

Third, there is really no reason to have high stakes exit exams unless one feels that that is the only way students can be motivated to perform well. One could give students exams during their senior year in reading, writing and mathematics and then record the scores on the students' transcripts, along with passing scores. This information would then be available to college admissions officers, personnel directors, military recruiting officers, others with a need to know.

At my last check the states surrounding Minnesota do not administer high stakes exit exams to students for graduation. These include Iowa, the Dakotas, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin. I would have to assume that these states consider their graduates as ready to compete in the twenty-first century as those graduates of states which have high stakes exit exams.

In New York State there is a consortium of twenty-eight high schools which have had their students excused from taking the Regents exams. This is because the students from these high schools have done so well post high school. One follow-up study found 77 percent of the consortium school graduates attending four year colleges, 19 percent attending two year colleges and 4 percent attending vocational or technical programs.

This is quite an accomplishment for students who came from high schools which have more students of color, more students who qualify for free or reduced-price

lunch, more students receiving special education services, and more entering ninth- and 10th-grade students scoring below the state standard on reading and mathematics tests than the average New York City high school. Perhaps Minnesota needs to study what these schools are doing so well.

We so often hear how well students from other countries or foreign educational systems do in comparison to the United States. These places include Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. None of these foreign educational systems require their students to pass a high stakes exit exams to graduate from high school. Again, perhaps we in Minnesota need to study how they are approaching the education of their students.

I just might add that when international test data is disaggregated and students living in poverty are factored out, U.S. students do very well in comparison to students of other nations. The elephant in the room appears to be poverty and not inferior teaching or lack of rigor in the United States schools. You don't hear this often mentioned.

In concluding, I would like to predict that if high stakes exit exams (i.e., the GRAD tests) are put into place in Minnesota, the following scenario will play out. After several years the Minnesota Legislature will ask for a study to be done to see how things are proceeding with regard to the tests. The results will be as follows:

There is no data to indicate that students who pass the tests are doing significantly better in college or the work force than students did before the tests were put into place; that many students are being harmed by being denied a diploma; and that the vast majority of students being harmed because of being denied a diploma are

students of color, ethnic minority students and students living in poverty.

Thank you.

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