Rachel Travis

Mr. Gross

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Standardized Testing

 “Attending this college is my dream.” This is a statement said many times by excellent, ambitious students. Even though the work ethic is present from these students, sometimes they are still not accepted. Since standardized test scores are taken into account when deciding a student's fate at a particular school, many students who have the work ethic and motivation are not accepted because their test scores do not meet that college's standards. This is a problem among many universities throughout the United States. Standardized tests must not be used to determine a student's educational future because of their lack to provide valuable information about a student. The scores produced by standardized test can be inaccurate and will vary each time a test is taken. Standardized tests are also inaccurate because of the large amount of stress and pressure placed on students. Yet, these tests are being used to determine college acceptances, scholarship candidates and recipients, and high school honors. Many people say that standardized tests are the only fair way to measure someone's aptitude. What these people do not consider is that wealthy people who can afford tutors and "testing coaches" will have children who score higher on the test just because of the testing strategies they have learned from the tutors. Standardized testing in the United States must be obliterated.

 Standardized tests must not be used to determine a student's educational future. Everything about a person cannot be determined in a sole test. Standardized tests such as the ACT (American College Test) and the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) are called aptitude tests. “Aptitude tests predict your child's ability to learn by measuring his mastery of school-success skills, such as reasoning or problem-solving” (Standardized Tests | Prepare and Interpret Results 1). Even though standardized tests are measuring a few things, they are not measuring a person as a human being. “Tests can measure only a portion of the goals of education, which are necessarily broader and more inclusive than the tests could possibly be” (Strauss 1). It is admitted that standardized tests only measure a fraction of education. “They do not measure the ability to think deeply or creatively in any field” (What's Wrong With Standardized Tests 1). Creativity among many other things is important when looking for a job, but is not measured in a standardized test. “We generally don’t even try to use standardized tests to measure: creativity, critical thinking, resilience, motivation, persistence, curiosity, reliability, enthusiasm, self-awareness, self-discipline, leadership, courage, compassion, resourcefulness, honesty, and integrity” (Strauss 1). When a standardized test is used to determine someone’s educational future, including college admissions and scholarships, but the test does not determine one’s actual ability to think and act, should it really be used to make decisions in these high stakes circumstances? A single test must not be a factor in determining someone’s educational future. Standardized testing must be eradicated because the test does not provide adequate information about students.

 Standardized tests are inaccurate due to the amount of stress and pressure put upon the students. During the week of standardized testing, many students become very stressed and feel the pressures from the school to perform at their best. “Standardized tests provoke considerable anxiety among students that seems to increase with their age and experience" (Edelstein 1). As students become older and the tests become more and more important, they are forced to deal with more stress. For any student it would be almost impossible to not feel this stress about a single test that would determine their entire future. Feeling this stress can have many side effects that could affect how a student feels and tests on the testing day. Some of these side effects of stress can include “disturbed sleep patterns, tiredness, worry, irregular eating habits, increased infections, and inability to concentrate” (Edelstein 1). With all of these stresses, it is obvious that a student will not be able to perform to the best of their ability when the time to test comes. Standardized testing must be abolished in order to relieve students of the testing stress.

 Standardized tests are used across America to determine the educational futures of students. These tests determine many different things about a student’s future. One of these things is college admissions. Standardized tests are not just used by a few colleges for admissions. “Approximately 78 percent of schools consider standardized test scores to be considerably important but they evaluate them in conjunction with your transcripts" (Are Test Scores Still Important College Admission Requirements 1). Even though a person’s transcripts are taken into account, the standardized test scores will still hold an influence of whether or not a person is accepted into college. Since being accepted into the right college is so important to a student’s future, standardized tests should not be used as a resource to determine this future.

 The scholarships that are received by students are also affected by standardized test scores. These standardized tests play a major role in determining who will receive a certain scholarship. “An impressive score on one of these tests could also make you a more impressive candidate for scholarships, especially those based on merit and academic achievements” (Many Colleges Require ACT Standardized Test for Admission 1). By earning a great score on a standardized test, a student could be awarded a large scholarship. High school honors are also affected by standardized tests. Even though a student may have a perfect grade point average (GPA) of a 4.0, they still may not be given the honor of valedictorian or salutatorian. At many high schools across the nation, standardized tests are now being taken into account when giving out these honors. “At Shepherd High School in Shepherd, Michigan, during the past seven years, three of the valedictorians have not had a 4.0. In these same graduating classes, there has been at least one other student with a 4.0” (Doug Bush). The formula that is being used uses a combination of a student's GPA and ACT score to determine high school honors. This formula is now being used by many high schools across the United States to honor students who did not earn these high honors. The formula is taking well deserved honors away from the smarter students. Since standardized tests do not measure valuable information, they should not be used to determine high school honors. Standardized tests must not be used to determine college admissions, scholarships, or high school honors. These tests must be obliterated in the United States all together.

 Two of the most popular standardized tests taken each year in the United States are the ACT and the SAT. “In 2012, 1,666,017 students took the ACT. This was the first year that the ACT over took the SAT by the number of test takers. The SAT only had 1,664,479 test takers in 2012” (Lewin 1). Compared to each other, both tests have many similarities. “Both the SAT and ACT test essentially the same skills in reading, math, and writing” (5 Similarities between the SAT and ACT 1). The ACT does have a science section, but most of the questions involve interpreting a graph or chart and are not content based. “Both of the tests use the multiple-choice format for all questions” (Top 5 Similarities between the SAT and ACT 1). On the ACT though, there is an optional essay section along with the standard multiple choice questions. On the ACT a student can get a score from 1-36, while on the SAT a student can get a score from 0-2400. Overall, the ACT and the SAT are very much alike. Even though they have many similarities, both of these standardized tests, along with all other standardized tests, need to be removed from the United States.

 The many flaws in the ACT and the SAT are endless. In a standardized test that is taken by both males and females, the scores should reflect on the grades of each gender. This is not always the case. “The ACT regularly underestimates the abilities of females, who earn higher grades than males in college, despite lower ACT scores” (The ACT: Biased, Inaccurate, and Misused 1). Gender should not influence the outcome of a standardized test that is so important for a student’s future. "An Education Testing Service study conducted in 1994 also found that SAT scores under-predicted the college performance of females and over-predicted that of males, showing a gender bias as well” (Abesamis 1). The scores of these standardized tests also fluctuate. “The margin of error in ACT scores is 1.55 points in English, 1.43 in Mathematics, 2.20 in Reading, and 1.75 in Science” (The ACT: Biased, Inaccurate, and Misused 1). This means that if a student took the ACT and then retook the test, their scores on average would fluctuate in each testing category by each of these amounts. When taking the SAT, a student can expect similar results. “If someone takes the SAT and receives a 2250, and then takes the test multiple times, their score will most likely fluctuate between the range 2160-2340” (2250 SAT Score 1). Both of these tests have scores that can vary tremendous amounts. Since the scores can be so inaccurate, should they really be used when determining a student’s future? Standardized testing must be put to an end in order to prevent problems such as these.

 Many people say that standardized tests are the only way to measure the knowledge and aptitude of students. Since everyone is taking the same test and the test is graded usually by a machine, there is nothing that will affect the test score besides the student taking the test. What people who have this point of view do not consider is that the amount of income a family has can affect the test scores. "Higher income families are investing more money and time in their children which can translate into extra classes and activities, or tutors" (Donald 1). Many students who have the money to afford tutors or "testing coaches" will score better despite their real knowledge. These "testing coaches" will not teach them any new knowledge at all, but instead teach them how to beat the test. These skills taught to the students by the tutors have a direct correlation to their test scores. "The gap in test scores between the higher income and low-income children has grown by about 40 percent" (Donald 1). If these lower income students could also have these tutors, then their test scores would be very close or the same as the wealthy students. These standardized tests must be terminated because of their lack to provide a fair way to determine the aptitude between all students.

 With every problem comes a solution. Standardized testing must not determine the educational futures of today’s students. The first step in solving this problem is to obliterate standardized testing in the United States. With standardized testing gone, colleges, scholarship committees, and high school administration will have to use a different way to determine who is awarded and who is not. The solution is easy. With colleges and scholarship committees, the admissions and awards should be determined the same way a job is determined. The colleges and committees can have a personal interview to discuss the applicant’s qualifications. By having a personal interview, the college and scholarship committees would actually get to know the student and see what kind of a person they are. Nonverbal communication would be shown through the interview. This unspoken communication speaks volumes. Again, just like a job interview, the candidate could bring in or submit a few letters of recommendation from teachers, coaches, or family friends. These people have watched the student grow up and would be able to provide valuable insight to the interviewers. By submitting the personal contact information, the interviewers would be able to call the contacts and obtain any information needed. In addition to the interview, letters of recommendation, and the personal contacts, the student could submit a written essay. This essay would show a student’s work ethic and their quality of work. Looking at a student’s grade point average would reflect on both of these things and also demonstrate dedication and persistence. By using all of these things instead of using standardized tests, the interviewers will have a better understanding of each student and a student’s future can be more honestly determined.

 Standardized testing is becoming more and more popular each year across America. Even though it is becoming more popular, it does not mean that testing a good thing. Standardized tests contain inaccurate information because of the large amounts of stress and pressure the students experience before, during, and after the test. It is once believed that these tests are the only fair way to measure someone's aptitude. But with wealthy parents hiring personal tutors to "coach" their child, the child receives a higher test score. This shows how unfair standardized testing is for students who cannot afford personal tutors. In addition, standardized tests produce inaccurate scores that vary from time to time. Not only this, but the test lacks to measure important skills including creativity, motivation, and problem solving. Since standardized tests are unfair and do not demonstrate a student's true and important abilities, they should not be used to determine their future. As stated by current first lady Michelle Obama: "If my future were determined just by my performance on a standardized test, I wouldn't be here, I guarantee you that" (Standardized Quotes 1). If Michelle Obama did not score very high on a standardized test but she can still achieve great things including being first lady, starting national campaigns, and graduating from Harvard, then what is a high score on a standardized test even proving?

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