

The issues of standardized testing

Business



As students prepare to apply to colleges, they each design their applications in a way that will hopefully make their own stand out when compared to the competition. This can be done any number of ways, but many times, more often than not, students struggle to make their standardized test scores stand out from those around them.

This is because standardized tests are actually designed in a way that minimizes opportunities to show their individuality or even their true intellectual abilities. These tests in reality show a very small sample of a student's capabilities, they fail to measure a wide variety of their skills, and they have no real correspondence to student performance in college. With all these statistics stacked up against them, it seems only logical that colleges begin to transition to an application system that focuses on the true intellect and character of the students applying, by minimizing or completely abolishing the role of these tests. The first issue with standardized tests is that they represent such a small sample of the intellectual capabilities of a student. On the SAT, for example, the test has a total of 154 questions, plus an optional essay ("SAT content and format").

This test is supposed to measure the intelligence and test taking skills that have been acquired throughout the entirety of secondary education and sometimes even earlier than that. In that time, students complete hundreds of tests, quizzes, and essays on a wide variety of topics. It seems ridiculous to think that colleges should look more closely at 154 questions than the thousands of other questions and results that students have worked towards throughout high school. Having a sample size this small also means that these tests "can measure only a portion of the goals of education"(Harris).

<https://assignbuster.com/the-issues-of-standardized-testing/>

As a result, some topics outshine other ones that may be equally important, which means that the test authors clearly have a very specific student in mind when they create the test. In some cases, students may be better at certain skills and subjects that are either minimally covered or not included in the exam, which leaves them at a disadvantage compared to kids who happen to excel at the popular test subjects.

Having a test that caters to one type of student is unfair to the majority of the applicant pool, which would not be the case if these tests were removed entirely. Another problem with this system of testing is that it fails to take into account a wide variety of skills, that are important for colleges to see. The test does this by “discouraging analytical thinking”(Harris). The ACT and SAT are predominantly multiple choice tests which makes them easy to grade, but doesn't give students the opportunity to show unique, outside the box thinking, which is becoming more and more relevant in today's technologically advanced world. This test format also makes it impossible to show skills in leadership or motivation (Harris). These two skills are particularly important because many colleges want students who will be leaders not only while at college, but in the real world after they graduate.

After all, if the entire point of college is to prepare students for after they graduate, what is the point of having a test that doesn't measure those skills? This leads to the next point, that performance on these tests has actually no correlation with performance levels in college or beyond.

Recently, a study was done with students from over thirty schools, that showed that the test in no way predicted how well they would do in college. It discovered that students with higher GPAs and lower standardized test

<https://assignbuster.com/the-issues-of-standardized-testing/>

scores performed much better later on as compared to students who had low GPAs but higher standardized test scores (Jaschik). This is because the types of students that put in the time to study and get good grades are going to be the same students to most likely continue with this behavior later on, unlike those who rely purely on natural ability. Another recent study, experimented with schools in which test scores were optional.

It was found that in those schools, those who submitted without an attached test score had a higher chance of being the first child in their family to go to college or to win a grant, versus those who submitted with an attached test score (Jaschik). By taking the tests away, admissions officers were most likely left with a better idea of who the students were, making it easier to distinguish the type of student they were looking for. With evidence like this, it seems that it would be the right decision to put this “ optional” mentality into every school, or better yet, eliminate the tests entirely. Although these flaws seem to be easily recognizable, many claim that these tests do in fact reflect the students that they represent, and that they should still be a requirement when applying to schools. Advocates for the tests state that the exams measure skills that have been taught to all students, and by having these limited tests, the students who have truly mastered them are able to stand out (Walberg).

They argue that the tests need only to apply to core subjects because it can be assumed that these methods can be passed on and will apply to other subjects like history and science. These sources also claim that test scores should be used on applications because students who take the time to study for these tests and get higher scores are the same students who will take

<https://assignbuster.com/the-issues-of-standardized-testing/>

time to study and get high scores while in college (Walberg). These claims, although they seem convincing, fail to consider the fact that students' academic skills are not the same as their academic performances. Just because a student's test score stands out, does not necessarily mean that they are students who take the time to study, as they simply may have natural abilities. While schools do of course value intelligence, they also value work ethic, and most would rather have students who are willing to put in the work versus those who take advantage of their gifts. Limiting the comparison of students in this way will help reveal the students who actually put in the effort inside the classroom and in all aspects of their life.

Ayn Rand's *Anthem* is a good example of a world that values how well people can conform to the government's wishes. In the novel, Equality 7-2521 is extremely intelligent and excels in all his lessons. Although he understands everything he is being taught, the government punishes him because he is not able to become their vision of an ideal person (Rand, 26). Similarly, when people think in a way that is outside the box on standardized tests, they are punished with low scores and therefore are at a disadvantage for acceptance. Even though Equality is given the job of the street sweeper, he ends up inventing electricity; " And when we put our wires to this box, when we closed the current- the wire glowed!" (Rand, 59).

Just because Equality lacked the common methods of thinking that his community valued did not mean he was any less smart, in fact he was much smarter. By removing the testing requirements from college, they can look beyond these barriers and into a side of students that shows only their possible chances for success. Another good example of this can be found in <https://assignbuster.com/the-issues-of-standardized-testing/>

Siddhartha, by Hermann Hesse. Here, the main character, Siddhartha, takes a journey to find spiritual enlightenment. As he travels from group to group, he finds it easy to fit in, yet he never is actually able to find the clarity that he is searching for; “ We find consolations, we learn tricks with which we deceive ourselves, but the essential thing- the way- we do not find” (Hesse, 18).

This quote can also be used to accurately describe the way in which standardized tests are used throughout the application process. These admissions officers try to analyze a candidate by their test score in hopes of figuring out the type of student or even, what type of person, the candidate is. Unfortunately, all that these test scores can provide are mere outlines of the students, and they fail to grasp what they are looking for from them. In the end of the story, Siddhartha gives up on searching for new religious paths and instead chooses to focus on studying the wonder that lies in front of him, the river. It is here that he finally finds the answers that he has been searching for all along. (Hesse, 136) In order to help improve the college admissions experience, they should focus on the most obvious thing of all, the individual.

By taking in all of the different information about the student in the same way that Siddhartha combined all the voices, the well rounded students will begin to surface, creating a system that is more accurate and more honest than ever before. Standardized tests have shaped the American education system for a long time, and while they have had successes in the past, times are calling for change. Students are over tested and over analyzed which can lead, unfortunately, to their intelligence and character being misjudged by <https://assignbuster.com/the-issues-of-standardized-testing/>

teachers and colleges. In order to give the students of this country the brightest possible futures, it is time to start analyzing them for who they really are, and not for who their test scores make them out to be.