

Running Head: STANDARDIZED TESTING

The Effects of Standardized Tests

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Standardized testing is commonly used, and are state-mandated exams that school districts have to give. Standardized tests are a way to compare students' achievements to others and evaluate the schools' curriculum's effectiveness. Views on standardized tests are mixed, and people believe that these tests are useful and show where students stand compared to others. Other people view testing as negative and not worth stressing students out. People think that schools have focused too much on tests, and school is becoming less engaging. Even though there is a disagreement on how people feel about standardized tests, they believe there should be a form of an exam. Standardized tests have been around for a long time, but they became more of an emphasis when George W. Bush's administration came out with the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002. The grades that the standardized tests affect are grades three through eight. The act's idea was to improve the proficiency level of all the students in math and reading. With multiple reviews, the belief was implementing state standards; students would do better on the tests. Students are strongly encouraged to do well on standardized tests because their scores reflect how well the school taught them. The idea of the standardized test is everyone is treated the same by the students learning the same information and taking the same test. Standardized tests do not consider the students' learning differences and their developmental needs (Dotson & Foley, 2017). Even though the idea is to treat the students equally and give them the same education, the test does not consider environmental factors, special needs, and socio-economic status. All of these factors can impact how students do on the tests and can add stress.

Stress can affect how students do on standardized tests. If students have high stress levels due to the pressure of performing well on the tests, the results may show that they may be behind. Standardized tests not only affect students but teachers and schools as well. Schools, through the scores of their students, are supposed to meet the adequate yearly progress. If scores

show that students do not do well, teachers, students, and schools can be penalized or get sanctions (Heissel, Levy & Adam, 2017). Having schools meet a yearly goal can be difficult. There are different learners, and the tests do not accommodate everyone. Schools have begun stressing the importance of standardized tests, and each year schools start to prepare them for the next exam. Students feel the pressure since their grades reflect the performance of the school districts. Schools put pressure on students, so they do not worry about losing funding because of the state requirements of having schools meet a score. Schools that do not meet the standards the first time get probation, and if schools fail multiple times, the school can be closed. Some schools have cut 44 percent of subjects and extra activities to focus on math and reading (Whitney & Candelaria, 2017). The scores are important, and not meeting them could mean that teachers and administrators can be let go because they could not meet the state requirement. Worrying about how students do means that teachers do not have time to be creative in the classroom anymore, and teaching has become practice and preparing students for standardized tests.

Teaching students has narrowed their instructions and is having students spend time learning other subjects and focus more on the subjects that will be on the tests. When teachers focus more on math and reading is to ensure that the students get good reports when they get their standardized tests back. Seventy-two percent of teachers felt stressed by their school district when dealing with standardized tests. Over forty percent of teachers said that schools placed moderately to severe emphasis on scores to evaluate their performance. About thirty percent of the time, teachers spend their time practicing and preparing students to collect, gather, and analyze the practice test results. With the stress of standardized tests, forty-five percent of teachers think about leaving the profession (Levitt, 2017). Teachers feel the stress of raising the

school's scores to make it look like their meeting the state's goal. Teachers do not like the idea of having to teach to the test and change the way they want to teach their class. Teachers find that following the school's guidelines is hard and does not enjoy focusing on tests. The stress of standardized tests makes teachers feel overwhelmed and feel they do not have control of their work-life because the test scores reflect the way they teach. English and reading teachers feel the pressure of having to give standardized tests to the students and can identify with their stress. English and reading teachers see how standardized tests take the joy out of learning for students, and they do not have the motivation for learning (Shelton & Brooks, 2019). With standardized tests, it affects everyone, and many find the tests tiresome. Teachers are not able to teach reading the way they want and can see how students have no interest in reading. With math, students are feeling the same pressure as they do with reading. Students are put through the same type of practice for the tests as reading that they find it hard to focus on their work. Teachers feel that it is a lot of pressure because they have to perform well in math to achieve. For the students to do work, the teacher has to come up with different strategies to get the students engaged actively (Pinder, 2013). Drilling facts and practice exams for the students tires them out, making it difficult to focus on their lessons.

Kindergarteners are now starting to take forms of tests now. Kindergartners are learning at a higher academic expectations, and they are not developmentally ready. Kids at kindergarten age are supposed to learn through play and hands-on materials. They learn best through getting to experience the world around them from first-hand experiences. Kids like to learn socially, songs, and getting to create art. Kids that are in Kindergarten need activities that are developmentally appropriate for them. If given lessons or activities that are hard, it can challenge them, and they can become frustrated. When given a form of assessment that is

advanced for them can be harmful to them. The tests given to them can change their positive outlook on their learning experience at a young age (Melia & Erwin, 2017). If kindergartners have to take multiple tests, it could be setting them out to have burned out at a young age. Many of them will not take an interest in learning, and their enthusiasm will show when they move up in grades.

There are people who are in favor of standardized tests and see them as useful to have. People who think standardized tests are beneficial get to see where schools, teachers, and students struggle and improve to make the scores better in the future. The people in favor of the tests think of them as non-discriminatory because everyone is required to take them, and it does not matter the race or ethnicity of the child (Dotson & Foley, 2017). They see the tests as beneficial it allows children to assess themselves and find ways to improve upon where they are weak when they get their scores back. When the results of the tests get back, families view this as a good way to hold the school and teachers responsible for how well the students did and find it useful when improving education. Standardized tests can be a positive When schools know why students are struggling on the exams and change the curriculum around to help students. The scores let the schools know where they went wrong in teaching and work with the students so that the scores can be perfect next time. The No Child Left Behind act can have a positive outcome. If teachers have accountability for the students' scores, they will work harder to make sure that they succeed. The teachers emphasize good instruction; it improves students' interests and behaviors (Whitney & Candelaria, 2017). When teachers emphasize good instruction, it makes tasks clear for students. When teachers do this, it helps them differentiate the information for students. The teacher can think of new ways of introducing topics and creating lessons students can understand.

There are different effects on learning when it comes to standardized tests. When students come from lower socio-economic statuses, the school districts do not get enough funding, and they have more pressure to do well so the schools can remain open. The students that are in the lower socio-economic status can be clustered into schools that are on the line of not making adequate yearly progress (Whitney & Candelaria, 2017). Students who are put into schools trying to make adequate yearly progress will feel the pressure and can have stronger responses to do well on the standardized tests. Students from lower statuses are generally more stressed, and focusing can be hard on them. Students who come from high socio-economic statuses have a better chance of doing well on standardized tests. The schools have better funding, and students do not have as much stress.

The students who have better backgrounds do better at controlling their emotions, positive parenting, high family, and community support (Heissel, Levy & Adam, 2017). Students who have a better support system can get more help when preparing for the tests, and if they feel stressed, they know how to hide how they feel when they may feel overwhelmed due to the tests. With the advantages of technology and resources, students who live in high-income areas will get better scores than those who live in low-income areas. The students who live in high-income areas results show they score in the 55th percentile. In contrast, students who live in low-income areas show they score in the 28th percentile (Rowley & Wright, 2013). The No Child Left Behind Act is used to improve all students' scores and reduce the gap between them. With the differences in socio-economic backgrounds, it impacts the scores and how well the school districts performed.

For students who have disabilities, it can be hard for them to get accommodations for their disabilities. Students have to prove that they have a disability with their Individualized

Education Plan or 504 plan. It can be a long process of establishing documentation that a student needs to get accommodations when taking the tests. In schools, 40 percent of students have disabilities, and if the students did not do well, it could count as the school is failing to meet the state's goal of being proficient. In some districts, if a student does not meet the goal, they can be held back a grade (Moore, 2011). It can be hard to meet the goal when many students struggle in math or reading. Standardized tests can be wordy, making it difficult for a student with a disability to comprehend the information. Many students in schools with disabilities and tests are not broken down to be at their level. The tests focus on students in general and push everyone to meet the state goal. The information that the No Child Left Behind Act provides it mentions improving the achievement gap and improving test scores. The No Child Left Behind Act leaves out students with disabilities, which means six and a half million students are ignored (Moore, 2011). Students with disabilities are not accounted for, and it does not give any information on how to accommodate students when they take the test. It does not talk about if students with disabilities should be given the same test but modified.

There are recommendations for how standardized tests can be better for students. A proposal for standardized tests is to stop giving students tests that do not show accurate students' knowledge and create exams that show what they can do. A recommendation for standardized tests is to create one that shows greater learning. There should still be a statewide assessment, but it should not take up as much time and create them to enhance the learning process (Lamb, O'Reilly & Matt, 2013). If tests help enhance the learning process, it could make testing better for students. When the tests do not take as much time, students can enjoy learning and let teachers focus on their students. Teachers can work with others and collaborate to discuss

common goals for all the students (Lamb, O'Reilly & Matt, 2013). The recommendations can help make classes enjoyable, and teachers and students may feel less stress.

The No Child Left Behind Act came into existence and created standardized tests to give everyone the same opportunity and close the achievement gap. When giving everyone the same opportunity, students with disabilities should be included and given different tests to accommodate them. The tests created pressures on schools and teachers for the students to do well, and if schools do not do great on the tests, schools can potentially shut down. Some people think that knowing how schools are doing and seeing where their children are academically. The tests can be helpful information in trying to make changes in school districts and improve upon where the scores were weak. Testing is starting in kindergarten, and many of them are having a negative view of school when they learn through play. There are recommendations to make testing easier for everyone and have it so teachers and students do not feel stressed.

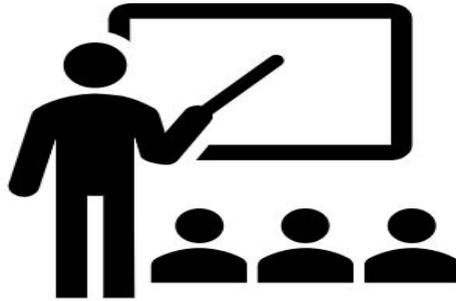
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## Standardized Testing Talking Points



### The stress of Standardized Tests

- School Districts are required to meet adequate yearly progress. Schools stress to teachers the importance of getting good results on standardized tests. Teachers take learning time away from students and spend time practicing for the exams. Teachers have to teach to the test and are losing their creativity when working with students.
- The practice drills can affect students. Many of them become bored with school and do not find an interest in learning. They feel the pressure of needing to succeed and can have testing anxiety. The tests can make students seem like students are behind and may not accurately show how they do in school.
- Some schools have made it where if a student does not meet the requirement on a score, they can be held back. Students become stressed and worry about meeting the goal and struggle with focusing on the information.

### Students With Disabilities

- In schools, some students have disabilities, and standardized tests can be challenging for them. The tests have a lot of information, and it is not broken down. It can be difficult for students to process information.
- Students with disabilities scores are counted like every other student. When their

scores count, it can lower the school's adequate yearly progress and it may seem the school is failing.

- Students with disabilities can have a challenging time meeting the required goal and can be held back.

### **Socioeconomic Differences**

- School districts in well-funded areas have well-educated teachers and amenities to help students do well on standardized tests.
- School districts in low socioeconomic areas are not well funded and can be difficult to support students. Schools can be close to shutting down, and there can be more of a push for students to do well.

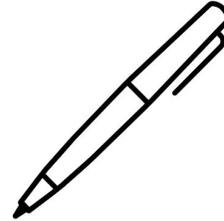
### **Positives and Negatives of Standardized Tests**

- Standardized tests can be helpful and promote changes to school curriculums so they can do better. The result shows how well schools did and how well the teachers taught the lessons.
- The scores show where students have strengths and weaknesses are. The results can help them know where to focus and improve.
- People view standardized tests as negative and do not accurately represent students. The tests only show what the student can do in a day.
- Many students get burned out from all the drills, and they lose interest in learning. The students feel the pressure from teachers and the school, and students can feel sick and have a challenging time focusing on tests due to stress.





## Standardized Testing Facts



### Impact on Schools

- Results of tests are important to schools. The grades reflect how well schools did, and some districts cut 44 percent of subjects and activities to focus on standardized tests.

### Testing and the Impact On Teachers

- Seventy-two percent of teachers feel stress when having to do standardized tests in their school district.
- Thirty percent of the time, teachers are spending more time focusing on tests than core subjects.
- School districts stressing the importance of standardized tests, and forty-five percent of teachers debate about leaving the profession.

### Students and Testing

- Students feel tired from all the drills to prepare for standardized tests.
- Students are losing motivation to learn with so much focus on the tests.
- Students feel sick when it comes to tests, feel pressure, and feel like they forget what they have learned.
- Forty percent of schools have students with disabilities, and their scores get included

with everyone else's.

- Tests are long and wordy and make it difficult for students with disabilities to comprehend.

### **Ways to Improve Standardized Tests**

- Create tests that work on proving what students can do.
- Create tests where it does not take up as much time and let there be more creativity.
- Tests that take less time allow more time to work towards a goal and give students time to process information.



### **Standardized Testing Action Alert**



In 2002 George W. Bush's administration created the No Child Left Behind Act. The act created mandated testing grades 3-8 covering the subjects of reading and math. Students are administered the test and are expected to meet an adequate yearly report. The report is used to track student's and school's scores. When schools do well, they get to receive funding, and if

they did poorly, schools would lose funding. These standardized test results are important for schools to remain open. Covering the tests can take time away from teaching the students core subjects, and it can become overwhelming for schools and students. The information used from the tests was to try and close the achievement gap.

**What Can you do?**

1. Help support the idea of high-quality tests but have them be designed to be at the student's level. Students should have tests that show what they know and can do based on their curriculum. If students are given tests that accommodates them better, it can show how well schools and teachers did.
2. Help create suggestions on how testing can be fair, and everyone should be given the same opportunity. Assessments should give the same opportunity to students who have disabilities by providing a different form of test that is meant for their level. Assessments should be given out so students can accurately show what they can do. Work together to create clear goals that students should meet.
3. Support the idea of spending less time on drilling facts for standardized tests. Work on suggestions that schools can have a set time each week where students prepare for the tests, and the rest where teachers can focus on the curriculum and having students meet standards.
4. Let states choose what kind of assessment they want to give instead of the nationwide assessment. It gives them more freedom on what they want to assess everyone over and can help with what students should know.
5. Instead of a test determining how well students did help support the idea of including background knowledge and teacher input. The use of a student portfolio with

assignments and projects can help show what students know. It shows their measurements and using the information can allow teachers to show where students are academically.

6. Contact US Representative Ann Wagner about any questions or ways to support the Student Success Act.

**Contact Information**



US Representative Ann Wagner

636.779.5449