, tutoring them for several years following the date they should have graduated, if necessary, so that they hopefully might get a diploma. What did they finally decide to do. They changed the cut score so that “only” ten percent of the students did not receive a diploma, not one-third.