

## Ref: 0006 Analysis

Source: "Tests + Stress = Problems For Students", 04/05/2016



Intensive standardized testing not only causes stress in students, but may undermine learning.

Anecdotal reports from educators, combined with a surge in prescriptions for such medications as Ritalin and Prozac, suggest that students are experiencing increased stress in the classroom. At the root of the problem, some researchers suggest, are schools that primarily rank students based on their test scores.

While the first piece of research about exam stress defined stress quite nicely, there was never little mention of the links between exams and stress; therefore I had to use this webpage to gather information about the links between exams and stress- the original purpose of the problem section of my client brief. This webpage instantly catches the eye as it starts with a statement that instantly shows that it is related to exactly what I was looking for, so I decided to read on.

Our educational system is now relying more than ever on standardized tests that compare students to one another as the dominant assessment instrument. This tendency has forced teachers at all grade levels to "orient students to performance goals and comparative standards of excellence instead of internal mastery goals," says Scott Paris, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. The emphasis on external goals, Paris suggests, has created an unhealthy classroom scenario in which "standardized tests provoke considerable anxiety among students that seems to increase with their age and experience."

While I was aware of this information- being a student myself and seeing the effects of this, but the wording allowed me to explore this problem as an issue that could be pinned down rather than a

flaw in education. This was allowing me to start to understand how to begin to discuss this issue of exams linking to stress what in turn will reduce a student's desire to participate in a subject.

Nonetheless, some educational researchers have documented "acting out" behaviors exhibited by stressed out students that even go beyond the "exam stress" symptoms described earlier. "Stressed elementary students in grades two through four tend to show emotional stress behaviors such as crying, throwing tantrums, wetting themselves, and vomiting," says Tim Urdan, an assistant professor of psychology at Santa Clara University. "The older kids, such as those in high school, are more likely to show 'rebellious' responses: refusal to participate, cutting class, and deliberately undermining the test by answering incorrectly on purpose."

This now gives symptoms that can be observed. Whether I decide to act on this information is no quite clear yet. I could ask science teachers about these symptoms and record the results- but this seems to drag focus and time to a small section of the task. For the most part, it's useful as by listing effects and observations, it has become clear that stress from education is apparent in all year groups.

Does an exaggerated emphasis on ranking students based on standardized test scores cause stress while discouraging the kind of open inquiry that fosters true intellectual growth?

Paris, along with Richard J. Stiggins, president of the Assessment Training Institute in Portland, Oregon, believes that more educators are now realizing how standardized tests provoke considerable anxiety—anxiety that increases with each year that students move through school. Furthermore, students do not necessarily become "test wise" as is commonly believed. Instead, older students report not checking their answers, filling in bubbles mindlessly, carelessly skimming passages for answers, and occasionally cheating. This "test pollution" encourages destructive habits that undermine genuine learning.

This last section wraps up these ideas nicely with a question. Once again going back to the idea of exams and their ranking systems having negative effects on students not only makes it really easy to make a main focal point as a mini hypothesis, but also makes a final link showing that this kind of stress can actually pose negative effects on students.

In terms of validity when compared with "*Exam Stress*", there are no direct contradictions- this is mostly due to there being little common ground between the approaches of the two webpages. *Exam Stress* was designed for student use and focuses more on helping students to notice and deal with stress. This article, *Tests + Stress = Problems For Students*, is aimed towards an older, or more professional audience. In terms of validity, other than a host of doctors (the PhD kind), I couldn't find any other evidence to prove the validity of this article- but as so far there has been no contradictions, I will treat this as a useful source.