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# Of Minima and Maxima: The Social Significance of Minimal Competency Testing and the Search for Educational Excellence

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In this essay, I explore the many meanings of the minimal competency testing movement and the more recent mobilization for educational excellence in the schools. Both of these movements have gathered strong social support for what appear to be the wrong reasons. While each of these movements focuses on declining educational achievement as the root cause of the school's failure—leading to the devaluation of the high school diploma—the dynamics are much more complex. In this respect, declining rates of high school completion (high school attainment rates) are far more responsible for the low value of the diploma than the perceived decline in educational achievement. Nevertheless, the movements for the minima and maxima of educational achievement can have an indirect impact on attainment rates—and thus the value of the diploma—through the setting of performance standards on minimal competency tests and the elevating of academic graduation standards. However, a more valuable diploma brought about in these ways may strongly conflict with our policies that encourage equality of educational and economic opportunity. It may be that the movements to secure the minima and maxima of educational achievement will incur costs that no one desires. From the vantage point of educational attainment, we are confronted with large political and social choices—choices that go well beyond a mere concern for minima and maxima.

The movement from minima toward maxima in the great debate on the American school has taken a scant few years. Though the controversy swirling about minimal competency testing continues to occupy the

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## Minimal Competency Testing

**L Darling-Hammond**

## **Minimal Competency Testing:**

*Goodbye To Excellence* Mitchell Lazarus, 2019-03-13 In recent years concern over high school graduates who could not balance checkbooks or read directions has led many states to require students to pass minimum competency tests before receiving their diplomas. This legislators believe will again make diplomas meaningful as well as promote better education. Dr Lazarus points out that any testing scheme creates inequities and that these tests are of special concern due to the emphasis society places on high school graduation. A just society cannot accept their potential to mark a student for life. The problem he believes is that society cannot agree on the goals of education making relevant testing difficult. He also questions whether such testing will produce better curricula and notes that while more emphasis on the basics may be needed undue stress on them may weaken other parts of the curricula. He concludes that the goals of minimum competency testing are laudable but that implementation may do long term damage to education.

**Minimal Competency Testing** Peter W. Airasian, George F. Madaus, Joseph J. Pedulla, 1979

**Final Report of the Select Joint Committee to Study Minimum Competency Testing in Elementary and Secondary Schools** Indiana. General Assembly. Legislative Council. Select Joint Committee to Study Minimum Competency Testing in Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1978

The Courts, Validity, and Minimum Competency Testing

George F. Madaus, 2013-12-11

**Minimum Competency Testing**, 1979

**Competency-based Education** Larry McClure, 1981

Leading educators explore the meaning and development of competency and the competency based approach. Review complex problems and issues pertaining to program development, examine the role of instruction in achieving competency based education, describe school and non school programs being implemented, probe evaluation issues and examine implications of competency based education for secondary school practice.

**Report of the Joint Subcommittee Studying Minimum Competency Testing to the Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia** Virginia. General Assembly. Joint Subcommittee Studying Minimum Competency Testing, 1981

State-mandated Minimum Competency Testing as a Requirement for High School Graduation Carol Isabelle Dean, 1979

**Minimum Competency Achievement Testing** Richard M. Jaeger, Carol K. Tittle, 1980

Let's Talk about Minimum Competency Testing Henry M. Brickell, 1978

**Legal Implications of Minimum Competency Testing** Joseph Beckham, 1980

The legal implications of state mandated minimum competency testing are assessed. Many state constitutions establish education as an individual's right. Court decisions have required school systems to provide educational services to every child who can benefit from them, implying equality of access to these services. When a minimum competency testing program has the effect of denying an educational benefit, then it can be argued that the testing program denies equality of educational opportunity, violating the Fourteenth Amendment, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Minimum competency testing statutes may violate standards of due process where an educational benefit has been denied and state action is judged to be arbitrary or lacking in fundamental fairness. However, courts have been reluctant to overturn

state action where minimal elements of due process have been provided Provision of clear educational objectives is necessary to establish the relationship between curriculum and the competency standard but objectives may create a legal duty of care permitting a lawsuit based upon breach of duty to educate Procedural safeguards for a testing program will vary according to state law but a number of guidelines are suggested GK

**Minimum Competency Testing, the Denied Diploma and the Pursuit of Educational Opportunity and Educational Adequacy** Diana Pullin,1982 **Proceedings of the National Conference on Minimum Competency Testing** ,1978 **Minimum Competency Testing** Evangelina Mangino,Marilyn

A. Babcock,1986 What's Happening in Minimum Competency Testing Robert Frahm,Jimmie Covington,1979

*Minimum Competency Testing* Jimmie Covington,1979 **Minimum Competence, Maximum Choice** Barbara Lerner,1980 **Minimum Competency Testing** Reba Neukom Page,1983 **Minimum Competency Testing** ,1980

*Report of the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Impact of Minimum Competency Testing on the Handicapped to the Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia* Virginia. General Assembly. Joint Subcommittee Studying the Impact of Minimum Competency Testing on the Handicapped,1982

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