

Standards, Accountability, and Provincial Testing: Shaping Homework and Teaching

Carolyn Clarke

St. Francis Xavier University

Author's Note

Carolyn Clarke <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1406-9311>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Carolyn Clarke at cclarke@stfx.ca

Abstract

This ethnographic case study, situated in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, examined the effects of full-scale provincial testing on families, its influences on homework, and familial accountability for teaching and learning. Data were drawn from family interviews, as well as letters and documents regarding homework. Teachers sensed a significant degree of pressure on student performance on province-wide tests. This sometimes resulted in narrowing of curricula in favour of more test-taking practice. Additionally, teachers sent home sample test items for students to practice with their families to increase test scores.

Keywords: homework, families, province-wide testing, teaching



Standards, Accountability, and Provincial Testing: Shaping Homework and Teaching

In Canada, public education is jurisdictionally directed by government and managed by provincial government departments (Wallner, 2022). Privatization, policy, research, and political agenda shape education (Ball, 2009). High-stakes and standardized testing are at the forefront of current trends in education and are gaining traction globally (Lingard & Lewis, 2016; Smith, 2016). The inception of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) at the beginning of the twenty-first century brought an increase in the number of countries participating in three large international assessments—PISA, PIRLS, and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Smith, 2016). While these are wide-scale international tests, this testing focus also becomes a narrative at national, provincial, and local levels of education.

Competitive student evaluation through high-stakes testing re-orientates educational pedagogical activities in classrooms toward increasing measurable performance (Ball, 2010). As the education system becomes fixated on tests and scores, comparing classes and individual children, the power of government, as defined by Foucault (1982), trickles through the system. Spina et al. (2019) describe the increase in measurable performance as “governing by numbers” (p. 42). Standardization and accountability may lead to a climate where teachers and schools are compared to their neighbours locally, provincially, and nationally. Teachers may become disillusioned in such a comparative teaching atmosphere (Moon, 2017). According to Brockmeier et al. (2014), pressure from district supervisors and principals to improve test scores increases teacher stress and anxiety. Teachers' fears of feeling judged and inadequate if they do not meet the established goals (Ball, 2010) result in the recruitment of families to help children complete work at home in attempts to improve schools' test scores. While the focus is on family support, it is most often mothers who assume responsibility for their children's education, which has increasingly led to mothers viewing their children's achievements as a personal moral responsibility (Doherty & Dooley, 2017). The narratives of declining achievement and the focus on testing align with neoliberal discourses in education (d'Agnese, 2020). The way in which neoliberal discourses are taken up by schools commonly places parents as being responsible and self-sufficient in supporting their children's education (Vincent, 2017). Such educational views fail to consider “that the category of ‘the parent’ presented as such, in broad and apparently neutral terms, hides a wide range of behaviours, privileges, and disadvantages” (Vincent, 2017, p. 552). As a result, parents' ability to expend their agency varies greatly depending on privilege and disadvantage.

In this article, I draw on the use of Grade 3 province-wide assessments in English Language Arts (ELA). These provincial assessments (PAs) are criterion referenced tests [CRTs]. I argue that the power of numbers (Spina et al., 2019) obtained from provincial testing and used to govern education in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Canada, influences education at every level and extends to families in homes. I provide an overview of how the focus on PAs shapes homework practices, resulting in expectations on parents to help their children practice and prepare for tests. My analysis involves data from semi-structured family interviews and a critical review of homework documents, which refer to the PAs.

I conducted this research, which was aligned with institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005), in two communities within one school district in NL. The lived experiences of school-based educators are typically absent from educational debates concerning standardized testing (Cormack & Comber, 2013), as are the experiences of families. Geographical area and socio-economic status differentiate the two communities in this study, Riverdale and Plainview. Riverdale, a rural community, consists mainly of working-class families. Plainview, a more urban community, consists primarily of middle-class families. For this study, I made working-class and middle-class distinctions according to skill, education, and income.

I gained access to families through the school district. I was given permission to speak with the parents of Grade 3 students in Plainview and Riverdale regarding my study at curriculum information sessions carried out early in each school year. Parents were informed that their participation in this study required their child's involvement, to which they would also be consenting. At that time, those interested in participating provided me with their contact information. Six families from Riverdale and five families from Plainview expressed an interest in participating in the study. After the curriculum information sessions, contact was made with each family by telephone. When meeting families for the first time, I received signed informed consent from the participating parents and informed signed assent from children. All family members were interviewed together; parents were always present with their children. Families were provided with a folder and a scrapbook to collect homework artefacts such as assignments, projects, letters from teachers, and/or school newsletters and were informed that such texts might be copied and used for analysis. I assured families that pseudonyms would be used, and that all information shared would be confidential. This article reports on two families from the broader study, as that allows an opportunity to provide more intensive and in-depth case studies. This sample allows for a detailed narrative rather than a generalization of all families.

Theoretical Framework

Foucault's (1982) concepts of power, discourse, and power relations and their applicability to educational contexts provide a robust framework for understanding dynamics between schools and families. Foucault's conceptualization of power and discourse lends itself to the problematization of the familiar, which is commonly accepted as true. Foucault (1972) explains that "the unity of a discourse is based not so much on the permanence and uniqueness of an object as on the space in which various objects emerge and are continuously transformed" (p. 36). By applying Foucault's theory to this research, this article provides a means to show how educational institutions do more than transfer knowledge; they also shape social relations of families and manage individuals through discourses and practices.

Foucault's (1972) notion that discourses construct and define reality is pivotal for examining how educational policies and practices shape the perceptions and behaviours of families. As Luke (1995) states, "Foucault described the *constructing* character of discourse, that is, how both in broader social formations (i.e., *epistemes*) and in local sites and uses, discourse actually defines, constructs, and positions human subjects" (italics in original) (p. 8). Analysis of educational documents reveals how schools create norms and expectations that families are requested to adhere to, thus influencing their daily practices.

Foucault's emphasis on power as exercised rather than possessed (Foucault, 1983) allows an exploration of the nuanced power dynamics within the school system. According to Foucault (1982), "power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual" (p. 781). For instance, the expectation that parents support their children's homework places schools in a position of authority over family routines and time management. This shows an extension of the school's power into the daily lives of families, subtly guiding and controlling daily interactions and priorities.

Focusing on how schools categorize and manage individuals (both students and parents) through routine practices reveals the micro-level operations of power. This could include how schools track academic progress, enforce disciplinary measures, or communicate expectations to families. Each of these practices can be seen as a way in which schools exercise control and shape the social identities of those within their domain.

Gilbert's (2003) interpretation of Foucauldian power as productive shifts the perspective of viewing power solely as repressive, to understanding how it produces social realities and identities. This is particularly relevant in educational settings where power relations can foster particular forms of knowledge, social interactions, and even resistance.

Each social body has its own forms of power. Foucault (1982) describes the power of schools by stating that all individuals who are members of a diverse school community are part of "a block of capacity-communication-power" (p. 787). As institutions, schools play a role in the social construction of relationships among those who work within the building and those who live in the school community. Highlighting the interdependence between schools and families introduces a critical aspect of power dynamics. While schools influence families, they also rely on them for support. This reciprocal relationship can be explored to understand how power circulates and is negotiated between these two institutions, impacting the broader educational landscape.

Applying a Foucauldian lens to this study on homework practices can reveal how such activities are infused with discourses that reflect and perpetuate the values and power structures of the educational system. Investigating how homework influences family life can uncover deeper insights into how power is enacted daily.

Literature Review

Throughout this article, I discuss the influence of PAs; however, most literature refers to standardized tests. While the PAs and standardized tests are not synonymous, they do have similar effects on education and on families. Research shows that increased focus on high-stakes and standardized testing and quantifiable data contribute to a global testing culture (Alexander, 2011; Kempf, 2016; Lingard & Lewis, 2016; Smith, 2016). Testing and data result in narrowing of curriculum (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2018) and shunting of schoolwork to homes (Clarke, 2021). Tests and standards result from a concern for regulation, external supervision, and external judgment of performance (Apple, 2001); they also serve a role in constructing and disciplining all those involved in the educational system through a process of self-governing. Graham and Neu (2004) claim that "elected representatives, government bureaucrats, local school board trustees, principals, teachers, parents, taxpayers—all of these, and not just the student—are subjected to measurement when the student is examined" (p. 311). As a result, all educational stakeholders are held accountable for measuring schools and students.

For decades, an increased focus on curriculum and testing procedures that are standardized, content specific, and prescriptive has existed. Comber (2012) shows that there is a “global proliferation of testing with a different underlying intent—compulsory standardized literacy tests aimed at measuring whole populations as a part of school and system-wide audits” (p. 120). Standardization may not be the root of all education dysfunction; however, its power strengthens and compounds issues in already struggling systems (Kempf, 2016). Even though there is some resistance, there is a new common sense in education, where it is believed that standards promote equity and “teachers and professors will perform better if there are stronger merit incentives and performance benchmarks, [and] that to catch up with country or system X in the competitive production of human capital requires a hard-nosed approach to outcomes” (Luke, 2011, p. 372). However, Kempf (2016) claims the push for accountability “deprofessionalizes teachers’ work; anchors competition at the core operation of our education system; and alienates students and parents from the constructive, experiential, and social elements of learning” (p. 27). Teachers work hard to ensure students reach performance benchmarks and desired scores established by school districts, government departments, and ministries of education. This does not come without cost as “standardized testing is meant to treat all individuals the same; it leaves no room to treat individuals differently” (Kearns, 2016, p. 128); however, all students are different.

Each spring, many departments and ministries of education require teachers to administer provincially mandated tests to students in their classrooms (Simner, 2000). Taylor and Tubianosa (2001) call for broad levels of testing in all Canadian provinces to measure and improve both school and student performance. Despite the limitations of standardized tests, most of the public views this type of assessment as essential when measuring school and student performance (Volante, 2004). However, “high-stakes standardized testing is tied to a privileged notion of literacy that some students possess, and others do not” (Kearns, 2016, p. 125), which must be taken into consideration in education.

Teachers’ voices continue to be practically absent from the conversation regarding PAs, which further marginalizes them as professionals. Nearly all teacher professional organizations in both Canada and the United States have spoken out against the current regime of standardized tests (Kempf, 2016; Lingard & Lewis, 2016). In 2010, the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario called for a two-year moratorium on testing and the People for Education, a parent-led organization, advocated for random sampling when testing. The Ontario government, however, claimed that a moratorium was not part of the province's educational plan. The Minister of Education, at the time, reacted to the union’s request by stating that the results of the tests were useful in providing information to support teachers and school boards. There were no changes in testing practices due to this advocacy (Canadian Press, 2010).

Standardized testing remains controversial—there are divergent views and impassioned arguments both for and against its use (Pinto, 2016). A recent report (2022) on teacher allocation in NL calls on the Department of Education (DoE) to continue provincial assessments at the end of Grades 3, 6 and 9. The report asks for the tests to provide individual student and school data for purposes of school analysis and improvement, as Provincial Reading and Mathematics Assessment (PRMA) was originally

intended to look at provincial wide data as a whole and not compare individual students or schools. The committee also recommended that the DoE continue to conduct provincial assessments at the high school level. The report positioned testing as a means of ensuring teacher accountability, claiming that accountability is not the opponent of creativity and critical thinking. Innovative and engaging teaching is the best route to student learning, including PAs. Kearns (2016) states: “Good students are shown to be literate successful standardized test takers; whereas those who fail are deficient, illiterate, flawed, and in need of remedy, remediation, and transformation” (p. 122); this shows that standardized tests are undemocratic practices, i.e., marginalizing specific groups of citizens, as are PAs.

While governments and various educational stakeholders claim benefits from province-wide testing and maintain that test scores provide valuable information to support teachers and inform instruction, some research indicates otherwise. According to Lingard (2010), focusing on improving test scores may lead to enhanced test taking skills rather than authentic learning. He continues, stating that the 21st century requires “high-order outcomes for all students in terms of individual purposes of schooling and in terms of opportunity, economic and democratic outcomes; it does not require schooling reduced to better test taking on a narrow subset of school curricula” (p. 135). Mandatory attention to testing often interferes with good teaching practices, such as diverse planning, varied instructional approaches, and a wide range of assessment strategies (Kempf, 2016). Teachers recognize the pressures on themselves as well as on their students to perform well on PAs. According to Kempf (2016):

Whether or not teachers have read the research suggesting it is developmentally inappropriate for children under nine to write standardized examinations, most recognize the tests’ limited utility for understanding and assessing their students and know that pressure to bring up test scores can take time away from other activities that are important for children’s learning and overall development. (p. 60)

As Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2018) note, PAs also tend to narrow teaching as teachers focus more on areas of curricula that are tested.

Kohn (2000) claims that the administration of standardized tests has grown to a point where it is threatening the whole school system. This era of high-stakes testing limits pedagogical practices, such as the use of formative assessment (Smith, 2016), deskills and intensifies teachers’ work (Apple, 2013), and discourages children’s exploration of topics of interest (Berliner, 2011). Alexander (2011) states that “narrow curriculum dominated by propositional knowledge in traditional subjects is the international curriculum default” (p. 281). Without the pressures of standardized testing or PAs, students are more likely to spend time learning through inquiry and investigation with their teachers as facilitators, rather than spending time on test preparation.

The management of the educational system through performativity is evident in the way results from standardized tests are displayed, goals established, and targets for higher scores set. There is a shift from using performance data to understand student progress to using data to increase evaluation and control teachers’ work (Spina, 2017; Stevenson, 2017). While the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and some provinces in Canada, are focused on testing and scores, this is not the case in all countries. Finland has no high-stakes testing (Alexander, 2011) and is not focused on scores, although they are

“considered the number one high achieving nation in the world” (Berliner, 2011, p. 288). According to Alexander (2011), Finland is “the country whose educational magic everyone wishes to capture” (p. 277); however, most countries are trying to achieve educational success through normative regimes.

The ongoing transformation of education systems results in changes which trickle down through the organization, resulting in teachers modifying their teaching and homework practices. Cormack and Comber (2013) drew on data from interviews with teachers and principals to investigate high-stakes literacy tests and local effects in a rural school. One factor not mentioned in the research, however, is the role families play in standardized testing if test practice occurs at home, identifying a clear gap in the literature. I propose to contribute to an understanding of PAs' impact on families by offering two case studies, which share families' at-home experiences preparing for PAs.

Methodology and Design of the Study

The research problem in this study, methodologically, is built on a qualitative approach and employs a case study design. A group of cases can be studied to form a “collective” understanding of an issue or question (Stake, 1995) and to understand a situation from the participants' perspectives (Hancock et al., 2021). This approach enabled in-depth documentation of families' lived experiences of homework. For this study, family refers to all individuals living together in a household.

Case studies also align with critical discourse analysis (CDA), discussed later in this section, as case studies require the researcher to organize the data according to categories or ideas, themes, and patterns and to “decide which data to include as evidence for the story that is developing” (Simons, 2009, p. 118). They serve a role in the evaluative process; they can document participant and stakeholder perspectives evident in public programs (Simons, 2009) and educational texts. As well, the evaluation of educational documents through case studies can help account for the trends and discourses that are communicated to the home through school texts.

This research is also situated within an institutional ethnographic methodology, beginning with the experiences of individuals in the local actualities of their lives (Smith, 2005). As a methodology, institutional ethnography is open-ended and allows one to ‘listen’ to the data, which helps guide the analysis. According to Smith (2005), institutional ethnography aids in making visible the forms of ruling that are often not observable from where we are in society. It begins in the local actualities, focusing on the ‘everyday’ of people’s lives (Smith, 2005). The aim is to understand the experiences of those directly involved in a particular situation. In this study, I used institutional ethnography to explore the problem of homework and how two families experienced homework in two different communities. Parents and children were living the situation being investigated, and families who participated spoke of their lived experiences concerning education, homework, and family life.

In the broader study, I investigated the homework practices of 10 Grade 3 children and the experiences of their families. I explored the reasons why there may be an increasing transference of educational discourse from schools to families, the ways in which this increase may be positioning parents, particularly mothers, and how it may be shaping family life. I examined how homework and other educational activities are experienced

differently in different families, depending on their accessibility to resources and how families access the various forms of capital required. I also considered teachers' views on homework and analyzed some of the homework tasks assigned to young children. The research drew on multiple sources of data generated through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and textual artefacts. In this article, I report on a small data sample, more specifically, two case studies, to detail how PAs shape homework practices.

I analyzed documents by identifying the subject positions available to parents within these texts, specifically related to standardized tests. Educational documents and homework assignments can be examined in relation to how they exercise power over human subjects (Foucault, 1979). To examine how the documents position schools and families, I used Fairclough's (1989, 1993) approach to CDA because it allows for "multiple points of analytic entry" (Janks, 1997, p. 329). I obtained data regarding homework through semi-structured family interviews, focus group sessions with teachers, and by examining educational documents, including homework activities and letters sent home. As Rogers (2003) suggests, CDA holds "the promise of uniting a critical social approach to the study of language and literacy with an ethnographic perspective" (p. 24). This approach assisted in analyzing homework texts in considering how the discursive practice of homework shaped relationships between children and parents.

CDA provided a means to systematically explore the relationships between the discursive practices and events occurring in the home resulting from the transfer of educational discourse from school (Fairclough, 1993) and to indicate how homework tasks in the form of test practice can shape the social interactions between parents and children (Fairclough, 1989). Because CDA "sets out to capture the dynamic relationships between discourse and society" (Luke, 2002, p. 100), it foregrounds the relationships and activities promulgated by the texts of homework practices. CDA also allowed documents to be analyzed by identifying the subject positions available to parents within these texts, specifically related to PAs.

The practical process of using CDA involved reading and re-reading family interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, and documents to identify themes. The reading of, and reflection on, each set of data served as "a process of resolving data into its constituent components to reveal their characteristic themes and patterns" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 8). During the first reading, comments that were reoccurring in the data transcripts were highlighted. The overarching reoccurring comments were then documented, with a colour-code added. All data were re-read, and themes were colour-coded throughout. Data for each theme were then added to a separate document for further analysis. Coding and data organization by theme served as entry points for interpretation and writing the data analysis. CDA allowed for an interpretation of themes that emerged from documents, and an explanation of how educational texts shape the social relations of parents and children (Fairclough, 1989), as described by them in the family interviews. Themes emerged which were related to PAs, including practice for PAs and expectations placed on families in letters sent home.

Third grade teachers and students were chosen as the focus for this research because Grade 3 is the year when children write their first PAs in reading, writing, and mathematics and appear to begin receiving a substantial amount of homework. Overall, this article draws on transcripts from family interviews and textual artefacts

distributed to families in the form of letters and homework assignments. The analysis of this broad data led to emerging themes of how PAs influenced homework and family life.

While all 10 families in this study referenced practicing for CRTs, as indicated earlier, this article documents a small sample of the broader study. It draws on interview data from two family case studies: the Bungay family from Riverdale and the Simmons family from Plainview (see Table 1). Case studies allow for the documentation of multiple perspectives and can be useful in explaining how and why things happen (Simons, 2009; Hancock et al., 2021).

Table 1

Simmons and Bungay Family

Family Name	Family members	Participants in interview	Mother's work	Father's work
Simmons	Carly – Mother Mike – Father 4 Children – Evan Grade 1 Jenna Grade 3 Craig Grade 4 Shawn Preschooler – age 2	Mother, Father* and Jenna *Father participated in second interview only	Social Worker	Air Traffic Controller
Bungay	Dianne – Mother Dave – Father 4 Children – Kyra Grade 3 Nora Grade 8 Jordan Grade 9 Sara completed secondary school	Mother and Kyra	Cashier at local grocery store at beginning of study, receptionist for an optometrist at end of study	Carpenter

Analysis and Findings

This section provides details from the case studies of the two families. It draws on data from semi-structured family interviews and analysis of documents used to communicate with families regarding PAs and homework.

Families

Both the Bungay and Simmons families referenced the practice of PAs as part of nightly homework in the six weeks leading up to the test. On occasion, homework tasks were photocopied directly from previously administered tests; at other times, teachers created homework tasks similar to those on the PAs. Families were questioned: “Have there been any changes in homework practices since the last time we chatted?” The following section provides data describing each family’s response to the question, highlighting experiences with PAs' homework practice.

The Bungay Family

Table 1 provides an overview of the Bungay family, including mom, dad, and four children. The oldest child had finished secondary school and no longer lived at home. When I asked Dianne Bungay and her daughter, Kyra, about changes in homework since our last meeting, Kyra explained, “we don’t have homework now because we are doing our CRTs”. Leading up to the two weeks of testing, however, homework was centered around test practice. Sometimes, homework included test practice that began in class during the school day but was not completed. For example, “The Grade 3 class had to write a five-paragraph story. She [Kyra] said most people didn’t finish it at school, so the teacher sent it home because it’s good practice for our test”. Dianne continued, “Some of them [children] get stressed out about it [tests]”. Kyra added, “[The teacher] said she hopes...she wishes she could just lay the books down and say, well, I don’t want any of you to do this, but she said the government wants you to do it so that’s all you can do”. Kyra continued to explain that some children were upset during the test. Dianne Bungay explained:

I think it [CRT] puts a lot of pressure on them [children] because I don’t think some of them are ready for it. Like, [her daughter Kyra] ...if it comes home, she’ll take it...she tackles it and will do what she has to do. But, a lot of little kids, you know, they kind of sit there as if to say, ‘Okay, what do I do with this?’ And their attention span is a little less.

Dianne continued to share that Kyra will “always find a way to do what the teacher asks of her”.

Kyra described a situation in her classroom in which, “We got to go to gym, or actually the only time we do what we like [choice activity time], like... today we had CRTs and a few people stayed back from gym because they had to finish them. And a few people cried because they missed it [gym time]”. It is time for those in positions of power to consider the detrimental effects of PAs on young children. Kyra continued to explain how four of her classmates did not have to complete the CRT. She claimed, “[The teacher] excuses them or something. And the rest of us have to do all of the test and they only have to do some of the test and I’m like...what?”

Diane was concerned about the situation described by Kyra and countered with: “They should be enjoying school. School’s fun. Like, I’ve learned this, and I’ve learned that...it’s exciting...you know... not putting pressure on them...to know okay, I have to do this test”.

The Simmons Family

As reflected in Table 1, the Simmons family consisted of four children, mother, and father, all living in the same household. Both parents supported their children’s homework but at times explained it was “difficult to manage it all”, which included work, homework, and extracurricular activities. During an interview, when Jenna, the Grade 3 daughter, was asked if there had been changes in homework since the last time we had met, she answered by saying, “We don’t have to do response journals anymore...we used to, but now we do CRT practice. We had poems, there’s one called *June* and there’s another one called *This is My Rock*”. I am familiar with the poems Jenna referenced because they were taken directly from previous PAs.

Carly Simmons explained that her daughter brought home a different CRT practice booklet to complete for homework each week for about six weeks leading up to the test. The booklets included poems and short stories (fiction and non-fiction) with questions to answer on each, a story prompt for demand writing, and for process writing. Carly explained that her daughter Jenna was “tired, and I think she’s bored, too”.

Carly began questioning the purpose of sending home CRT for practice, even before the interview. During a telephone conversation to set up a time to meet, Carly brought up her concerns about practicing for the tests. She explained, “Mike and I are both really struggling with this. We feel that it’s not right to be doing this; it feels like we are cheating. It just doesn’t feel right”. Mike added, “I thought it was supposed to be unbiased...just a test of where they are...just doing it...no matter what”. These parents have different views from those of the teachers regarding the parameters of test situations. Carly and Mike have post-secondary education degrees; therefore, both have ideas about testing regimes and are aware that, in other circumstances, it is considered wrong to know the content in advance. This may be why they struggled with the idea that teachers were sending home practice activities when preparing for tests.

The Simmons’ views toward practicing at home for PAs surfaced again during the interview. Carly explained that Jenna’s homework had changed, and the regular homework tasks were replaced by practice for the tests: “She’s [Jenna] been doing her CRTs for practice....and she hasn’t even had spelling words either because of that. They don’t do the written response for her reading any more...all because of the CRTs”. Carly continued, “Jenna is ‘tired of doing it [practice for CRTs]’, and those are her exact words to me, ‘I’m tired of doing it’”. When test scores are publicly displayed and teachers feel pressure to reach benchmarks, practicing at home becomes a common occurrence.

Carly also expressed her concern about the amount of class time being spent on the PAs. She felt “tests are taking away from more important things that children should be learning. I don’t think they have done science or social studies for weeks”. Carly reported a conversation with another third-grader parent. They discussed the fact that both their children were tired of, and bored with, the practice, and they questioned whether either child would exert any effort when the actual CRTs were administered. Carly commented that it would be better for teachers to “fudge the answers”. This remark shows that she is aware of the power such tests have on the education system but, as a mother, she does not see any value in having her children complete such a test.

Carly also questioned whether test scores determined schools’ funding. She may have been familiar with the focus in the United States on high-stakes accountability where, according to Berliner (2011), schools that did not improve their reading and mathematics scores sufficiently could see teachers and administrators fired, or schools closed. Again, Carly was questioning and trying to justify the legitimacy of the process and understand why there is such a focus on testing. Even though parents questioned the value and purpose of the process, they continued to be involved, possibly because they wanted their children to do well. Parents may feel pressure to have their children perform well, and therefore, they conform to the school’s requests. Both of Jenna’s parents referred to her as being “really good” in school and claimed that “she always completed her assigned homework with no difficulties”. Carly and Mike indicated that their son had had the same experience

as Jenna in third grade—lots of homework assignments based on previous years' assessments.

Homework Assignments for Test Practice

In the case of homework, the institutional observability of the education system reaches outside the institution of school. The texts (Figures 1 and 2) serve a regulatory purpose if families assume responsibility for overseeing the homework process and ensuring that homework is completed. Teachers then observe the child's work, and this two-stage process, in essence, serves as surveillance of families. The letter (Figure 1) and the description of writing traits (Figure 2) are documents directly linked to PAs. Such documents position parents as having a clear and direct responsibility for their children's test performance. The letter begins with "Dear Parents" and explicitly outlines that there will be "sample pieces for homework" from tests "from a couple of years ago". The traits of "good" writing are included, in this case, not in the form of a traditional rubric with a number score but included as criteria in the holistic rubric used by those who score PAs. The traits for "good" writing are named with a list of questions under each heading that can be asked to determine whether the writing is "good". The teacher reinforces the fact that "we are always discussing [the traits] in class", which implies that the child should already know the traits as well as expectations for "good" writing.

Figure 1

Letter to Parents: Criterion Referenced Test Samples for Homework

Dear Parents:

For the next month or so I will be giving some previous CRT sample pieces for homework. We will begin with several samples of writing. In the CRT in June, Students will be asked to do 2 demand writing pieces. They will be given a topic and will do just a one copy piece to respond. For homework this week, I have a sample from a couple of years ago. This work is due next Friday. I have included the traits of good writing which we are always discussing in class.

When I send home some reading samples, students should answer the questions in full sentences stating out their reply, support their answers with evidence from the text (I know this because in the poem it said), and give their opinion or some connection to their own life or other books they have read where it would further support their answer.

I will score the work and give suggestions for improvement. You will notice that the questions are very similar from one year to the next. We will also work on some samples in class so that the students are well prepared.

Figure 2

*List and Description of 'Good Writing' Traits***Good writing should have:**

organization - Did you use a good lead? (Sound effect, dialogue, describe the setting, action, thoughts or feelings, question, startling or interesting fact). Did you include lots of details in an organized way? Did you use a good ending? (Memory, decision, thoughts or feelings, action,)

word choice - Did you use specific words? Could the reader get a good picture in their head from your writing? Did you use a variety of words?

sentence fluency - Did you start your sentences in different ways? Do you have some long and some short sentences?

voice - Does your writing come alive? Does any dialogue sound natural?

conventions - Did you use correct spelling and punctuation? Did you use conventions for special effect such as big letters or dashes or dots?

content - Do you have a beginning, middle and end to your story? Are your ideas and details creative and connected?

The letter to families (Figure 3) begins with “Hi Family”, appearing to be more inclusive of all family members rather than being written to parents alone. The teacher lets parents know that the test is to “evaluate your child’s school learning since Kindergarten”. This may be an attempt to alleviate some of the stress and responsibility felt by third grade teachers and to reinforce the fact that all the child’s teachers, since entering kindergarten, have played a role in their education. The letter continues to say that “practice work” completed in school will be sent home for parents to “review the answers” with children. Questions are included to ensure that appropriate strategies are used when answering test questions. Asking families to review work for the PAs with children creates an expectation that they foster a study atmosphere at home, which further validates the importance of testing. There is an assumption in this letter that all families have certain knowledge, as well as time, to carry out test practice without accounting for the diverse circumstances of home situations. The letter also refers to “a story and multiple-choice questions” that are sent home for practice. Included is an outline of the process used in class to answer multiple choice questions. Parents are asked to “take some time and read it over”, again making it the parents’ responsibility to review and practice with their children for the test. One feature

of the letter is that parents are asked to “remind [children] that there is nothing to worry about”, when writing such a test. However, this view is contradicted by asking parents to review with their children all the work that had been previously completed in school and to take the time to read over the story and multiple-choice questions. If there really were nothing to worry about, parents would not be expected to take up such a position in helping children prepare for the test.

Figure 3

Letter to Family Regarding CRTs

Hi Family,



It is June 2nd and we are about to begin our CRT's. Remember, this is a test that will evaluate your child's school learning's since Kindergarten. Please remind your child that there is nothing to be worried about, as long as you try your best!!

Over the past few weeks, we have been practicing and sharing ideas how to answer questions. Your children have a good idea now of what to write in their answers.

I am sending home some of the work we completed in school. Please take a few minutes and sit down and review the answers. Asking; "Is there anything else you should add? Did you use pictures, numbers and words? (In math) Are you looking for answers around the room?(Word wall) Can you think of an example in your life?" eg. "Meet The Teacher" (May 30th)
eg. "Math Questions (June 2)"

As well, I am sending home a story and multiple choice questions for practice. Please take some time and read it over. In class we use these three steps:

When reading something new:

1. Scan the questions.
2. Circle the most important words.
3. Read allfrom top to bottom.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Have a great day,

The approach shown in Figure 3 was the teacher's final attempt before the CRTs were administered to ensure that students achieve “good” scores. Most families are supportive of school and want their children to do well. However, such expectations on families are not always viewed in the most favourable light by families, as was illustrated above by the Simmons and the Bungay families.

Figure 4 is a letter written to parents to provide them with information to help their children complete a process writing assignment. The teacher referred to “most of the children” on two occasions in the letter. The use of this term suggests to parents that most

of the children had their story completed and were finishing up the final copy. There was an underlying tone to the letter, one that may have been considered by parents to be punitive in nature. It indicated that if children were not working on their final draft, they had not completed their writing effectively or efficiently during class time.

Figure 4

Letter to Parents: Process Writing

Dear Parent:

Your child is bringing home a **process writing* selection that we have been working on in class. Each child completed an organizational chart and was instructed, step by step, how to include this information in paragraphs. Most of the children then had opportunity to pair up with a classmate and read each other's work to check for spelling mistakes, words left out, anything that was unclear, and so on. Most also had time to begin writing their final copy, with all their errors corrected.

Those who did not finish need to complete their final copy. Each paragraph should be indented; sentences, names, place names, days of the week, months, and the word "I" should be capitalized; periods should be used at the end of each sentence. *Each paragraph should have a topic sentence (an introductory sentence that tells what the paragraph will be about.)* Students are aware of these conventions, as we have been doing them each morning in our "daily edit".

The outline given for the children to follow is below, so you will know if your child is on track:

Paragraph #1 - Include a topic sentence about the event, who was involved, when it happened, and where it happened.

Paragraph #2 - Include a topic sentence about what kinds of things made the event happy or sad. Details should be added here, as well.

Paragraph #3 - Include a topic sentence about why the event made your child feel happy or sad, and a closing statement that tells how your child feels about the event.

We have logged about six hours of class time on this activity. The remainder (mostly rewriting) can be done at home. This writing piece will be **due on Friday, March 7**.

Note: *Process Writing* refers to a piece of writing in which children have the opportunity to "brainstorm" together, write a "rough" draft, get together with a classmate to edit their work, and then write a final copy, in which their errors are corrected. The final copy should be the child's best work.

I trust I have not been too wordy, but I realize at this age, many children still need parent support, so you need to be aware of the procedure. Thank you so much for valuing your child's school work and spending time with him/her this year!! I have found the parents of this class very supportive. Your child will certainly reap the rewards of your interest and efforts! Thank you, once again.

The teacher stated, "We have logged about six hours of class time on this activity", thereby giving the activity value. Again, the above statement reiterated that much class time was spent on this activity, and six hours was sufficient for most children to complete the work; the note implies there had been adequate time allocated for children to complete the assignment. The implied message to parents was that the teacher had done their part at school, and now, it becomes the parent's job to ensure that the writing is complete. As with any text, if parents take up the position recommended in the letter, the implications may contribute to changes in routines at home, as well as changes in the social relations between parents and children. Dominant messages in the texts, such as parents being positioned as responsible for their children's educational success or failure, may also contribute to an individual's change in beliefs and attitudes toward the school and teachers. At the end of

this letter, the expectation that a parent would help their child is clearly stated. In this school-to-home communication, the teacher thanks parents “for valuing your child’s school work and spending time with him/her”. Again, there is a degree of pressure on parents to carry out the teacher’s assigned activity. The letter continues, “I have found the parents of this class very supportive”, which hints that this may not always be the case while also coercing parents to demonstrate their support for their children’s learning.

These types of homework activities show how the PAs shape teaching and homework practices and require new work from families that may well go beyond their own educational experience.

Discussion

Five main themes emerged from the data regarding provincial tests: (1) homework changed leading up to the time of testing; (2) teachers assigned practice activities from previous tests for homework; (3) parents questioned the reasons and validity of practicing for the tests; (4) parents felt the tests created unnecessary stress and pressure on young children; and (5) the language used in the homework documents place schools in positions of power over families.

Both families, Simmons and Bungay, described in this article, valued education and wanted their children to do well but struggled with some tasks they were asked to carry out by the teacher. When parents helped children with homework assignments reflective of PAs, they felt “pulled in” to the testing phenomenon even though they questioned the pressure it places on their young children. As Dianne Bungay said, her daughter would find a way to do whatever the teacher asked her. Both Dianne and Carly Simmons validate Kempf’s (2016) claim that children are stressed and test preparation for province-wide tests happens, in various forms.

According to Ball (2010), an “effect of performativity in education is to re-orient pedagogical and scholarly activities toward those which are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance” (p. 126), which may account for the focus on previously administered tests being sent home as nightly homework assignments. Alexander (2011) states, “The Cambridge Review shows how, over the period 1997–2010, the pursuit of this narrow concept of ‘standards’ at the primary stage seriously compromised children’s legal entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum” (p. 272). The increased focus on testing not only results in narrowing the curriculum (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2018; Lingard, 2010; Rogers, 2014) but, for struggling students, is a direct correlation to the misery families experience with homework (Dudley-Marling, 2000). Parents are positioned as co-educators (Lareau, 2000; Reay, 1998), who are expected to understand educational discourse and be able to adequately help prepare their children for PAs.

Homework assignments reflective of previous tests “do not randomly or arbitrarily proliferate” (Luke, 1995, p. 15); they emerge to serve the institutional purpose of improving test scores. Participation in test practice at home requires parents to move beyond the role of supervisor, where they ensure that homework is completed, to assuming responsibility for teaching, checking, and providing guidance and feedback. This is a direct indication of how Foucault’s (1982) notions of power place schools in a position of authority over family. Such involvement in homework is related to the particular field of knowledge and beliefs prevalent in current educational institutions (Luke, 1995).

When schools require parents to be involved with monitoring homework and being co-teachers, there is also an assumption that someone is available at home with the time, desire, and capability to help each child. According to Berliner (2011), “when shaming and blaming of teachers and administrators for low student test scores is common” (p. 291), they do “whatever they deem necessary to achieve their goals” (p. 289). This may account for the transference of test practice from schools to homes.

Teachers may be assigning homework activities for test practice as a means to increase scores. Lingard (2010) writes about the erosion of “trust in teachers” and how it affects their “sense of professional worth” (p. 137). Ball (2005) describes how testing and a culture of performativity in schools affect teachers’ abilities to practice authentic pedagogies and authentic assessment and has also changed what it means to be a teacher. Authentic teaching practices are eroded when teaching is merely drill and skill practice for PAs. Teachers may be resorting to “small acts of cunning” (Foucault, 1979, p. 139) and deploying “mundane inescapable technologies” (Ball, 2010, p. 129) that are unavoidable by parents if they are to carry out the school’s expectations at home.

As described by eight-year-old Kyra, some children were exempt from the test, drawing attention to the inequity of such testing, and reiterating what Kearns (2016) calls undemocratic practices. Students who experience challenges are often those who are exempt from writing all, or parts of tests. This message demonstrates what Kearns (2016) claims about successful test takers: Some children have a privileged notion of literacy, which can be transferred to test taking, and some do not.

Fairclough (2011) claims that “texts have causal effects on, and contribute to changes in, persons (beliefs, attitudes, etc.), actions, social relations, and the material world” (p. 122). One function of the examination is that “it establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault, 1979, p. 184). On the other hand, the power of the examination is exercised through its invisibility (Foucault, 1979), particularly in the case of practice at home for PAs. There is invisibility within the education system as to how test practice is shaping family life, as well as how it may be affecting test scores. While the examination extends power over students, it also extends lateral control (Foucault, 1979) over families. The individualized documentation of students’ scores allows and requires surveillance. Practice at home, and the expectation that parents are involved in the process, demonstrate how schools extend their power into homes. As Foucault (1979) explains, “The examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification” (p. 187). This is true not only for students who are writing the test; it is true for teachers who are teaching in a system where testing and scores are being used to judge their effectiveness. Scores are becoming increasingly important in how governments monitor, steer, and reform the education system at every level (Ball, 2009), shaping teachers’ everyday instructional decisions. As described by Kempf (2016):

Indeed, a student who devoted a day per week (20 percent) to football would be a student athlete, while another who every Friday had attended specialized music instruction would be considered a musician. In this light, the common specialization of twenty-first-century students is test taking. (p. 19)

As parents, Carly and Mike Simmons and Dianne Bungay were involved with activities viewed by teachers as having a positive impact on measurable scores and outcomes of the class (Ball, 2009). Jenna liked school and usually liked homework; however, she expressed her dislike for CRT practice at home. Jenna's assessment of CRT practice reminds us that there is virtually no literature that takes into account children's perspectives on PAs. Reay and Wiliam (1999) state:

It is in the silences in relation to children's perspectives that it is assumed either that National Curriculum assessments have minimal impact on children's subjectivities or that children's concerns and attitudes are merely a backdrop to the assessment process; simply part of the social context. (p. 344)

Children, however, are actively and profoundly affected by the testing process (Reay & Wiliam, 1999) and should have opportunities to express their views at the earliest testing grade.

There is a hierarchical observation (Foucault, 1979) at play, one in which the child and parent were both being observed by teachers and school. As a result of this approach to teaching and learning, and the coercion clearly visible in families, it became the unpaid labour of parents—usually mothers (Comber, 2012; Griffith & Smith, 2005)—to ensure that homework practices were completed.

Concluding Thoughts

In this article, I outlined how teaching practices and homework have been shaped by standards, accountability, and testing in one school district. I also demonstrated how a focus on testing and scores affected homework practices that, in turn, resulted in some of the responsibility for test performances being shifted from school to home. Alexander (2011) explains, “The race to industrialize during the nineteenth century (and for that matter American reaction to Sputnik in the twentieth) remind us that the supremacist view of world class education is hardly new” (p. 277) but it has become a political obsession and a multi-national industry with the availability of data, which encourages the ranking of countries, provinces, and schools. As a response to this so-called “political obsession”, government officials require data to compare Canada with other countries around the world. The data generated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) not only provides information to compare countries but also allows comparisons to be made between Canadian provinces. The data generated from PAs “are presented as means to measure and compare ‘academic achievement’ across classes, schools, districts, provinces and countries” (Nichols & Griffith, 2009, p. 244). All schools, teachers, and families in my study were within the same school district. The DoE's attempt to increase test scores shapes the development of educational brochures for parents and places expectations on school districts to do better. Districts respond by developing policies that focus on increasing instructional time, which are intended to boost scores. These official texts are intended to govern public schools but are only successful when taken up by people in their everyday lives (Nichols & Griffith, 2009), which includes both teachers and families.

In this situation, educational policies are downloaded to schools and conveyed to teachers. Teachers often feel pressure and react by shaping their classroom teaching practices to reflect the content of tests, which is evident in changing homework practices.

This results in teachers co-opting parents by transferring educational responsibilities to families through homework. In this study, I found that the homework tasks set by teachers often reflected practice for the PAs undertaken in schools. Increased homework for young children, specifically test practice, played a role in shaping everyday family life. Once test practice moves to homes, responsibility for children's test performance moves somewhat from the teacher to family; therefore, success may be connected to the parent's ability and time to support their children.

All those involved in education explore ways to respond to a system dominated by performativity, accountability, and external surveillance. This study specifically shows that test-practice homework serves to construct families as invested stakeholders responsible for their children's test performance. The amount of work demanded of families by schools has changed, and this study confirms research undertaken by others, which found that mothers spend many hours supervising and supporting their children with homework (Griffith & Smith, 2005). As a result of the increased focus on scores and measures, teaching changes, as does homework. Through standardization, the power of the institution of school finds its way into the home in the form of written documents and increased homework demands on families.

NL eliminated standardized testing in 2017 in the primary, elementary, and junior high grades. After a three-year hiatus, the provincial government announced the reintroduction of mandatory tests in ELA and Mathematics for students in the third, sixth, and ninth grades. There was a further disruption due to COVID-19, but provincial testing was reinstated as PRMA in May 2022. The testing context appears to be changing provincially as CRTs are no longer used, and data from PRMA is not intended to compare schools or individual students. However, The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2022) report still claims that tests hold teachers accountable. Hopefully, this does not once again trickle down into the home, shifting responsibility onto families for a role that they are neither qualified for nor paid to fill and that is not shown to benefit children. A future study to investigate whether the changes in PAs play out differently in schools and in homes for families may be worthy of examination, depending on how the assessment process and purpose evolve over time.

References

- Alexander, R. (2011). Evidence, rhetoric and collateral damage: The problematic pursuit of 'world class' standards. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(3), 265-286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2011.607153>
- Apple, M. W. (2001). Creating profits by creating failures: standards, markets, and inequality in education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 5(2), 103-118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110010020840>
- Apple M. W. (2013). Knowledge, power, and education: The selected works of Michael W. Apple. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203118115>
- Clarke, C. (2021). Investigating homework as a family practice in Canada: The capital needed. *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, 50(6), 789-820. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2021.1912135>
- Ball, S. J. (2005). *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203015179>
- Ball, S. J. (2009). Privatising education, privatising education policy, privatising educational research: Network governance and the 'competition state'. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 24(1), 83-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930802419474>
- Ball, S. J. (2010). New voices, new knowledge and the new politics of education research: the gathering of a perfect storm? *European Educational Research Journal*, 9(2), 124-137. <https://doi.org/10.2304/eej.2010.9.2.124>
- Berliner, D. (2011). Rational responses to high stakes testing: The case of curriculum narrowing and the harm that follows. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(3), 287-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2011.607151>
- Bradbury, A., & Roberts-Holmes, G. (2018). *The datafication of primary and early years education: Playing with numbers*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315279053>
- Brockmeier, L., Green, R.B., Pate, J.L., Tsemunhu, R., & Bochenko, M.J. (2014). Teachers' beliefs about the effects of high stakes testing. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 3(4), 91-104. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272364902>
- Canadian Press. (2010). *Halt standardized testing: Ont. Teachers*. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/story/2010/08/16/standardized-testing.html>
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. Sage Publications Inc. ISBN: 9780803970533.
- Comber, B. (2012). Mandated literacy assessment and the reorganization of teachers' work: federal policy, local effects. *Critical Studies in Education*, 52(2), 119-136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2012.672331>

- Cormack, P., & Comber, B. (2013). High-stakes literacy tests and local effects in a rural school. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 36(2), 78-89.
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/BF03651913.pdf>
- d’Agnese, V. (2020). Dewey and possibility: Challenging neoliberalism in education. *Educational Theory*, 69(6), 693-717. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12400>
- Doherty, C., & K. Dooley. (2017). “Responsibilising parents: The nudge towards shadow tutoring”. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39(4), 551-566.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2017.1377600>
- Dudley-Marling, C. (2000). *A family affair: When school troubles come home*. Heinemann. ISBN: 9780325001012.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Longman Group UK Limited. ISBN: 9780582009769.
- Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: The universities. *Discourse Society*, 4(2), 133-168.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002002>
- Fairclough, N. (2011). Social transformation and learning. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp. 119-127). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203836149>
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*. Tavinstock Publications Limited.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777-795.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343197>
- Foucault, M. (1983). Discourse and truth: The problematization of parrhesia. Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley.
<https://foucault.info/parrhesia/>
- Gilbert, T. (2003). Exploring the dynamics of power: A Foucauldian analysis of care planning in learning disabilities services. *Nursing Inquiry*, 10(1), 37-46. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1800.2003.00155.x>
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2022). *Learning in a time of change: Teacher Allocation Review Committee Report*.
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/Learning-in-a-Time-of-Change-Report-of-Teacher-Allocation-Review-Committee-2022.pdf>
- Graham, C., & Neu, D. (2004). Standardized testing and the construction of governable persons. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(3), 295-319.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0022027032000167080>
- Griffith, A. I., & Smith, D. E. (2005). *Mothering for schooling*. Routledge Falmer. ISBN: 9780415950534.
- Hancock, D. R., Algozzine, B., & Lim, J. H. (2021). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*.

- Janks, H. (1997). Critical discourse analysis as a research tool. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18(3), 329-342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630970180302>
- Kearns, L. L. (2016). The construction of 'illiterate' and 'literate' youth: the effects of high-stakes standardized literacy testing, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19(1), 121-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.843520>
- Kempf, A. (2016). *The pedagogy of standardized testing*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kohn, A. (2000). *The case against standardized testing: Raising the scores, ruining the schools*. Heinemann.
- Lareau, A. (2000). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Lingard, B. (2010). Policy borrowing, policy learning: testing times in Australian schooling. *Critical Studies in Education*, 51(2), 129-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508481003731026>
- Lingard, B., & Lewis, S. (2016) Globalisation of the Anglo-American Approach to Top-down, Test based Educational Accountability. In Brown, G.T.L. & Harris, L.R. (Eds) *Handbook of Human and Social Conditions in Assessment* (pp. 387–403). Routledge.
- Luke, A. (1995). Text and discourse in education: An introduction to critical discourse analysis. *Review of Research in Education*, 21(3), 3-48. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X021001003>
- Luke, A. (2002). 5. Beyond science and ideology critique: Developments in critical discourse analysis. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 22, 96-110. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190502000053>
- Luke, A. (2011). Generalizing across borders: Policy and the limits of educational science. *Educational Researcher*, 40(8), 367-377. <https://doi-org.libproxy.stfx.ca/10.3102/0013189X11424314>
- Nichols, N., & Griffith, A. I. (2009). Talk, texts, and educational action: An institutional ethnography of policy and practice. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 241-255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640902902286>
- Moon, M. (2017). Story as a means of engaging public educators and Indigenous students. *In Education* 23(2), 25-42, <https://doi.org/10.37119/ojs2017.v23i2>
- Pinto, L.E. (2016). Tensions and fissures: The politics of standardized testing and accountability in Ontario, 1995-2015. *The Curriculum Journal*, 27(1), 95-112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2016.1140061>
- Reay, D. (1998). *Class work: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling*. Routledge Falmer.
- Reay, D., & Wiliam, D. (1999). I'll be nothing': Structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment. *British Educational Research Journal*, 25(3), 343-354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192990250305>

- Rogers, R. (2003). *A critical discourse analysis of family literacy practices: Power in and out of print*. Routledge.
- Rogers, T. W. (2014). Improving the utility of large-scale assessments in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 37(3), 1-22.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/canajeducrevucan.37.3.03>
- Simner, M. L. (2000). A joint position statement by the Canadian psychological association and the Canadian association of school psychologists on the Canadian press coverage of the province-wide achievement test results.
http://www.cpa.ca/document/joint_position.html
- Simons, H. (2009). *Case study: Research in practice*. Sage Publications.
- Smith, D. E. (2005). *Institutional ethnography: A sociology for people*. AltaMira Press.
- Smith, W. (Ed.) (2016). *The global testing culture: Shaping education policy, perceptions, and practice*. Symposium Books.
- Spina, N. (2017). *The quantification of education and the reorganisation of teachers' work: an institutional ethnography*, (Doctoral thesis, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia). <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/104977/>
- Spina, N., Harris, J., Carrington, S., & Ainscow, M. (2019). Resisting governance by numbers: Some lessons from schools. In M. W. Apple & S. Riddle's (Eds.), *Re-imagining education for democracy* (pp. 42-55). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429242748>
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage Publications.
- Stevenson, H. (2017) The “Datafication” of teaching: Can teachers speak back to the numbers? *Peabody Journal of Education*, 92(4), 537-557.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2017.1349492>
- Taylor, A. R., & Tubianosa, T. (2001). *Student assessment in Canada: Improving the learning environment through effective evaluation*. Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.
- Vincent, C. (2017) The children have only got one education and you have to make sure it's a good one': Parenting and parent–school relations in a neoliberal age, *Gender and Education*, 29(5), 541-557.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1274387>
- Volante, L. (2004). Teaching to the test: What every educator and policy-maker should know. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*.
<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:142605102>
- Wallner, J. (2022). Schooling successfully: The elementary and secondary education sectors in Canada. In E. Lindquist et al. (Eds), *Policy success in Canada: Cases, lessons, challenges* (pp. 77-97). Oxford Academic.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192897046.003.0005>