

Standardized testing: expedient or a waste of time?

Business



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Students come in at a groggy 8 am, they all put their phones in a large plastic bin and their backpacks against the wall. They sit in assigned seats in a different classroom with a different teacher. They then stay in that seat for 3 hours, not permitted to use the restroom, not permitted to drink or eat. These students test on specific material for the entirety of the 3 hours, and that isn't even including the overtime for students that did not finish this test during the allotted time.

What are they testing for, you may ask, well an End of Course exam. It is understandable that students would be put in this position when taking a final of some sort, right? But no, this is not for any normal high school class. This is for one of the school district's new standardized tests. Standardized testing has been around since the mid 1800s, but the use of this testing has become more prevalent in recent years. In today's education system, standardized testing is used to measure a student's achievements in school.

Standardized tests contain multiple choice questions which vary from true and false, short answer questions, or even essay questions. Students are given these tests to show if they have understood the material being taught in schools. While standardized testing has good intentions, are they actually helping students? The tests sparked a major debate. In this major debate it is important to align oneself with the facts, and the facts show that although the education system says that these tests are needed to measure growth of students, standardized testing is more detrimental than beneficial to the education of our students because of stress put on the students, taxpayer money thrown at this, and overall no true advantage or help given by these

tests. Even though there are severe consequences to standardized testing, there are few beneficial qualities.

China ranked #1 worldwide in reading, math, and science and they utilize standardized testing, as stated by Sam Dillon, a writer for the New York Times(Dillon, 1). But when looking at the PISA scores that china did receive, it is important to acknowledge a few contributing and overall important facts. For one, China has only been at the top of these rankings since 2008, before that Finland ranked highest in all these subjects.(Darling-Hammond and McCloskey, 2) Finland has no standardized testing and is still, even though not at the top anymore, consider to be a very high ranking country in terms of academics. In an article about Finland's education system, the Huffington Post opened with " Finland's education system, often held up as an exemplary model for the rest of the world"(Klein, 1).

Also to understand China's domination of the educational rankings, one must understand the Chinese testing and educational culture " While the Americans attend sports, socialize, work in part-time jobs and study, their Chinese and Indian counterparts pretty much study nonstop" (Orr, 1).

Standardized testing is also thought to not be as stressful as people make it to be. The University of Arkansas had a study that students who take these tests do not express stress and actually have positive attitudes (Mulvenon, Connors, and Lenares) . This proves that these tests aren't as bad as many express it to be. These tests may also provide useful information in a cost efficient manner. Caroline M.

Hoxby, a professor at Stanford with a PhD, says that standardized tests only costs \$5. 81 per student (Hoxby 1). But what Ms. Hoxby ignores is that while testing is 5. 81 per student, the standardized testing industry is a multi-billion dollar industry (FairTest 1). And while it is \$5 per student, this amount adds up very quickly and states end up throwing millions of dollars toward the tests.

From 2009 to 2012, the Texas education industry used taxpayer money to pay for state standardized testing, at around \$88 million (Martinez 1). This is one state, over 3 years. \$88 million could have built entire schools, or given a new computer lab to some kids in need. Instead of paying taxes for your child to test for three hours in a strange room, your taxpayer money could have helped so much more. Wouldn't you want your five dollars to go towards a cause beneficial to your child? But even with the few positives that standardized tests have, they fail to exceed the negatives.

It teaches teachers to initiate a " Drill n Kill" format (Valli 1). A study from the University of Maryland, which took five years, showed that teachers are also encouraged to teach to the test (Jacobs 1) which deprives children of higher thinking and learning. As multidisciplinary social scientist Donald Campbell wrote in 1976, "...

when the test scores become the goal of the teaching process, they both lose their value as indicators of educational status and distort the educational process in undesirable ways" (Kamenetz, 5)This stunts the development of these children, and sadly this form of teaching deprives children of their childhoods (Miller 1). Not only does this systematic testing

take away from this generation's ability to develop social skills on the playground, but it creates extreme stress and a resentment towards testing. In fact, test booklets even come with instructions on what to do if a child vomits on the booklet, as stated by Gregory J. Cizek, an education researcher (Ohanian 1). This stress of course is completely unreasonable as the test are not fair measurements of the student's progress. Standardized testing boasts about being able to measure a student's progress over the years or between courses.

Conversely, a study by the Brookings Institution 50-80% of year to year testing improvements were temporary and caused by "fluctuations that had nothing to do with long-term changes in learning" (Olson 1). Not only does standardized testing fail to effectively serve its purpose, it is an inaccurate measurement of student achievements. As W. James Popham stated in his article "Why Standardized Tests Don't Measure Educational Quality" measuring the growth of knowledge with tests is like "measuring temperature with a tablespoon" (Popham 1). The purpose of standardized testing is to see if students have mastered the common material.

Instead they are being used to determine which school is bad or good, which in turn causes all sorts of issues. Teacher cheating scandals have arose from standardized testing. In reference to the Atlanta cheating scandal (the US's largest cheating scandal to date) Dana Goldstein, a writer at the Marshall Project told NPR, "A federal report in 2013 found 40 of 50 states are showing some evidence of this type of cheating,[on standardized tests, by teachers] and an older study from the Chicago public schools looked at all the classrooms in that district, and it found evidence of teacher cheating on tests <https://assignbuster.com/standardized-testing-expedient-or-a-waste-of-time/>

in 5 percent of classrooms. And something that's relevant to the Atlanta case is that that Chicago study seemed to suggest that when there were lots of incentives for adults tied to these student tests, that's when cheating increased."(Calamur, 1) One of the worst parts about standardized testing is the issue of out of school learning.

On more than one occasion, children are expected to know information that was not taught in class and that was instead learned through experiences in the real world. A plant's fruit always contains seeds. Which of the items below is not a fruit? orange pumpkinApplecelery W. James Popham This an example of a 6th grade question on a standardized test.

Children are judged on their ability to learn and schools, and the reputation of schools are at stake over questions like these. Let's say an underprivileged boy is living with his mother, sadly she never takes him grocery shopping and they have a fairly unhealthy diet. Not hard to imagine considering that America is the second most obese country in the world. However this young boy doesn't get many vegetables or fruit in general, hand the school district will tell him how smart he is based on his homelife? This boy doesn't even know what celery is, why is this boy's socioeconomic status an important factor in his education? It isn't. Why is his school ranked on the socioeconomic status of their students? They shouldn't be. W.

James Popham stated in his work against Standardized testing Why Standardized Tests Don't Measure Educational Quality " Suppose you're a principal of a school in which most students come from genuinely low socioeconomic situations. How are your students likely to perform on

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standardized achievement tests if a substantial number of the test's items really measure the stimulus-richness of your students' backgrounds? That's right, your students are not likely to earn very high scores. Does that mean your school's teachers are doing a poor instructional job? Of course not."(Popham 1) Which brings up the elephant in the room of standardized testing being discriminatory towards people in need of special education, (Olson, 1) and those whose first language is not English.(Strauss, 1) Standardized tests are not objective as they rely on student's backgrounds as a source of information.

The intelligence of a child should not be measured by such an extreme, impractical assessment tool. Students are all different and every single one has a unique way of thinking. To give them a test and deteriorate their self esteem is uncalled for and appalling. The use of standardized testing should be limited or eliminated entirely for the sake of the future of students. The education system believes it's needed to evaluate the growth of students in school.

Parents are outraged because of the stress that comes with taking them. Students are exasperated that their intelligence is being measured by the number of questions they got on a multiple choice test. Therefore, standardized testing is a deceptive measurement of student performance.