

# Do standardized tests really benefit students?

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One of the few memories that I have from kindergarten is baking Apples in the fall, playing bowling with pumpkins during halloween, and taking standardized test during the spring. I remember all of my classmates being placed all around the classroom being told to fill in the answers on a bubble sheet.

Not fully able to read I remember sitting at my assigned spot confused and lost. Standardized testing has begun to change how the school system now operates. Schools are now worried about how they can teach the material to the students in order for them to succeed and how to raise their test scores. When taking these standardized testing children are judged on their knowledge and if they do not meet the standard they risk repeating the grade, teachers risk losing their jobs, and school face the threat of closing its doors. A story covered by Marion Brady shows the affects of the modern standardized testing.

A mother from Florida tells a story about how her son suffered from these tests given by the school. This mother had received a letter from her sons teacher saying that her son failed the FCAT or Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test by one point and in order for him to move on to the next grade level he would have to take a summer class and take the FCAT once more and pass. After taking those classes and retesting this mother got a phone call from her sons teacher saying that he had failed again by one point. The son knew that he had once again failed because no one was talking about his results. As the mother got ready for dinner and called him to ask what kind of drink he wanted for dinner he did not respond. As he did not respond the mother knew that something was wrong and she rushed to <https://assignbuster.com/do-standardized-tests-really-benefit-students/>

his room to find her nine year old hanging from the post of his bunk bed with a belt around his neck.

Although the mother was able to save her son he still faces trauma from failing his test in third grade. It took him almost six months to look into his mother's eyes and one whole year to smile. Five years later he is still facing those memories of failing a test by only one point. He had to repeat third grade and has to live with that fact for the rest of his life. Our school system now places a heavy burden on if you meet the pass or fail standard.

Standardized tests are not only taking away valuable resources, time, and money away from students and teachers but it is beginning to ruin lives of the students and teachers.

Today standardized testing has become a big debate for teachers, students, parents, and even politicians. Standardized testing is not something new to the American education system. It has been around from the mid-1800's. With the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) being passed in 2002 the use of standardized tests increased. The NCLB has now required testing to occur in all 50 states in math and reading. Students from third grade to eighth grade are tested every year and students are tested once in high school.

These standardized tests are not helping out the school system but are instead changing the way material is being taught, causing severe stress especially in younger students, and tons of money is used each year for these tests. In order for teachers to prepare the students for these standardized tests they now have to change their curriculum. Schools and teachers now have to reduce the time spent on other subjects like art,

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science, and social studies because they need more time to focus on reading and math. Standardized tests only focus on reading and math leaving out all the other important subjects. Students are only learning how to fill in bubbles and answer questions in a right or wrong format. Creativity and critical thinking skills are being lost.

Students may improve their test taking ability but that does not teach them how to become a productive adult in society. The stress level of students from elementary, middle, and high school is on the rise. A study conducted by Stanford school of Medicine found that the number of children from ages seven to seventeen, treated for depression more than doubled from 1995 to 2001. These high stake tests create an environment for especially young students to feel pressure to succeed. Having elementary students deal with tests that can potentially fail or pass you is a lot of pressure being put on them. These test that are given to students every year cost money that taxpayers end up paying.

It is reported by Washington-based Brown Center on Education Policy that “ states spend a combined \$1. 7 billion annually on standardized tests”.

Although \$1. 7 billion is a quarter of one percent of total spending on kindergarten to twelfth grade students in the United States that money can be used in a better way to benefit students and teachers. According to national school supply association “ public school teachers spend, on average, \$500 out of pocket on their students”.

By getting rid of these standardized tests money can be given to teachers so they can buy supplies for their student and won't have to pay for things out

of their own pockets. There are other ways to use the resources that are being given to these standardized tests that can better benefit both students and teachers. A survey conducted by first comprehensive shows that “ typical (American) student take 112 mandated standardized tests between pre-kindergarten classes and 12th grade” while other countries that outperform United States take about three standardized tests during their whole school careers. The NCLB was placed because America’s academic level was declining but this shows that having students take more standardized tests does not equal a higher academic ranking. Sugata Mita an education researcher explains that the “ educational process to self-organize, then learning emerges. It’s not about making learning happen.

It’s about letting it happen”. Mita proposes a new way of learning. Having the teacher raise and question and have the students then collaborate with one another and figure out the answer with the teacher in the back quietly watching his or her students. By forcing students to take standardized tests it is forcing students to learn because of the tests instead of allowing the learning to happen. I am not saying that standardized tests are not important but having students take an average of 112 tests from kindergarten to 12th grade is not doing anything to help the students.

It instead is taking away valuable time and creating stress for both students and teachers. Instead of more standardized tests being administered the way students are being taught should change. Students should be allowed to think outside the box and problem solve versus being taught to take a test and have that dictate if you are smart or going to succeed in life. By going back to the basics of asking questions and collaborating and figuring out the

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answer to the question, students will be able to learn and thrive. The number of tests being given to students are not going to make them smarter but is only going to limit their knowledge.

Knowing how to fill in a bubble on tests is not going to benefit students in the long run, but what's going to benefit them is knowing how to solve a problem and being creative. Instead of feeling pressure to succeed on these tests students need to be told that it does not matter how they score. Getting a high score on these standardized tests does not equal happiness or a guaranteed success in life.