

# Forget the bubble sheets

[Business](#)



Standardized tests.

Just those two words make your stomach want to flip. Since Bush's Presidency, testing in schools has risen. Although the intent of instituting these tests was good, it has hurt our educational system. Testing was meant to ensure that everyone be held to an equal standard; however, evidence of changes in classrooms has said otherwise. Standardized tests are enforcing all the wrong ideals in students: that learning only extends to the extent of the test, that everyone works best in the same environment, and that filling in bubbles is more important than actual subject knowledge. One thing that has been lost throughout testing reforms is simply the love of learning.

It's hard for teachers to go deeper into lessons based on topics their students enjoy or just want more practice with. Deadlines have eliminated this freedom. In Reading and Writing Quarterly magazine, Frank Serafini describes how schools have figuratively become factories, churning out test results to ensure "quality products". The personality, character, and work ethic of the students get diminished to nothing more than a number. While standardized tests originally aimed to hold a standard of subject knowledge for all students, it has stunted curiosity. Students won't spend as much time learning for the love of learning and deepening their understanding of certain topics they are passionate about.

No, instead students will be studying for tests and practicing their timing at filling in bubbles. Another issue with standardized tests is the assumption made that all students work at their best under the same conditions. Peter Sacks wrote in his non-fiction book, *Standardized Minds: The High Price Of*

America's Testing Culture and What We Can Do To Change It, that "females tend to do worse than males on standardized tests but consistently earn better grades than males." This demonstrates just one example of a certain group that is hurt by standardized testing because the testing situations don't allow them to perform to the best of their ability. Females aren't the only group affected by standardized tests. Because standardized testing is made out to be such an important part for a student's application, there is a lot of pressure.

Not everyone works the same under high pressure. Some rise to the top and others freeze. Additionally, many standardized tests like AP exams and regents are only given once. What if the student is sick or had a tough day? Their whole year of work amounts to one test given on one day. Should we really be judging students by that? Clearly, standardized tests will not provide accurate results of student subject knowledge.

There are too many other factors influencing the results. Finally, the concept of standardized testing misses the point of assessing knowledge. In Jeff Parker's cartoon entitled, Graduation Testing, a student is pictured walking across a stage to receive an award for being voted best at "filling in circles with a number two pencil." The message being sent is that taking tests requires no real subject knowledge. Rather, students have to understand the tricks to taking a test and memorize frequently asked questions.

Furthermore, tests like the SATs and ACTs are completely unnecessary.

They are testing subjects that students have already taken and been tested on. And there is no cheap way to study for these exams. Whether it is private

tutoring, a prep class, or expensive review books, much money is spent on studying for these exams. So if you don't have the money to spend on them, you're out of luck. Standardized testing is by no means the correct way to assess student subject knowledge. The goals of standardized testing are valid, but the execution needs to be revised.

Students should not be judged based on a single exam. It should be more of a continuous year long assessment where students are assessed on a more personal level. I understand with the number of students, this would be a very difficult task. The first step to making progress in the way of positive reform for education systems is to realize that the current system isn't working. Only then can we begin to make changes for the better.