

Standardized testing's effects on students



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In 1838, educators in America thought of ways to formally assess a students' achievement (National). The idea for these assessments evolved throughout the one hundred and fifty years they have been around. Now there are multiple forms of assessing students in America, such as the preliminary scholastic aptitude test, the American college test, the Keystone Exams, and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments. Each of these tests were created for the specific purpose of helping improve the learning for all students. Though there are positive aspects of assessing students, standardized testing can negatively impact children's self-esteem, confidence, and limits their ability to learn properly by the scoring system being used wrong, the tests being reviewed by the teachers incorrectly, and falsely reflecting not only individual performance, but the school's performance as well.

The preparation needed to take a standardized test takes time away from students being able to develop better " soft skills". Teachers having to follow an exact curriculum, that sometimes includes scripting, makes it harder for a student's educational needs to be taken care of. Often a student is unable to take subjects like music, art, or a foreign language, because their test scores were to low or the subjects are not included on the test (Squire). These subjects are essential for a young child when they are still growing. Music and art classes help promote creative thinking as well as problem solving, both skills that can be used in everyday life as an adult. For example, in Indiana a student with a pass score on their ISTEP exam lose an elective for remediation classes, while a student who did not pass lost many of their electives (Harbour). When picking an elective, a student tends to pick a

subject that they find enjoyment from, which in return reduces their stress and anxiety levels. Standardized testing preparations make students more stressed, anxious, and less motivated. These effects then lead to the potential to drop out of school.

Statewide assessments reflect an individual's performance and an entire school's performance. Individual's that are among the poor and minority often score lower leading to the inability to graduate (Squire). While individuals who do well on the assessment usually think of it as a game, because they do not feel the assessment is an accurate representation of their academic achievements (Squire). Because everyone has a different outlook on the test this will affect the entire school's performance records. If the school's performance is poor they can lose funding and be taken over by the state (Abrams). The data shown from the tests can lead to students believing the opportunity for success does not exist, with rewards having little impact for improvement. For example, Paul Harbour states " data is a Bell Curve, and to within 90-plus percent accuracy where you are on a bell curve doesn't change" (Harbour). Scores and data are difficult to use for improving a learning environment. By making a student aware of their test scores, they become more aware of their flaws, some use this to improve while others have a hard time accepting it. The data generated cannot get specific enough to focus on what an individual student needs to further their academic career.

In Pennsylvania, there are two main statewide tests that are taken between the grades kindergarten and twelfth. The first assessment is the PSSA or Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, which is a standards-based

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assessment that provides students, parents, and educators of student and school performance related to the proficiency of the academic standards (PA). Grades three through eight are assessed in English and Math, while grades four and eight are also tested in science. This test also helps the schools and districts improve academic instruction. The second assessment is the Keystone Exams, which are an end-of-course assessment in literature, biology, and algebra 1 (Murphy). These exams are intended to help meet Pennsylvania state standards, so other exams will be created for more subjects (PA). Both exams are being improved upon to respond to concerns of students, parents, and teachers. Governor Tom Wolf improved the PSSA by condensing the testing period from three to two weeks and taken later in the year. Giving students an extra two weeks to learn (Governor). Wolf also delayed the Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement, delaying this requirement until the school year of 2021-2022. Giving the school districts the opportunity to find other ways to help students show proficiency without taking a test. The Keystone Exams are not the only way for students to demonstrate proficiency and readiness for high school graduation. Students in career and technology education can use alternative pathway because of House Bill 202, also known as Act 6 (PA).

Tests and exams are tools to help promote equity and learning, measuring progress and improvement for everyone (U. S.). This being the reason why President Bush created the No Child Left Behind act, which was designed to improve student achievement in the United States (Eisenburg). The act also emphasizes on increased funds for poor school districts, as well as higher achievements, and new ways for accountability of schools. The repeated

lessons help a student become familiar with the assessment essentially preparing them to take the exam. The lessons also help them apply relevant information and test taking skills toward other tests. The data received by standardized can help teachers plan and adjust their personal curriculum. The documentation can provide an assessment for any potential impact the test scores could have (Eisenburg). The standardized testing can also help ensure students are becoming effective users of information and ideas (Eisenburg). Without standardized testing students' families would have no way of knowing that although their child maybe a solid-GPA student they are significantly lacking in a specific basic skill (Almagor).

Standardized testing has multiple effects on students both negative and positive. With the lowering of self-esteem, confidence, and the test results not being reviewed the correct way, the negatives can outweigh the positives greatly. Standardized testing is being improved upon to try to help relieve the stress and anxiety that comes from the consistent remediation needed to be prepared. There are other options that students can take to graduate as well. Standardized testing is a way for teachers and students to keep track of their overall academic path. The data collected from it is not always portrayed in a way that won't harm the confidence of the student without it seeming like a game or money being involved. One hundred fifty years later, standardized testing is still evolving, whether it be in a negative way or a positive way.

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