

Standardized testing in schools

[Education](#), [School](#)



Standardized tests are administered in all schools across the U. S. in lieu of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. According to these laws, schools have to administer standardized tests to qualify for various types of licensing and grants. For instance, a certain percentage of the students in public schools must pass the standardized tests to be allowed federal support and funding for that particular school. If the results of the standardized tests are not at par, the school does not get funding.

At the same time, many students have to take high-stakes standardized tests to get into various colleges/universities of their choice. If the students do not do well on such tests, they are denied admissions. The thing to note about these standardized tests is that they are not reliable and they contain various biases in them. Many people have criticized how such tests do not contain relevant information that can be found in the course syllabus and they test students on impractical levels. Others believe that standardized tests provide results based on very few parameters that do not reflect the students' real intelligence.

Looking at the various researches and opinions of critics, we find that standardized testing is not an effective measure of gauging students' intelligence, and they should not be used in schools. For example, one of the biggest reasons standardized testing is not effective is because of the subjectivity that can be found in such tests. For instance, Williams (2005) speaks of how many of the standardized tests are gauged by computers. These computers look at the essays input and they provide the results after

running certain algorithms that measure certain aspects of the essay, such as structure.

Williams (2005) presents a very interesting fact of how some of his colleagues and even he himself used an online website to generate essays about a subject and fed that into the testing machine. The essay that was generated was completely gibberish but was constructed properly according to the rules of grammar. For instance, the essay was supposed to be about standardized testing, but it speaks of how governmental officials and monarchs use the system. The testing machine, however, said that the essay was very well written. This is because the essay followed rules of grammar impeccably, even though it did not make any sense.

This shows how standardized testing can be extremely ineffective, as they are mostly being gauged by computers that assess their structure and not their contents. Another problem with standardized tests is that they do not take into account the syllabus that students learn all year round in their classroom curriculum (Rosengarten, 2002). This means that it makes what children are being taught in classrooms as being useless. Children are taught a different syllabus in class, and they are expected to prepare for a test that tests them on other criteria.

This causes two problems: one, that the children are being given two different types of education, and two, teachers are not sure what to teach their children. They must teach the children the regular coursework, however, they also must make sure that the children pass the standardized test so that they can receive the federal funding and grant, as per the No

Child Left Behind Act. Many people have criticized this act. According to his act, each school must administer standardized tests to its students so that all schools can be gauged on a similar platform (United States Department of Education, 2001).

If the students attain a certain level of score on these tests, the public schools are given the federal funding and grant; however, if the school fails, the grants are withdrawn (Diorio, 2008). This is why most of the schools pressure their teachers to prepare the students in such a way so that they ace the standardized tests (Smyth, 2008). This can be problematic. Another problem with standardized testing is that when teachers prepare the students for the standardized tests, they neglect and ignore the subjects that the students will not be tested on.

For example, most of the standardized tests focus on mathematics and English skills more. This is why to help students pass the standardized tests, teachers' pay more attention to these subjects and other subjects, such as science, humanities, history, and art are ignored. Children are getting a skewed education that is tailored to fulfill the federal mandate. Moreover, as noted earlier, most of the standardized tests test students on knowledge that is not part of their syllabus.

This results in teachers preparing the students to take the test and do well at it, instead of providing a homogenized form of education that benefits students across all the different subjects. This also means that students can effectively remain lazy and not study all year round and only prepare themselves to take the standardized tests at the end of year to pass their

grades. This is also not good, as the students are not being given the proper way of being educated, which should be consistent all year round and not focused on passing one test at the end of the year.

Furthermore, standardized tests are also not effective because they contain various biases (Se Queda, 2011). This is because the standardized tests are designed to be administered to a large population that has to take the same test. All the students are required to answer the test in the same manner. This can be problematic, as the U. S. has a very diverse student population from various social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds (Scholmerich et al, 2008). Placing them all on the same level and playing field is giving advantage to some of the students while making it more difficult for others.

For instance, children from different parts of the country would have different sets of skills. For example, a child raised in a big city, such as New York City, would have completely different mindset and set of skills than a child who was raised in a small town, such as Fort Pierce, Florida. This has to do with cultural dynamics and the way that children are taught, treated, and raised in different surroundings. Each of these children would respond in different ways to various educational questions because of their differences in the way that they were raised.

Standardized tests do not account for such differences, as the same test is administered in the same manner for all students. At the same time, children with disabilities, e. g. blind children, are also mandated to take standardized test under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In such cases, the questions are read out aloud to the children and they have to speak out

their answers (National Council on Disability, 2008). However, the No Child Left Behind Act ignores the blind children and gives them a null score (Mefford, 2009) since they cannot read, which means that the standardized tests are skewed and biased. Additionally, many critics have voiced their concerns over how standardized tests should not be allowed because they are unfair. Such critics talk about how the questions “ require a set of knowledge and skills more likely to be possessed by children from a privileged background. The discriminatory effect is particularly pronounced with norm-referenced tests, where the imperative to spread out the scores often produces questions that tap knowledge gained outside of school” (Kohn, 2000).

At the same time, since the standardized tests contain various patterns that students can be taught, various parents can help their children get the proper preparation so that they can pass these tests. This means that the rich and better off people tend to have the ability to provide their children with private tuitions, helping them prepare specifically for the standardized tests so that they can do well. This is another bias that can be seen in the standardized tests, as those who are able to afford to get specific education and preparation for the standardized tests are able to get better scores.

This goes against the true reasons for the standardized tests, which is to gauge the students equally across the same platform. Clearly, the rich have an advantage, as they can afford to be specifically prepared for the test, giving them better scores not because they are more intelligent but because they could pay enough money to tailor their preparation exactly for the test.

Another reason standardized tests are ineffective is because they tend to measure superficial thinking rather than the deep thinking of the students.

Many scholars have indicated the difference between active thinking and superficial thinking, in that active thinking occurs when students ask many questions about their course, coming up with questions themselves and then linking their current coursework with what they have learned in the past. Superficial thinking occurs when students tend to copy down the answers, do a large amount of guesswork and do not ponder on the more difficult aspects of the curriculum. Research has shown that students who get higher scores on their standardized tests are usually those that indulge more in superficial thinking rather than active thinking.

Even though some of the students who indulged in active thinking were also able to get high scores, the correlation between superficial thinking and high scores on standardized test is a positive one. This is another reason standardized tests can be seen as being ineffective, as they tend to measure the wrong kind of things; instead of measuring the students who do active thinking, they favor superficial thinking, which is not good. Thus, we find that standardized tests are ineffective for many reasons. Standardized tests test students on a set of knowledge and skills that they are not usually taught in their coursework.

This is why many of the teachers tend to teach students how to pass standardized tests instead of teaching them the proper syllabus. To do this, the teachers have to cut down on other subjects, such as art, and sometimes even take the recess time from the children's daily timetable. Students can

also suffer because many subjects that are not paid attention to help children in building their moral and social learning. At the same time, standardized tests tend to be biased against certain portions of the society, as some students are able to do well on them because of their social backgrounds.

Children belonging to rich parents also benefit, as they are able to afford tuition and materials that have been designed to prepare them specifically to get good scores on standardized tests. Finally, it has been found that standardized tests measure superficial thinking more than active thinking. All of these reasons depict why standardized testing is wrong and that it should be replaced with other forms of testing that are more homogenized and work to test the students across relevant parameters.