

The negatives of standardized testing



The first argument is that standardized tests are not fair. On a standardized test, all students answer the exact same questions. These answers are always provided in a multiple choice type of set up, and every question has only one answer that is correct. The tests reward students who are able to answer quickly and to answer questions that do not demand much thinking. The tests do not assess the ability to think. The tests do not assess the ability to create. These tests also are written in a manner that assumes all students that take them are being exposed to a white middle-class background. ' For decades, critics have complained that many standardized tests are unfair because the questions require a set of knowledge and skills likely to be possessed by children from a privileged background' (Kohn).

Standardized tests are not objective. The scoring can be objective if it is done by a machine, but that is all that is objective. Even the uses of the results are decisions made by subjective human beings. Everything about the test is subjective such as: the content of the questions, the wording of the questions, what information is covered in the questions, the determination of the correct answers, the rules for giving the test and the choice of which test to give.

Standardized test scores are often not reliable. For a test to be completely reliable, it means that if you repeated the test again you would get exactly the same results. Even the test makers know this would not happen. Tests have what is called a measurement error. A measurement error means they expect a student's score to vary from day to day. These changes could be caused by the test giving conditions or the emotional state or mental state of the student taking the test. It is because of this that many students' scores

are often not correct. The test scores of young children are a lot less reliable than the test scores of adult test-takers.

Test makers do not really remove biases. They try to remove offensive words and they hope that removes biases. Sadly, this is not doing enough to remove bias from their tests. ' SAT exams, for example, have been accused for years of being culturally biased ' immigrants or Native Americans may do poorly on tests not because they don't know the material but because they don't understand the questions' (Messerli). There are many types of bias that are not superficial. There are test-writers who employ statistical bias reduction methods. These methods cannot perform everything that is needed to be done. They cannot pick up basic bias in the test's content or the test's form. There are cultural assumptions that are built into the test. They provide bias. These methods do not detect this kind of bias so it is not removed. ' A student's ability to advance to the next grade or get into a college shouldn't be affected by a biased, unfair exam' (Messerli). ' It is necessary to enact safeguards to ensure that race, class, gender, linguistic, or other cultural biases do not affect evaluation' (Fairtest).

Standardized tests do not reflect what we know about how students learn. Behaviorist psychological theories from the nineteenth century are the theories upon which standardized tests are based. Even though there has been tremendous progress in our knowledge of our brain and about how people think and learn, standardized tests have stayed the same. The theory of behaviorism promotes the idea that knowledge could be broken into bits that are separated and that people learn by absorbing these bits in a passive manner. In today's world psychologists (both cognitive and developmental)

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are aware that knowledge is not separated bits. They also understand that people, both adults and children, learn by putting together a connection of what they already know with they are attempting to learn. If people are not able to make any meaning from the task they are completing or information they are receiving, they do not remember or learn anything! Unfortunately, most standardized tests are still based on remembering isolated facts and narrow ability skills and the tests do not utilize modern theories.

Most or all standardized tests are multiple choice. ‘ This focus on multiple choice format limits teaching and learning to knowledge, at the expense of skills and abilities, such as critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving’ (Young). Multiple choice tests do not measure important student achievement. They are not an accurate measurement of student performance. They do not measure the ability to make meaning from information that is read and do not efficiently measure thinking skills or what people can do on tasks in the real world.

Standardized tests are not really helpful to teachers. The multiple choice tests were not designed to be helpful to teachers when they were introduced. Classroom teachers rarely use standardized test scores as a resource. Surveys have indicated that teachers do not find the scores helpful. The tests do not reveal how a student learns or thinks; consequently, the tests do not help teachers understand what they should do next when they work with students.

Standardized testing puts stress on teachers, students, and school systems. ‘ In many districts, raising test scores has become the single most important

indicator of school improvement. As a result, teachers and administrators feel enormous pressure to ensure that test scores go up' (Fairtest). Some teachers feel so much pressure for the students to achieve a certain score that they end up teaching the test. ' Teaching to the test narrows the curriculum, forcing teachers and students to concentrate on memorization of isolated facts, instead of developing fundamental and higher order abilities' (Fairtest). Teachers are frequently found to be referring to lessons as important lessons because they are questions covered on the standardized tests. This does not benefit the students and steals the teacher's love of teaching. ' Prospective teachers are rethinking whether they want to begin a career in which high test scores matter most, and in which they will be pressured to produce these scores' (Kohn). Standardized tests put a tremendous amount of stress and pressure on students. Even children who are excellent students become stressed about standardized tests. High school students are affected by the SAT and ACT tests. This pressure is high because they believe that if they do not receive a good enough grade, they will not get into a college. Standardized tests put pressure on school systems. The systems feel pressure to raise their scores. ' School systems narrow and change the curriculum to match the test' (Fairtest). ' Schools across the country are cutting back or even eliminating programs in the arts, recess for children, electives for high schoolers, class meetings, discussions about current events, the use of literature in the early grades, and entire subject areas such as science' (Kohn).

Now I will write about the arguments that support standardized testing.

There are significantly fewer points that support the testing.

One benefit of testing is that it can provide parents, schools, and districts, with a superior understanding of how their children are doing. It puts it in perspective by comparing it to other students and in terms of meeting curriculum expectations. For parents, it can serve as an alert if something is wrong. Some of these parents have children who get A's and B's in school but perform poorly on the tests.

Standardized testing can indicate how a family's local school district is performing compared to school districts across the nation. It gives parents a basis to become aware of how their children are doing as compared to students across the nation and locally.

Tracking is a practice that can be useful. Standardized tests allow for tracking to take place. It can be seen if a student is losing ground academically, is improving, or staying the same.

Standardized testing allows school districts to give the same test to all of the students. This makes it easier to make a comparison.