

Troubles with standardized testing

Business



No one looks forward to a standardized test, and the time dedicated to preparation for these tests could be put to better use in the near future. Now, more than ever, students are faced with pressures in school.

The importance of good grades and tests provoke academic stresses. Many factors instill knowledge in a student's academic career, but a recent study conducted by The Council of the Great City Schools proved that standardized testing is overused, does not teach students anything, and instead consumes valuable class time (Hart). There are also better ways to measure teacher and student performance besides standardized testing. The Obama Administration should limit the number of standardized tests students take increasing class time spent teaching, improving knowledge, and preventing test anxiety. Recently President Obama addressed the nation about the US's obsession with standardized testing asking, " If our kids have more free time at school what would you want them to do with it (Obama)?" If the president thinks there is a problem with standardized testing, there must be a problem.

His overall message reassured, " Tests shouldn't occupy much classroom time or crowd out teaching" (Obama). News outlets went on informing citizens that the Department of Education is enforcing a new plan limiting class time spent preparing and taking standardized tests to 2%.(Ure). The Department of Education admits that the US's testing obsession is mainly caused by the department " force-feeding" standardized tests to students in schools nationwide. The report issued by the Council claims that out of 66 districts tested, the average student takes 112 required standardized tests

from K-12th grade (Hart). Imagine the pain students endure taking eight standardized tests annually.

Additionally, the study found that more time testing in these districts showed no learning improvements (Hart). Studies carried out during math and reading sections of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) resulted in no grade or learning improvement (Dialing). Marcie Bianco, an English professor says, “ 95% of my students are concerned about their grade average because they’re worried about landing good jobs. It’s rare to come across students who take a literary writing course because they want to learn to think critically or communicate their thoughts in clear, cogent prose” (Bianco). While assessments are supposed to measure if students are on the right track, they take away from class time and teach nothing, negating the very fundamental ideas schools try to enforce. In his speech the president suggests, “ Learning’s so much more than filling in the right bubble” (Obama).

It is about gaining knowledge and using it in the future. Students face many stresses on a daily basis. Finishing homework and social pressures in school can be overwhelming. All this stress stacked on pressures from standardized tests can accelerate symptoms of test anxiety. Ethan Hughes, a 15-year-old student who suffered from test anxiety says, “ I felt so anxious that I’d just run out of the classroom because it’s just so much pressure put on you” (Donnelly).

Standardized tests do make many students suffer from high stress levels, so limiting assessments would relieve these students. Admittedly, standardized

testing is an effective and comprehensive way of measuring student performance and holding teachers accountable for low scores. However, the added stress on students is not worth the information found in many test results, especially when there are better ways of measuring teacher and student performance (Walberg). Value-added modeling is the best system the US currently has for evaluating teacher performance (Glazerman). In this process, a student's current test scores are compared to the same student's test scores from the beginning of the year, previous school years, and to other students' scores in the same grade (Glazerman). Standardized tests also do a poor job of measuring student achievement.

They fail to measure important attributes such as creativity and critical thinking skills (Harris). Studies indicate that standardized tests reward superficial thinking and may discourage more analytical thinking (Harris). Standardized tests may be an efficient, easy way of measuring one-dimensional or superficial thinking, but they fail to measure many other important forms of knowledge. The stress brought on by standardized testing is not worth the information gained by test results. They are also not the most effective way to measure teacher performance and student knowledge.

Obama's push for new reduction in standardized testing will improve education and dampen effects of test anxiety among students, ending the US's obsession over testing.