

Writing Diagnostic Assessment, Project 1 Orientation Summer 2008

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is one fairly recent attempt to address the growing concerns over education in the United States. Contemporary education reform in Texas and the United States has crystallized into two essentially zero-tolerance approaches. Under one approach, students cannot advance to the next grade without meeting minimum performance levels on standardized tests. Texas follows this approach with TAKS testing. This is a departure from traditional “social” promotions, which places developmental concerns over academics in determining whether a child advances to the next grade.

The other zero-tolerance approach to education reform focuses on school accountability and imposes various sanctions against individual schools when student performance falls below minimum performance levels on standardized tests. The No Child Left Behind Act follows this latter approach. Critics of the Act claim that it is unfair to hold all schools to the same performance standard because of different student populations in different school districts. For example, rural and border districts may have disproportionately high populations with limited English proficiency, resulting in lower standardized testing results.

What is your opinion on the education reform debate? The excerpts from various media sources (provided separately as a .pdf file) contain differing views on this debate. Using ideas and information from these sources, analyze:

1. whether social promotion properly accommodates social and academic development needs, or whether grade promotion should be tied to minimum academic standards; and
2. whether standardized performance measures should be tied to school sanctions, or whether sanctions unfairly burden instead of help the very schools that reforms target.

Make the best decision you can based on the media sources provided and your own life experience. Then prepare a written analysis that provides your informed opinion and an explanation of how you arrived at that opinion. In your written analysis, use a sentence and paragraph format. Do not use bullets or lists. You are expected to use and informally cite sources (no specific citation format is required). Write no more than one page, single-spaced. You have one hour to complete this assignment.

Before you begin writing your response, you must save this “read-only” file renamed as your Exam ID (Initials plus last-four SSN: for example, SL9697). Begin writing as soon as you are ready after saving this file (to wctest\$ on ‘walter.writecen.uh.edu’).

