

Should We Continue the Use of Standardized Testing?

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We all have been there, putting in countless hours of work in and outside of the classroom to get that well deserved A. Then it comes time for the standardized test and you receive a score that you feel doesn't accurately reflect you as a student. An opinion piece from the Sun Times called "I'm an educator. We shouldn't give standardized tests this year — or ever" explains how standardized testing is actually not beneficial or useful for students or educators. The author Gina Caneva (2021) first started teaching on the south side of Chicago. Her students excelled in class but when it came to standardized testing, they performed poorly. Standardized testing didn't accurately represent her students' knowledge in the classroom because tests only allow one way of thinking. Furthermore, standardized testing divides the achievement gap between predominantly inner city students of color and suburban white students. Caneva also believes that standardized tests don't directly prepare students for the real world as that is what education is intended to do. Finally she expresses her frustration for our country's failure to trust educators' ability to teach and assess students' comprehension of the core curriculum. Due to these reasons, she believes that we shouldn't be using standardized testing to assess our students' intelligence. While I do agree with Gina that standardized testing doesn't accurately represent students' understanding of core curriculum subjects, I find one of her main points to be questionable. When talking about preparing students beyond the classroom, Gina completely dismisses the need for standardized testing when assessing and confirming a professional's mastery of their specialized practice.

Near the start of her article, Caneva (2021) writes, "Students' results on any standardized test hinge on their ability to pick the right answer on multiple-choice questions. All of their understanding of a text or a math problem is reduced to their choice of fill-in bubble." I completely agree. While standardized testing can be useful as it's an easy way to quickly gather

and summarize students' knowledge, it is not accurate, since one test cannot fully encapsulate students' understanding from experiences and work formulated in and outside the classroom. Pushing and celebrating high standardized test scores can leave students focused on memorizing the right answer rather than having a full well rounded understanding of the subject at hand. Teaching subjects in a wide array of ways not only helps personalize learning, as every student learns differently, but it also gives students different opportunities to prove their understanding. This can include small group discussions, projects, and homework (i.e. all things that can be calculated through gpa). A study done by the American Educational Research Association confirms this: "Students' high school grade point averages are five times stronger than their ACT scores at predicting college graduation" (Pals, 2020). Proving that it is important to provide students with a variety of ways to show their knowledge other than multiple choice tests.

Talking about her experience as an educator in the inner cities, Caneva notes how in her career she has worked with mainly students of color. She voices, "I was often dumbfounded as to why their intelligence did not translate into a high test score. Was it anxiety over test-taking? But then I read the ample research on racial bias in standardized testing. During my career of working mainly with students of color, I have come to this conclusion: It is the testing itself that leads to the 'achievement gap', not the students" (2021). Brookings.edu aired research done by National Assessment of Education Process (NAEP) saying "African Americans score lower than European Americans on vocabulary, reading, and math tests, as well as on tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence. The gap appears before children enter kindergarten and it persists into adulthood. It has narrowed since 1970, but the typical American black still scores below 75 percent of American whites on almost every standardized test" (Jencks and Phillips, 1998). This statistic shows that there is a proven noticeable gap between black and

white students in America. The article goes on to further say “Judging by the currently available statistical evidence, eliminating the test score gap would sharply increase black college graduation rates, making them nearly equal to white rates” (Jencks and Phillips, 1998). Simply by banishing standardized test scores it would get rid of the test score gap between black and white students. Allowing inner city public schools sole worth to not be determined by a score.

Caneva goes on to say “And in the real world, I can’t think of a single job in which adults read text and then answer a multiple choice question. Instead, they apply their skills to the job at hand” (2021). While I do agree with Gina that standardized testing isn’t helpful to assess students' knowledge in basic core classes, I do believe that when specializing in a certain area study in college there is some need to test your expertise. It should be noted that standardized testing is just one way to evaluate a professional's knowledge and should not be the only factor to consider when looking at a person's mastery of that specific field. Doctors and Lawyers for example are both careers that require a considerable amount of schooling and standardized testing. To be admitted to a law school, lawyers have to pass the BAR exam which is a standardized test that looks at the applicant's knowledge on legal concepts and principles. Passing the BAR exam is a huge milestone for applicants wishing to attend law school but I do not believe that it proves that they can practice law in a successful manner. Doctors also have to pass various standardized tests as well to test their knowledge and skills on practicing medicine with an example being the MCAT. Relating to the BAR exam, this is very important for an applicant's journey to being admitted to medical school. I believe that this also does not give a direct understanding toward how an applicant may provide the required level of care to a patient and be able to work in the day to day workspace of a hospital or other intensive care facility. In my opinion standardized testing can be a good way to get an understanding of an applicant's

broad knowledge of the field but it is not a great way to understand their experiences in the field. This can include work experience, further training and education, patient/client feedback, etc. I believe that these things along with standardized testing can prove a professional to be well rounded and well prepared for working in their desired field.

Ending her opinion article on standardized testing, Caneva expresses “Then, come on the day they have to take a standardized exam. No joy, no sound, no creativity. It is time for us to go beyond re-thinking standardized testing and end them altogether. Trust our educators to teach, assess and prepare our students for the world beyond school” (2021). I think the most important thing to take away from this statement is Caneva’s clear vocalization to have better trust in educators. The Missouri State Teachers Association (n.d.) reported “In early December, MSTA surveyed its certified members to get their feelings on issues facing teachers, including whether or not standardized testing should be suspended this year. More than 6,000 teachers responded, and they were overwhelmingly in favor of eliminating standardized testing in 2020-21. Nearly 94 percent of those responding were in favor of suspending standardized testing.” It is clear that our educators do not find standardized testing to be helpful and efficient in measuring students comprehension of our basic core curriculum. They are educated, certified professionals who have their students' best interests at heart. It is time to listen and act on our country's educators' opinions as we put them in charge of teaching America's youth.

As I've come to learn, standardized testing is a very divided topic. Many of us grow up experiencing the dreadfulness and anxiety that comes on test day. To this day as an adult in college I experience testing anxiety that ultimately ends up impacting my test scores. Whereas when I have papers, homework, discussion posts, and projects I seem to excel. Even though it is not a problem that most American adults have to deal with now, we should continue to vocalize

how standardized testing is unnecessary to assess the youth's knowledge. As standardized testing poses much bigger concerns like the achievement gap between predominantly inner city students of color and suburban white students.

References

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