

Hannah Vicini  
Trentanelli and Soeder  
PSL Block 2  
11/28/16

### **Standardized Tests: Inaccurate**

In today's society, standardized tests determine one's future. Considering the role standardized testing has taken in education systems throughout the world, it is safe to assume that most, if not all students, will have taken a standardized test by the time they graduate. With that said, these tests determine not only one's admission into colleges, but also where they stand in comparison to other students. While standardized tests have their purpose, they are not a fair representation of one's overall intelligence, as they don't assess one's work ethic or the ways in which they learn best.

Standardized tests are formal assessments that require all test takers to answer the same questions, typically multiple-choice, under the same circumstances and are scored in a "standard" or consistent manner, which makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students. In addition to the familiar format of multiple-choice questions, most standardized tests also contain true-false questions, short-answer responses and even essays. Another well-known aspect of these tests is their time limits. Time limits ensure each student is permitted an equal amount of time to complete the test to their best ability. A few common examples of standardized tests would be the ACT and SAT, which, in today's society, are required in order to get into any college. Basically, there is an average score to be admitted and if one is below that score they may or may not be admitted based on other traits/talents they are able to contribute to that specific school. There are, however, many other forms of standardized tests such as achievement tests, aptitude tests, international comparison tests and

placement tests. Because of the “stakes” attached to these assessments, “it becomes the driving force of what goes on in the classroom” (Kamenetz).

Anya Kamenetz, author of the CNN article, “Testing Time at Schools: Is There a Better Way?,” believes that when these tests become the focus, it “corrupts the nature of teaching and learning.” Recent survey results through Perry High School indicate that most disagree with standardized tests simply because they do not accurately gauge a student’s overall intelligence (Vicini). In a recent twitter poll, nearly 87% of respondents believed that standardized tests do not provide an accurate gauge of student intelligence. Now the question is, why? One argument against standardized tests is that some students are not good test takers, especially when given a time limit. For example, an extremely intelligent kid taking the ACT could be well prepared and obtain all the knowledge, but experience test anxiety when the time comes to actually take the test. Typically, what causes this anxiety is how much rides on the scores of these tests. Also, the same student could know exactly what they are doing, but not finish because they are limited on how much time they have. In relation, because of how important the test score is, so many classrooms focus on preparing students to perform well on these tests, that they disregard any other knowledge/curriculum necessary for their future (Kamenetz).

Another common reason why students and parents are against standardized tests is because the tests do not include every aspect of what goes into how smart a child is (Vicini). For example, those who perform best through hands-on learning or asking questions are bound to do poorly on these tests. In addition, a child’s work ethic is a major factor when it comes to their success and these tests do not take that into consideration either. From personal experience, a student who works extremely hard everyday by studying, doing homework assignments, going to

tutoring, etc. can do poorly on these tests, whereas someone who is lazy and never does any school work can do good. The process is a joke because who is going to do better in the long run? Bosses and managers would rather have the hard worker so why is it that they are not considered as “smart” or “successful” as those who get a better score? When interviewed, Tammie Vicini, mother of four, was asked her opinion on standardized tests. She stated, “standardized tests do not adequately gauge a student’s intelligence. Many other factors need to be considered including, a student's work ethic, and the ways in which they learn best...”

On the contrary, the 13% that believes standardized tests are a fair way to compare students have their reasons as well. Arguments supporting standardized tests suggest that, if every student in the world is required to do the exact same thing in the exact same amount of time, how much more fair can you get? Many educators and experts believe these tests to be a “fair and objective” way to assess the academic status of students (“Standardized Test” 1). Because of the format, as well as computerized scoring, favoritism/bias is eliminated (“Standardized Test” 1). Another benefit of this format is that we can see exactly what students are NOT learning or do NOT understand (Wiggins). Wiggins, in his article, “Why We Should Stop Bashing State Tests,” refers to the belief that tests “demand and reward low-level coverage,” as a “myth” and suggests that the results say otherwise (Wiggins). Ronald Vicini, was also interviewed, but his response was a little different from his wife’s. When asked his opinion on standardized tests, he stated, “Yes, standardized tests are fair. I don’t know what standardized tests cover, but since everyone is required to take the same test, it seems fair.” Through this interview, it seems as if some of the parents who agree with standardized tests, are not even

aware of the material on it. That being said, they only agree with it because everyone has to take the same test which supposedly makes it “fair.”

While there are some people that support and agree with standardized test, the majority of those interviewed did not. The question now becomes, if standardized tests are not a fair representation of a student’s overall intelligence, what could replace them that would be considered “fair?” Many proposals and viewpoints have been noted regarding this topic and the most efficient ones are as follows. The first proposal, made by Wallace in CNN article, “Testing Time at Schools: Is There a Better Way?,” is called a “stealth assessment” (Wallace). A stealth assessment is a measure of student performance throughout the year without the student knowing. In other words, it allows teachers to get a good gauge of their students without them knowing they are being observed and compared. Stealth assessments eliminate test anxiety as well as stress and allow students to be graded and compared based on how they engage and learn daily rather than on that one “high-stakes” day (Kamenetz). Stealth assessments also take into consideration a whole year's worth of progress, again, providing more evidence to document student achievement. As Kamenetz says, “you’re getting a picture of effort over time.” Ultimately, when a teacher is able to see how much effort a student puts in, that is crucial information to obtain when it comes to learning and success.

Stealth assessments seem efficient, but Kamenetz also proposes a more interesting replacement for standardized tests, game-based assessments. Because every child is familiar with videogames and/or electronics, more children would be more open to taking these types of assessments (Kamenetz). Kamenetz mentions that game-based tests offer “inherent personalization.” As one plays a videogame, they learn how to play the game. A student must

repeatedly fail in order to understand the game and succeed. Kamenetz specifically states, “game-based assessments can help students learn how to fail productively on the way to conquering a challenge.”

A third and final proposal is some sort of review system (Neill). In such a system, retired educators would spend their days at school observing and understanding the curriculum. Also while at school, these educators interview teachers, parents, administrators and even shadow students (Neill). This approach is beneficial in the way that everyone is being observed to make sure each job is not only done, but done correctly. In addition, it allows students to be individually assessed and compared based off of work ethic.

Furthermore, many converse over whether or not standardized tests are an accurate representation of a one’s intelligence and readiness for college. Unfortunately, there is this belief that a test score or GPA determines whether or not a student is “college ready” (Tanis). When essential qualities of success such as perseverance and work ethic are taken into consideration, these tests do not seem as glorious as they are believed to be. As Wallace mentions, “We have to ensure that we are creating confident, civic-minded, well-rounded, creative, outside-of-the-box thinkers, and actually there is no evidence that what we are doing supports that” (Wallace).

#### Works Cited

Vicini, Tammie. Personal Interview. 4 Dec. 2016.

Vicini, Ronald. Personal Interview. 4 Dec. 2016.

Vicini, Hannah. "Do you think standardized tests ultimately get a good gauge of a student's intelligence?" Twitter Poll. Twitter. 29 Nov. 2016.

Wallace, Kelly. "Testing Time at Schools: Is There a Better Way?" *CNN*. 1-4. 4 April, 2016.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/04/health/school-testing-alternatives-measure-progress/>

Wiggins, Grant. "Special Topic: Why We Should Stop Bashing State Tests". *Reading To Learn*. Pages 48-52. Volume 67. March, 2010.  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar10/vol67/num06/Why-We-Should-Stop-Bashing-State-Tests.aspx>

No known author. "Standardized Tests" 12 Nov. 2016.  
<http://edglossary.org/standardized-test/>

