# 1AC--SLOW

IFF LAY JUDGE:

Before I begin my arguments, when I say a name and a number I’m reading a piece of evidence, or a card. For example, if I say Smith 19, I’m then going to read the piece of evidence written by John Smith and published in 2019.

I affirm the resolution: “**Resolved: In the United States, colleges and universities ought not consider standardized tests in undergraduate admissions decisions.”**

**My value is Fairness. Fairness is defined as a lack of favoritism toward one side or another. With respect to the resolution, fairness can be seen as no person being in an advantageous position going into the college application process**

**My criterion is creating a more equitable society. Equity is defined as** dealing fairly and equally with all concerned. According to Mckinsey 19, Equity can be understood as the principle of treating people differently to ensure fairness by accounting for varying levels of privilege and status. Since education is such a nuanced process, using a standardized metric is unfair. In order to create a fair application process, we should focus on equity to remove inherent inequalities that exist when we judge people by a standardized metric.

My goal here today is not to prove that standardized tests are on-balance bad, but I am here to proof that they promote unfairness and that by removing them we could be creating a more equitable society and promoting fairness in the undergraduate admissions process.

**Now on to my definitions:**

**The definition of a standardized test from USLEGAL 19 states:**

A standardized test is administered under standardized or controlled conditions that specify where, when, how, and for how long children respond to the questions. In standardized tests, the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent.

Usually seen as SATs or ACTs.

**On to my contentions:**

Contention 1. Certain groups of high schoolers statistically do better on Standardized tests

Subpoint A. Having highly educated parents affects test scores

Valero-Cuevas 19

Designed to identify college readiness, tests like the SAT or ACT have become another way wealthy families can give their children an advantage over competent peers.

Students from better-off and better-educated families typically take intensive — and expensive — prep courses that boost their scores on these tests. Higher scores increase their chances of getting into a university and winning scholarships. Students from families who [can’t afford prep courses](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__economix.blogs.nytimes.com_2009_08_27_sat-2Dscores-2Dand-2Dfamily-2Dincome_&d=DwMFaQ&c=clK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=_X5uCqA9VIXpcWjBgnleTw&m=xuEfWtj8Qg3w95sWLG_C9r0YszhIS44kWUalch9gmVk&s=qX9P5ovxjul8xUvZv0Biak7Hh6G3R7f-bYr-HIJBCjU&e=) or are unaware of the importance of the tests tend to get lower scores, which reduce their chances at admission and aid.

Subpoint B. Ethnicity and Race Determine Test Scores

Reeves and Halikias 19

The SAT provides a measure of academic inequality at the end of secondary schooling. Moreover, insofar as [SAT scores predict student success](http://research.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/publications/2015/6/research-report-sat-validity-primer.pdf) in college, inequalities in the SAT score distribution reflect and reinforce racial inequalities across generations.

The mean score on the math section of the SAT for all test-takers is 511 out of 800, the average scores for blacks (428) and Latinos (457) are significantly below those of whites (534) and Asians (598). The scores of black and Latino students are clustered towards the bottom of the distribution, while white scores are relatively normally distributed, and Asians are clustered at the top:

There are some limitations to the data which may mean that, if anything, the race gap is being understated. The ceiling on the SAT score may, for example, understate Asian achievement. If the exam was redesigned to increase score variance (add harder and easier questions than it currently has), the achievement gap across racial groups [could be even more pronounced](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ccf_20160811_jacob_evidence_speaks1.pdf). In other words, if the math section was scored between 0 and 1000, we might see more complete tails on both the right and the left. More Asians score between 750 and 800 than score between 700 and 750, suggesting that many Asians could be scoring above 800 if the test allowed them to.

Debates over the fairness, value and accuracy of the SAT are sure to continue. The evidence for a stubborn race gap on this test does meanwhile provide a snapshot into the extraordinary magnitude of racial inequality in contemporary American society. Standardized tests are often seen as mechanisms for meritocracy, ensuring fairness in terms of access. But test scores reflect accumulated advantages and disadvantages in each day of life up the one on which the test is taken. Race gaps on the SAT hold up a mirror to racial inequities in society as a whole. Equalizing educational opportunities and human capital acquisition earlier is the only way to ensure fairer outcomes.

Contention 2. Standardized tests are inherently unfair

Even though standardized tests are supposed to be standard, in practice they deviate from test to test

Princeton review 18

For a standardized test to be of any value, it needs to be possible to compare the scores of someone who took the test in June 2018 to someone who took it in March 2018, June 2017, October 2016, etc. College Board cannot just give the same test at each administration, and it’s really hard to make each test exactly as hard as every other test. As a result, test makers need to adjust the scaled score, which is based on the raw number of correct answers, on each test to make sure they’re comparable.  [Learn how the SAT is scored.](https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/guide-to-sat-scores)

Score equating is done before the test is ever given, so it’s worth saying that the actual performances on test day did not affect the curve. College Board knew it was going to administer an easier test, which meant more students would get more questions right, and the scale would need to undergo adjustment. As a result, small differences had a larger impact than usual.

Why Easy SATs Can Hurt High-Scorers

1. It's Tough for Colleges to Evaluate Their Scores

The equating applied to the June 2018 SAT suggests that the College Board made the test far too easy to distinguish among high scorers who received a score of 650 (86th percentile) or higher. That is a problem for those colleges who treat a 650, a 700, a 750, and an 800 as accurate indicators of real differences in Math ability.

2. No Room for Errors

It is a problem, too, for high-scoring students who make the occasional careless error or who mis-bubbles on questions that they are quite capable of answering. With a typical curve, there’s some cushion to mitigate the impact of such errors. There was no cushion on the [June 2018 SAT](https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2018/07/12/surprisingly-low-scores-mathematics-sat-stun-and-anger-students) .

It might be fair to say that the most accomplished students shouldn’t make those kinds of errors, but is that true? Wouldn’t it be more accurate to say that the most accomplished test takers don’t make those kinds of errors. Small mistakes under time pressure can make a big difference in life, no doubt, but doing well in college tends to be about doing well over time with the possibility to revise, rethink, and do better.

Contention 3. Admissions Processes can function without standardized tests

**Strauss 19**

Hampshire College is a liberal arts school in Massachusetts that has decided not to accept SAT/ACT scores from applicants. That's right - the college won't accept them, a step beyond the hundreds of "test-optional" schools that leave it up to the applicant to decide whether to include them in their applications. So what has happened as a result of the decision?

If we reduce education to the outcomes of a test, the only incentive for schools and students to innovate is in the form of improving test-taking and scores. Teaching to a test becomes stifling for teachers and students, far from the inspiring, adaptive education which most benefits students. Our greatly accelerating world needs graduates who are trained to address tough situations with innovation, ingenuity, entrepreneurship and a capacity for mobilizing collaboration and cooperation.

We weighed other factors in our decision:

- Standardized test scores do not predict a student's success at our college.

- SATs/ACTs are strongly biased against low-income students and students of color, at a time when diversity is critical to our mission.

- We surveyed our students and learned not one of them had considered rankings when choosing to apply to colleges; instead they most cared about a college's mission.

- Some good students are bad test takers, particularly under stress, such as when a test may grant or deny college entry. Multiple-choice tests don't reveal much about a student.

- We've developed much better, fairer ways to assess students who will thrive at our college.

In our admissions, we review an applicant's whole academic and lived experience.

We're seeing remarkable admissions results since disregarding standardized test scores:

- Our yield, the percentage of students who accepted our invitation to enroll, rose in a single year from 18% to 26%, an amazing turnaround.

- The QUANTity of applications went down, but the quality went up, likely because we made it harder to apply, asking for more essays. Our applicants collectively were more motivated, mature, disciplined and consistent in their high school years than past applicants.

- Class diversity increased to 31% students of color, the most diverse in our history, up from 21% two years ago.

- The percentage of students who are the first-generation from their family to attend college rose from 10% to 18% in this year's class.

- An unexpected benefit: This shift has saved us significant time and operational expense. Having a smaller but more targeted, engaged, passionate, and robust applicant pool, we are able to streamline our resources.

**Clearly, the status quo inequitable, and unfair. By removing standardized tests, we could change that. For all these reasons, vote in Affirmation of the ballet**

# AFF

I affirm the resolution: “**Resolved: In the United States, colleges and universities ought not consider standardized tests in undergraduate admissions decisions.”**

***My value is Fairness.* Fairness is defined as a lack of favoritism toward one side or another. With respect to the resolution, fairness can be seen as no person being in an advantageous position going into the college application process**

***My criterion is creating a more equitable society.* Equity is defined as** dealing fairly and equally with all concerned. According to Mckinsey 19, Equity can be understood as the principle of treating people differently to ensure fairness by accounting for varying levels of privilege and status. Since education is such a nuanced process, using a standardized metric is unfair. In order to create a fair application process, we should focus on equity to account for inequalities that exist when we judge people by a standardized metric.

My goal here today is not to prove that standardized tests are on-balance bad, but I am here to proof that they promote unfairness and that by removing them we could be creating a more equitable society and promoting fairness in the undergraduate admissions process. **In order for my arguments to be refuted, my opponent will need to prove that removing standardized tests will not make the admissions process fairer at all.**

## ****Value + Criterion Definitions****

#### Fairness Definition

(2019) Fairness | Definition of Fairness by Merriam-Webster. Retrieved August 15, 2019, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fairness>

the quality or state of being [fair](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fair#h1) especially **:** fair or impartial treatment **:** lack of favoritism toward one side or another

#### Fairness =/= Equality

Emelda M. (2019) Difference Between Equality and Fairness | Difference Between. Retrieved August 24, 2019, from http://www.differencebetween.net/language/words-language/difference-between-equality-and-fairness/

Every individual is born different from each other. Each has his or her own physical, mental, and emotional characteristics. Each one is also born to parents of a different social and economic status; some are born to an affluent life while others are born to a life of struggle. Men are not created equal, and life is not always fair.

This [fact](http://www.differencebetween.net/language/difference-between-fact-and-theory/) has encouraged certain individuals as well as political organizations to go out of their way to make an effort to provide equality and fairness to everyone. Fairness can result in equality, and equality is giving all individuals their fair share.

“Equality” is defined as the [quality](http://www.differencebetween.net/language/difference-between-quality-and-quantity/) of being the same in quantity, value, or status. It is the state of having a balanced social, economic, and political standing among individuals in a society despite differences in race, religion, sex, social and economic status, and culture. It refers to providing every individual the same opportunities to improve his rank or condition in life without expecting that the results [would](http://www.differencebetween.net/language/difference-between-would-and-should/) also be equal. It provides the same compensation and [benefits](http://www.differencebetween.net/business/difference-between-features-and-benefits/) to workers or employees with the same job.

The word “equality” comes from the Old French word “equalite” which means “uniformity in size” or “evenness of surface or number,” from the Latin word “aequalitatem” which means “likeness, similarity, or equality referring to rights or privileges.”

Fairness, on the other hand, is defined as the quality of having an unbiased disposition. It is the characteristic of being just to everyone, of treating them without discrimination or partiality. It is the absence of prejudice. The word “fairness” comes from the Old English word “faeger” which means “beauty” and the Old English adjective “nes” that [form](http://www.differencebetween.net/language/difference-between-shape-and-form/) a word which means “evenhandedness.”

Since men are not created equal, some are born rich while others are poor, some are naturally beautiful while others are physically lacking. Still, some are born smart and intelligent while others are born with lesser minds. It is important that they are given equal and fair opportunities. The discrimination against homosexuals in the military is not fair. Like all other people, they too have a right to apply for a job that they feel is right or good for them. They have to be given equal opportunities as individuals who are straight.

Every [country](http://www.differencebetween.net/miscellaneous/difference-between-country-and-continent/) and every society strive to provide their citizens equality in every aspect from [politics](http://www.differencebetween.net/category/miscellaneous/politics/political-institutions/) to [economics](http://www.differencebetween.net/business/difference-between-positive-and-normative-economics-2/) and social aspects. They try to give them their just and fair share of opportunities to help them improve their status.

Summary:

1.Equality is the quality of being the same in status, quantity, and value while fairness is the quality of being unbiased and impartial.  
2.Equality is giving individuals who have the same task the same compensation while fairness is giving individuals the same choices or chances no matter their status in life.  
3.“Equality” comes from the Latin word “equalitatem” which means “similarity or likeness” while “fairness” comes from the Old English word “faeger” and “nes” which means “evenhandedness.”

#### Fairness through Equity

Fidellow, McKinsey . "Equity." Issues: Understanding Controversy and Society, ABC-CLIO, 2019, issues.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/2140147. Accessed 25 Aug. 2019.

Equity is the principle of treating people differently to ensure fairness by accounting for varying levels of privilege and status. In equity, groups that are institutionally or socially disadvantaged, such ethnic minorities and people of low socio-economic status, receive more aid than their more privileged counterparts. Equity is not be confused with equality, which is the principle that assumes everyone is on the same level and should be treated the same to ensure fairness.

#### Equitable Definition

Black Feminist Legal. (2019) Social Justice Definitions | Resources | Diversity, Equity & Inclusion | Brandeis University. Retrieved September 18, 2019, from <https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/resources/definitions.html>

The notion of being fair and impartial as an individual engages with an organization or system, particularly systems of grievance. It reflects processes and practices that both acknowledge that we live in a world where everyone has not been afforded the same resources and treatment while also working to remedy this fact. “Equity” is often conflated with the term “Equality” which means sameness and assumes, incorrectly, that we all have had equal access, treatment, and outcomes. In fact, true equity implies that an individual may need to experience or receive something different (not equal) in order to maintain fairness and access. For example, a person with a wheelchair may need differential access to an elevator relative to someone else.

#### Definition of standard test

Us Legal, Inc. (2019) Standardized Test [Education] Law and Legal Definition | USLegal, Inc.. Retrieved September 11, 2019, from https://definitions.uslegal.com/s/standardized-test-education/

A standardized test is administered under standardized or controlled conditions that specify where, when, how, and for how long children respond to the questions. In standardized tests, the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent.

#### Definition of undergraduate

https://www.diffen.com/difference/Graduate\_vs\_Undergraduate

An undergraduate program is a 4-year college bachelor's degree program, or a 2-year associate's degree program.

#### Definition of Graduate

https://www.diffen.com/difference/Graduate\_vs\_Undergraduate

A graduate program is a 1-6-year college master's degree program, for someone who already has a bachelor's degree.

## Contention 1. Certain groups of high schoolers statistically do better on Standardized tests

### Subpoint A. Having well-off parents affects test scores

#### Economic inequality affects Children’s outcomes

(2019) [Ariel Kalil](https://equitablegrowth.org/people/ariel-kalil/)  How economic inequality affects children’s outcomes - Equitable Growth. Retrieved August 24, 2019, from <https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/>

--Maybe Neg card since it is general inequality that affects test scores, not standardized tests, we should focus on solving inequality rather than removing SAT

What happens in the home is paramount to children’s early development. Economically disadvantaged children’s limited access to cognitively enriching home environments may help drive growing gaps in cognitive and non-cognitive skills, producing a feedback cycle that leads to low socioeconomic mobility and further grows inequality. Research increasingly suggests that policy should identify new targets for programs aimed at enhancing parent-child interactions in low-income families, such as Early Head Start and Healthy Families America. All parents want to help their children flourish, but low-income parents often lack the resources to achieve their parenting goals. Parents are children’s first teachers and, to equalize the playing field, governments need to invest in parents so that they, in turn, can better invest in their children.

Background

Economic growth for much of the 20th century supported America’s promise of offering opportunities to both parents and their children. It is well known, however, that income inequality increased dramatically in the United States beginning in the 1970s.[1](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-1) Greg Duncan and Richard Murnane illustrate how increasing family income inequality may affect access to high-quality child care, neighborhoods, schools, and other settings that help build children’s skills and educational attainments.[2](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-2) Changes in these social contexts may in turn affect children’s skill acquisition and educational attainment directly as well as indirectly by influencing how schools operate.

Growing income inequality also increases the gap in the resources high- and low-income families can spend on enrichment goods and services for their children.[3](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-3) For instance, Sabino Kornrich and Frank Furstenberg show that spending on child-enrichment goods and services jumped for families in the top quintiles but increased much less—in both absolute and relative terms—for families in bottom-income quintiles, as reflected in four large consumer expenditure surveys conducted between the early 1970s and 2005-2006. In 1972-1973, high-income families spent about $2,700 more per year on child enrichment than did low-income families. By 2005-2006, this gap had nearly tripled, to $7,500.[4](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-4)

As the incomes of affluent and poor American families have diverged over the past three decades, so too has the educational performance of the children in these families. Sean Reardon documents substantial growth in the income-based gap on the test scores of children born since the 1950s. Among children born around 1950, test scores of low-income (10th income percentile) children lagged behind those of their better-off (90th income percentile) peers by a little over half a standard deviation, or about 50 points on an SAT-type test. Fifty years later, this gap was twice as large. Family income is now a better predictor of children’s success in school than race.[5](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-5)

At age four, children from families in the poorest income quintile score on average at the 32nd percentile of the national distribution on math, the 34th percentile in a test of literacy, and at the 32nd percentile on a measure of school readiness compared with children in the richest quintile, who scored at the 69th percentile on math and literacy and at the 63rd percentile on school readiness.[6](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-6) Gaps in conduct problems and attention/hyperactivity also are apparent albeit less pronounced. On measures of hyperactivity, for instance, children from families in the poorest income quintile score on average at the 55th percentile of the national distribution (in this case, higher scores indicate higher levels of behavior problems) compared with children in the richest quintile, who scored at the 44th percentile.[7](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-7)

Delivering equitable growth

Previous article: [Income volatility](https://equitablegrowth.org/labor-markets/addressing-income-volatility-in-the-united-states-flexible-policy-solutions-for-changing-economic-circumstances/), Bradley Hardy  
Next article: [Social Security](https://equitablegrowth.org/fiscal-policy/expand-social-security), Jesse Rothstein

Using data from the 1979 and 1997 National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth, Martha Bailey and Susan Dynarski show that graduation rates for children born into high-income families jumped 21 percentage points (from 33 percent to 54 percent) between the early 1960s and the early 1980s. The corresponding increase for children born into low-income families was only four percentage points (from 5 percent to 9 percent). A little less than half of the gap between rich and poor in college graduation rates can be explained by differences in college enrollment rates, with the rest explained by differences in students’ persistence in completing their degrees.[8](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-8) Phillipe Belley and Lance Lochner show that high family income has become a substantially more important determinant of college attendance and college quality in recent years, particularly for those youth with the lowest skills.[9](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-9)

Drivers of the socioeconomic  
status-based gaps in child outcomes

Rising gaps in children’s skills and attainments cannot be attributed to rising income gaps alone, however.[10](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-10) In fact, Reardon estimates that only about half of the rising income-based gap in test scores can be attributed to rising income inequality.[11](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-11) Parents invest more than money in their children’s development. Through their time and attention parents can provide a cognitively stimulating and emotionally supportive home environment that promotes children’s early learning and behavioral adjustment. Economically advantaged parents differ from their less advantaged peers on many relevant dimensions of parenting.[12](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-12)

Mounting evidence suggests that socioeconomic status-based gaps in parenting and children’s early developmental outcomes have grown alongside increasing economic inequality in family conditions.[13](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-13) The demography of family structure, for example, has changed in ways that favor the socioeconomically advantaged and their ability to invest parental time and resources in their children’s development. Between 1980 and 2010, the share of children living with college-educated mothers who were married remained at about 90 percent. In contrast, the share of children living with mothers who lacked a high school degree and who were married decreased from about 73 percent to about 66 percent.[14](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-14) Two-biological-parent households not only enjoy greater economic well-being but also demonstrate higher levels of parental time investment in children than do single-parent households.[15](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-15)

Trends in maternal age at first birth also have changed in important ways that may favor the parenting environments provided by mothers with high socioecoconomic status. Comparing data on U.S. births in 1970, 1989 and 2006 by age of mother and maternal schooling reveals that the maternal age gap between children born to high school dropouts and college graduate mothers grew by nearly 3 years—from 4.3 years to 7.1 years.[16](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-16) Positive parenting behaviors increase in maternal age at first birth whereas negative parenting behaviors decrease in maternal age at first birth.[17](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-17)

Finally, how parents think about parenting has changed dramatically over the past century. In 1900, parenting experts emphasized nutrition, medical care, and fresh air as the key inputs into child development, according to a comprehensive analysis of magazine articles containing parenting advice. By the 1980’s, intellectual stimulation and social/emotional development had replaced nutrition and fresh air as key topics of concern along with medical care.[18](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-18) Yet economically advantaged parents, more so than their disadvantaged counterparts, may have responded more quickly to this advice, thus widening the parenting gap.

Why parents matter

Economically advantaged parents display more of the behaviors deemed supportive of children’s development across a range of parenting domains. Economically advantaged parents display more authoritative (versus authoritarian) parenting styles,[19](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-19) engage in more sensitive and responsive mother-child interactions,[20](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-20) use greater language stimulation,[21](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-21) and use greater levels of parental management and advocacy.[22](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-22) A famous example of differential parenting by socioeconomic status is the study by Betty Hart and Todd Risley, who intensively observed the language patterns of 42 families with young children. They found that in professional families, children heard an average of 2,153 words per hour, while children in working class families heard an average of 1,251 words per hour, and children in welfare-recipient families heard an average of 616 words per hour. By age four, a child from a welfare-recipient family could have heard 32 million words fewer than a classmate from a professional family.[23](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-23)

One of the most important parenting differences between advantaged and disadvantaged parents is in how much time the parent spends with the child. Annette Lareau’s qualitative study of family life reported that middle-class parents target their time with children toward developmentally enhancing activities. In her study, middle-class families (whose jobs, by her definition, require college-level skills) engage in a pattern of “concerted cultivation” to actively develop children’s talents and skills. By contrast, in lower-class families, Lareau identified a pattern that she calls “the accomplishment of natural growth,” wherein parents attend to children’s material and emotional needs but presume that their talents and skills will develop without concerted parental intervention.[24](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-24)

Numerous quantitative studies not only show large differences in the time investments of advantaged and disadvantaged parents but also that these gaps remain large even when other differences across families, such as employment hours and schedules, are accounted for.[25](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-25) Work by Ariel Kalil, Rebecca Ryan, and Michael Corey further shows that highly educated mothers are more “efficient” in their parental time investments by tailoring their specific activities to children’s developmental stage. This research also shows that with respect to total childcare time, the educational gradient is most apparent in households with the youngest children, a point also made by Erik Hurst, Daniel Sacks, and Betsey Stevenson.[26](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-26) Economically advantaged mothers, more so than their less advantaged counterparts, may have learned the message that parental investments in early childhood are key ingredients in children’s long-run success.[27](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-27)

High-income parents appear to be investing more parenting time than ever before in their children’s cognitive development and educational success.[28](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-28) This increase may mean that high-skilled parents are responding to the increased returns to having high-skilled (highly educated) children.[29](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-29) Work by Erik Hurst , Daniel Sacks, and Betsey Stevenson further show that all of the increase in childcare time between 1985 and 2003 has come from households with children ages 5 and younger, and Evrim Altintas shows that the growing education gap in time with young children is driven by time in educationally enriching activities.[30](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-30)

Increases in the parenting gap are expected to be relevant for socioeconomic status-based gaps in children’s development. Observational research suggests that the quality of the home learning environment as measured by the HOME score accounts for up to half of the relationship between socioeconomic status and disparities in children’s cognitive test scores.[31](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-31) In a descriptive analysis of U.S. data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort, Jane Waldfogel and Elizabeth Washbrook conclude that parenting style (in particular, mothers’ sensitivity and responsiveness as well as the home learning environment) is the most important factor explaining the poorer cognitive performance of low-income children relative to middle-income children, accounting for between a quarter and a third percentage of the gaps in literacy, mathematics, and language.[32](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-32)

What’s the role for  
public policy?

Few trends are more ominous than the increases in both the class gaps and achievement gaps between low- and high-income children in the United States. The rising income-based achievement gaps call into question whether the American Dream of intergenerational mobility is now beyond the reach of many children raised in low-income families.[33](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-33)

Policy approaches to addressing increasing disparities in outcomes for children from low- and high-income families can take a number of forms. Some of these will boost families’ economic security, others can help support parents’ engagement in their children’s development, and others can provide educational supports directly to children. Such approaches can be pursued simultaneously. These include policies such as the Earned Income Tax Credit that redistributes income and relies on parents to use the added income to promote their children’s development; policies such as the Nurse Family Partnership that teach high-risk parents about positive parenting practices and about the nature of early childhood development; polices such as Pell Grants that encourage would-be parents to acquire post-secondary schooling; and policies such as state pre-Kindergarten programs that provide educational services directly to young children.[34](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-34)

Given the importance of parental engagement in children’s development, it may be especially fruitful for policies to focus on boosting parents’ ability to provide a cognitively stimulating and emotionally supportive home environment. Gaps in children’s skills could be narrowed if less-advantaged parents adopted the parenting practices of their more-advantaged peers. Notably, a leading family intervention for low-income children—the Nurse-Family Partnership program—is being targeted for substantial expansion by the federal government from the Administration on Children and Families’ Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program demonstration. The program provides weekly in-home visits by trained nurses from pregnancy through the child’s second birthday.

One mission of the Nurse-Family Partnership program is to improve children’s health and development by helping young, economically disadvantaged parents provide more competent care. Some experimental evaluations of the program show it reduces child maltreatment. In one study, mothers in the treatment group who received nurse visits during their pregnancy and the child’s infancy had 0.29 substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect at some point before the child turned 15. Mothers in the control group, in contrast, had on average 0.54 such reports.[35](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-35) This is important because child maltreatment is costly for the individual affected and for society.[36](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-36)

The Nurse-Family Partner program also yields long-run benefits for some children. By age 19, girls in the treatment group had fewer arrests and convictions; a subset of these girls had fewer children and less Medicaid use than their comparison group counterparts.[37](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-37) Although there is room for improvement in the design and delivery of this and similar intervention programs, research underscores the merit of the new federal emphasis on supporting parenting in educationally disadvantaged families.

Important new evidence also is emerging that suggests that low-cost “light-touch” efforts can be highly successful in helping low-income parents support their young children’s learning and development.[38](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-38)

Conclusion

The United States has made little progress toward narrowing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children. This is in part because public policy has neglected the critical role of parenting in children’s development. Parents do more than spend money on children’s development; they also promote child development by spending time in cognitively enriching activities and by providing emotional support and consistent discipline.

All parents want the best for their children, but the “parenting divide” between economically advantaged and disadvantaged children is large and appears to be growing over time.[39](https://equitablegrowth.org/how-economic-inequality-affects-childrens-outcomes/#footnote-39) The main barrier to designing and scaling up parenting interventions nationwide is the currently limited understanding of the key ingredients of successful programs. Policymakers need to become better informed on effective interventions that can motivate and support parents to engage effectively in their children’s development.

#### SATs favor Rich students

Francisco Valero-Cuevas. (2019) SAT, ACT unfair for low-income, minority students | The Sacramento Bee. Retrieved September 04, 2019, from https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/soapbox/article224538095.html

College admissions officers will once again pass over highly qualified applicants this year simply because they haven’t ranked among the top scorers on the SAT.

Designed to identify college readiness, tests like the SAT or ACT have become another way wealthy families can give their children an advantage over competent peers.

This failing in university admissions has to change.

Students from better-off and better-educated families typically take intensive — and expensive — prep courses that boost their scores on these tests. Higher scores increase their chances of getting into a university and winning scholarships. Students from families who [can’t afford prep courses](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__economix.blogs.nytimes.com_2009_08_27_sat-2Dscores-2Dand-2Dfamily-2Dincome_&d=DwMFaQ&c=clK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=_X5uCqA9VIXpcWjBgnleTw&m=xuEfWtj8Qg3w95sWLG_C9r0YszhIS44kWUalch9gmVk&s=qX9P5ovxjul8xUvZv0Biak7Hh6G3R7f-bYr-HIJBCjU&e=) or are unaware of the importance of the tests tend to get lower scores, which reduce their chances at admission and aid.

This reality distorts the fairness of university admissions and financial aid, and it is spurring a growing movement among elite universities to try to do away with traditional standardized tests. Most universities, however, remain under enormous strain to use the tests to evaluate the growing applicant pool. For the foreseeable future, most universities have little choice but to use the SAT or ACT to help them sift through the mountain of applications. The University of California system — one of the biggest targets for applicants in our increasingly diverse state — still requires an SAT or ACT score from all freshman applicants.

Opinion

Private high schools often promote prep courses as an integral part of their offerings. But California public school districts, already short on resources, understandably do not see prep courses as an essential part of a rigorous academic curriculum.

This puts public high school students from non-college-educated households and minority groups at a disadvantage. They find it harder to gain entry into private universities and the [University of California system](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__admission.universityofcalifornia.edu_counselors_freshman_profiles_index.html&d=DwMFaQ&c=clK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=_X5uCqA9VIXpcWjBgnleTw&m=XF4hBmmMPM18cKqJW0ApF8taB2E3KwrRMRNu1WEsVcg&s=B-QA-M7V4zSd4LZhnvH4LFYRDx1T3rw76qs_APM4vic&e=), which was built to serve the best students in the state regardless of income. As a result, the best upward-mobility mechanism — higher education — is not available to those who need it most.

There is an urgent need for high-quality, low-cost test prep courses for these otherwise college-ready students so that they can compete with their wealthier peers. The College Board, which runs the SAT, recognizes this problem and has teamed up with the [Khan Academy to offer free online courses](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.khanacademy.org_sat&d=DwMFaQ&c=clK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=_X5uCqA9VIXpcWjBgnleTw&m=XF4hBmmMPM18cKqJW0ApF8taB2E3KwrRMRNu1WEsVcg&s=qiz0oS7FejdnB9s-27LFn14cmBXi0pu9HS_JGmwgELg&e=).

But these courses lack the critical element of small-group learning that [helps underrepresented students](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__journals.plos.org_plosbiology_article-3Fid-3D10.1371_journal.pbio.1002398&d=DwMFaQ&c=clK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=_X5uCqA9VIXpcWjBgnleTw&m=XF4hBmmMPM18cKqJW0ApF8taB2E3KwrRMRNu1WEsVcg&s=FEfVc6e2oe_GvaZSuXYDqbMEB1FK3568qHM4CLQ6Cxc&e=) the most. The courses also require internet access and a stable supportive household that disadvantaged students often lack.

Nonprofit organizations like [Fair Test](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.fairtest.org&d=DwMFaQ&c=clK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=_X5uCqA9VIXpcWjBgnleTw&m=XF4hBmmMPM18cKqJW0ApF8taB2E3KwrRMRNu1WEsVcg&s=hIeC-diejqDZeO7FuVeV6Vb0YmB6rEXE7QdP58J7bW0&e=) and [Acceso Academy](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.accesoacademy.org&d=DwMFaQ&c=clK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=_X5uCqA9VIXpcWjBgnleTw&m=XF4hBmmMPM18cKqJW0ApF8taB2E3KwrRMRNu1WEsVcg&s=04or45WH6BYC3drPhytVldmTTg1iBUpQazL7q9p3sZQ&e=) offer more affordable prep courses, but we need a broader solution.

High-quality, affordable prep courses could level the playing field. Anyone with an interest in the issue should push for change. Entities such as the California Community Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the University of California system, The California Endowment, philanthropists, industry, legislators and school districts should come together to offer low cost, high quality, small-group learning that parallels the $8 billion for-profit prep industry. We all stand to win from pushing to provide access to university education for all highly qualified students, regardless of their parents’ income.

### Subpoint B. Ethnicity and Race Determine Test Scores

#### SAT produces race gaps, reinforces inequality

Richard V. Reeves And Dimitrios Halikias. (2019) Race gaps in SAT scores highlight inequality and hinder upward mobility. Retrieved August 22, 2019, from https://www.brookings.edu/research/race-gaps-in-sat-scores-highlight-inequality-and-hinder-upward-mobility/

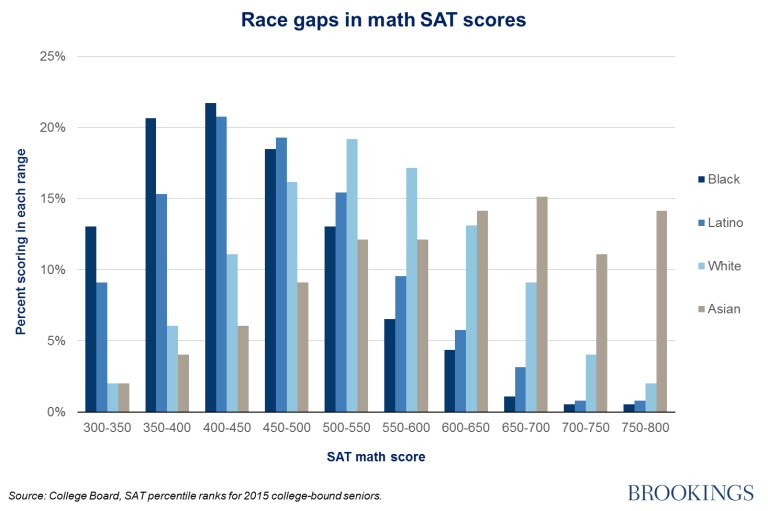
Taking the SAT is an American rite of passage. Along with the increasingly popular ACT, the SAT is critical in identifying student readiness for college and as an important gateway to higher education. Yet despite efforts to equalize academic opportunity, large racial gaps in SAT scores persist.

The great score divide

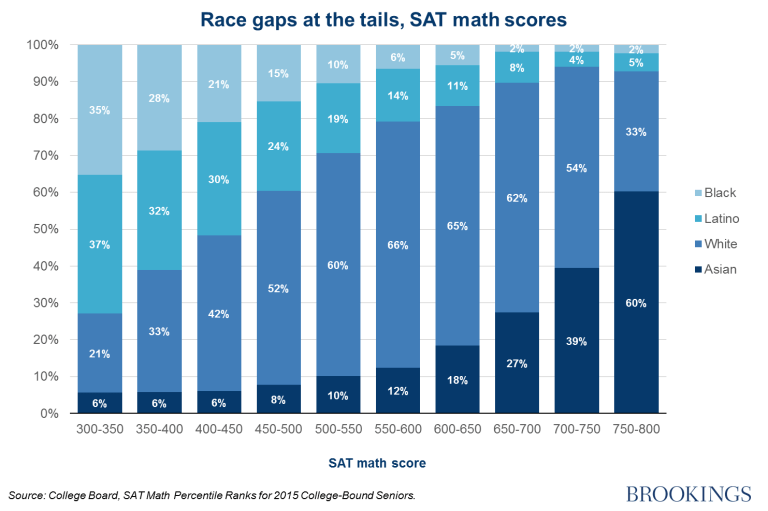
The SAT provides a measure of academic inequality at the end of secondary schooling. Moreover, insofar as [SAT scores predict student success](http://research.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/publications/2015/6/research-report-sat-validity-primer.pdf) in college, inequalities in the SAT score distribution reflect and reinforce racial inequalities across generations.

In this paper, we analyze racial differences in the math section of the general SAT test, using publicly available College Board population data for all of the nearly 1.7 million college-bound seniors in 2015 who took the SAT. (We do not use the newest data released for the class of 2016, because the SAT transitioned mid-year to a new test format, and data has so far only been released for students who took the older test.) Our analysis uses both the [College Board’s descriptive statistics](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/sat/total-group-2015.pdf) for the entire test-taking class, as well as [percentile ranks](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/sat/sat-percentile-ranks-gender-ethnicity-2015.pdf) by gender and race. (The College Board has separate categories for “Mexican or Mexican American” and “Other Hispanic, Latino, or Latin American.” We have combined them under the term Latino.)

The mean score on the math section of the SAT for all test-takers is 511 out of 800, the average scores for blacks (428) and Latinos (457) are significantly below those of whites (534) and Asians (598). The scores of black and Latino students are clustered towards the bottom of the distribution, while white scores are relatively normally distributed, and Asians are clustered at the top:

[](https://i1.wp.com/www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ccf_20170201_reeves_1.png?w=768&crop=0%2C0px%2C100%2C9999px&ssl=1)

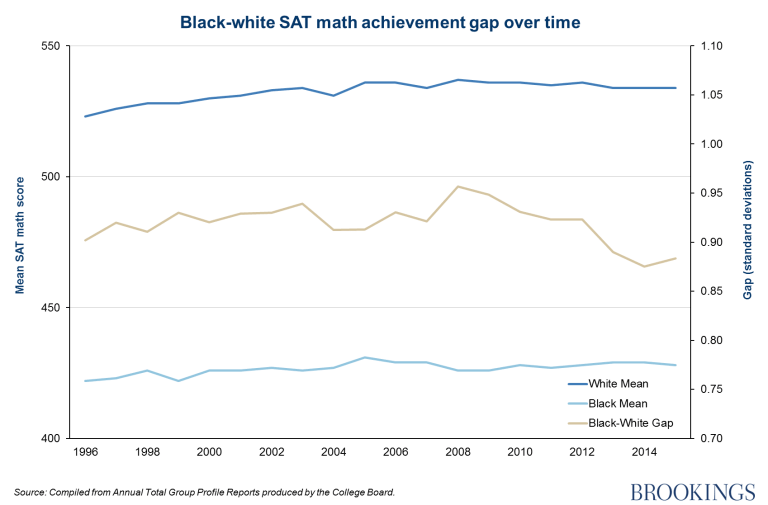
Race gaps on the SATs are especially pronounced at the tails of the distribution. In a perfectly equal distribution, the racial breakdown of scores at every point in the distribution would mirror the composition of test-takers as whole i.e. 51 percent white, 21 percent Latino, 14 percent black, and 14 percent Asian. But in fact, among top scorers—those scoring between a 750 and 800—60 percent are Asian and 33 percent are white, compared to 5 percent Latino and 2 percent black. Meanwhile, among those scoring between 300 and 350, 37 percent are Latino, 35 percent are black, 21 percent are white, and 6 percent are Asian:

[](https://i0.wp.com/www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ccf_20170201_reeves_2.png?w=768&crop=0%2C0px%2C100%2C9999px&ssl=1)

The College Board’s publicly available data provides data on racial composition at 50-point score intervals. We estimate that in the entire country last year at most 2,200 black and 4,900 Latino test-takers scored above a 700. In comparison, roughly 48,000 whites and 52,800 Asians scored that high. The same absolute disparity persists among the highest scorers: 16,000 whites and 29,570 Asians scored above a 750, compared to only at most 1,000 blacks and 2,400 Latinos. (These estimates—which rely on conservative assumptions that maximize the number of high-scoring black students, are consistent with an older estimate from a [2005 paper](http://www.jbhe.com/features/49_college_admissions-test.html) in the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, which found that only 244 black students scored above a 750 on the math section of the SAT.)

A stubborn black-white gap

Disappointingly, the black-white achievement gap in SAT math scores has remained virtually unchanged over the last fifteen years. Between 1996 and 2015, the average gap between the mean black score and the mean white score has been .92 standard deviations. In 1996 it was .9 standard deviations and in 2015 it was .88 standard deviations. This means that over the last fifteen years, roughly 64 percent of all test-takers scored between the average black and average white score.

[](https://i1.wp.com/www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ccf_20170201_reeves_3.png?w=768&crop=0%2C0px%2C100%2C9999px&ssl=1)

These gaps have a significant impact on life chances, and therefore on the transmission of inequality across generations. As the economist [Bhashkar Mazumder has documented](https://www.chicagofed.org/publications/economic-perspectives/2014/1q-mazumder), adolescent cognitive outcomes (in this case, measured by the AFQT) statistically [account for most of the race gap](https://www.chicagofed.org/publications/working-papers/2011/wp-10) in intergenerational social mobility.

Could the gap be even wider?

There are some limitations to the data which may mean that, if anything, the race gap is being understated. The ceiling on the SAT score may, for example, understate Asian achievement. If the exam was redesigned to increase score variance (add harder and easier questions than it currently has), the achievement gap across racial groups [could be even more pronounced](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ccf_20160811_jacob_evidence_speaks1.pdf). In other words, if the math section was scored between 0 and 1000, we might see more complete tails on both the right and the left. More Asians score between 750 and 800 than score between 700 and 750, suggesting that many Asians could be scoring above 800 if the test allowed them to.

Research Assistant - Center on Children and Families

Another important qualification is that the SAT is no longer the nationally dominant college-entrance exam. In recent years, the ACT has surpassed the SAT in popularity. If the distributions of students taking the two exams are significantly different, focusing on one test alone won’t give a complete picture of the racial achievement gap. A cursory look at the evidence, however, suggests that race gaps on the [2016 ACT](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/P_99_999999_N_S_N00_ACT-GCPR_National.pdf) are comparable to those we observe for the SAT. In terms of composition, ACT test-takers were 54 percent white, 16 percent Latino, 13 percent black, and 4 percent Asian. Except for the substantially reduced share of Asian test-takers, this is reasonably close to the SAT’s demographic breakdown. Moreover, racial achievement gaps across the two tests were fairly similar. The black-white achievement gap for the math section of the 2015 SAT was roughly .88 standard deviations. For the 2016 ACT it was .87 standard deviations. Likewise, the Latino-white achievement gap for the math section of the 2015 SAT was roughly .65 standard deviations; for the 2016 ACT it was .54 standard deviations.

Or could the gap be narrower than it looks?

On the other hand, there is a possibility that the [SAT is racially biased](https://bearcenter.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/Wilson%20%2322.pdf), in which case the observed racial gap in test scores may overstate the underlying academic achievement gap. But most of the concerns about bias relate to the verbal section of the SAT, and our analysis focuses exclusively on the math section.

Finally, this data is limited in that it doesn’t allow us to disentangle race and class as drivers of achievement gaps. It is likely that at least some of these racial inequalities can be explained by different income levels across race. Unfortunately, publicly available College Board data on class and SAT scores is limited. The average SAT score for students who identify as having parents making between $0 and $20,000 a year is 455, a score that is actually .2 standard deviations above the average score for black students (428). These numbers are fairly unreliable because of the low rates of student response; some 40 percent of test-takers do not list their household income. In comparison, only 4 percent of test-takers fail to provide their racial identification.

However, a [2015 research paper](http://www.cshe.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/shared/publications/docs/ROPS.CSHE_.10.15.Geiser.RaceSAT.10.26.2015.pdf) from the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley shows that between 1994 and 2011, race has grown more important than class in predicting SAT scores for UC applicants. While it is difficult to extrapolate from such findings to the broader population of SAT test-takers, it is unlikely that the racial achievement gap can be explained away by class differences across race.

Down with standardized tests?

Given the reliance of colleges on test scores for admissions, the gaps in SAT math performance documented here will continue to reproduce patterns of inequality in American society. It seems likely, however, that colleges [rely too heavily on such tests](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/02/21/a-telling-study-about-act-sat-scores/?utm_term=.134785980295). [Research from William Bowen, Matthew Chingos, and Michael McPherson](http://press.princeton.edu/TOCs/c8971.html) suggests that high school grades may have more incremental predictive power of college grades and graduation rates. The SAT may not be a good measure of student potential.

Even to the extent that SAT scores do predict college success, it is far from clear that universities are justified in basing admissions so strongly on the exam. After all, a wide range of other morally relevant considerations—questions of distributive justice, for example—may well need to be weighed alongside considerations of academic preparation.

Significant racial and class inequalities much earlier in life explain persistent obstacles to upward mobility and opportunity. The extensive racial gaps in academic achievement and college preparation across high school seniors are symptomatic of those deeper drivers of inequality. Accordingly, policy efforts may be more effective if they target underlying sources of these achievement gaps. That means experimenting with earlier childhood interventions of the sort we have [described elsewhere](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2016/08/25/four-ways-to-close-the-early-years-learning-gap/): increasing [cash transfers to disadvantaged parents with young children](https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/this-policy-would-help-poor-kids-more-than-universal-pre-k-does/), improving [access to quality preschool programs](https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/does-pre-k-work-or-not/), pursuing [paid leave policies](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2016/12/13/what-could-really-help-the-working-class-paid-leave/) to allow for more quality parent investment during the first years of life, [teaching parents the skills they need](https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-parenting-gap/) to effectively raise their children, and so on.

It is also important to bear in mind that despite persistent gaps in test scores, racial gaps in college enrollment have actually [been closing](http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/race-gap-narrows-in-college-enrollment-but-not-in-graduation/) in recent years. In fact, the college enrollment gap by income is now significantly larger than by race. The challenge now is about college graduation rates (where race gaps have not closed) as much as college enrollment: for graduation rates, race gaps remain larger than income gaps.

It is also clear, however, that when such large gaps have opened up by the end of the high school years, equalizing outcomes at the college level will be an almost impossible task. Interventions at the end of the K-12 years, or in the early stages of college, can often be too little, too late.

Debates over the fairness, value and accuracy of the SAT are sure to continue. The evidence for a stubborn race gap on this test does meanwhile provide a snapshot into the extraordinary magnitude of racial inequality in contemporary American society. Standardized tests are often seen as mechanisms for meritocracy, ensuring fairness in terms of access. But test scores reflect accumulated advantages and disadvantages in each day of life up the one on which the test is taken. Race gaps on the SAT hold up a mirror to racial inequities in society as a whole. Equalizing educational opportunities and human capital acquisition earlier is the only way to ensure fairer outcomes.

## Contention 2. Standardized tests are inherently unfair

### Subpoint A. Deviations from test to test

#### Why EASY SATS are Bad

(2019) Why You Shouldn't Want an "Easy" SAT | The Princeton Review. Retrieved August 24, 2019, from https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/no-to-easy-sat

Scores for the June 2018 SAT have been released and high-scoring students are not happy. The curve on the SAT math section was really unforgiving to high-scoring students. The test is a reminder that the SAT is scored on a curve, and no one actually wants an "easy" SAT.

Which is Easier: ACT or SAT?

In recent months, the College Board has been sending a survey to students asking them which test they think is easier, the [SAT or the ACT](https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/5-reasons-to-take-both-sat-and-act) ?

It is hard to imagine why the College Board would ask this question unless it wanted to change the image of the test in order to make it more popular among states, school districts, and students. For years, the ACT has had the reputation of being an easier exam, so perhaps the College Board wants to reverse that image.

The problem is that an easier test is no good for students or for colleges using test scores to evaluate applicants. To explain why, we need to discuss one of the fundamental aspects of standardized tests: equating.

Read More: [What is a Good SAT Score?](https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/good-sat-scores)

How Does the SAT Curve Work?

For a standardized test to be of any value, it needs to be possible to compare the scores of someone who took the test in June 2018 to someone who took it in March 2018, June 2017, October 2016, etc. College Board cannot just give the same test at each administration, and it’s really hard to make each test exactly as hard as every other test. As a result, test makers need to adjust the scaled score, which is based on the raw number of correct answers, on each test to make sure they’re comparable.  [Learn how the SAT is scored.](https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/guide-to-sat-scores)

When the June 2018 SAT scores came out, and students took to Reddit to decry the Math curve for the exam. Students who got fewer questions wrong on the June test than on previous attempts woke up to lower Math scores.

Difficulty, to be sure, is in the eye of the beholder. Some, or perhaps most, students were bound to find the June Math sections to be difficult. When we call the Math section “easy” we do not mean that everyone should have found it so. We mean that the scoring curve indicates, objectively, that students tended to get fewer questions wrong than they did on other SATs. That made the curve less forgiving.

Score equating is done before the test is ever given, so it’s worth saying that the actual performances on test day did not affect the curve. College Board knew it was going to administer an easier test, which meant more students would get more questions right, and the scale would need to undergo adjustment. As a result, small differences had a larger impact than usual.

To a degree, this is how it should be. A student who misses two questions on an easier test should not get as good a score as a student who misses two questions on a hard test. Equating takes care of that issue.

Read More: [When Should You Take the SAT or ACT?](https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/when-to-take-sat-act)

Why Easy SATs Can Hurt High-Scorers

1. It's Tough for Colleges to Evaluate Their Scores

The equating applied to the June 2018 SAT suggests that the College Board made the test far too easy to distinguish among high scorers who received a score of 650 (86th percentile) or higher. That is a problem for those colleges who treat a 650, a 700, a 750, and an 800 as accurate indicators of real differences in Math ability.

2. No Room for Errors

It is a problem, too, for high-scoring students who make the occasional careless error or who mis-bubbles on questions that they are quite capable of answering. With a typical curve, there’s some cushion to mitigate the impact of such errors. There was no cushion on the [June 2018 SAT](https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2018/07/12/surprisingly-low-scores-mathematics-sat-stun-and-anger-students) .

It might be fair to say that the most accomplished students shouldn’t make those kinds of errors, but is that true? Wouldn’t it be more accurate to say that the most accomplished test takers don’t make those kinds of errors. Small mistakes under time pressure can make a big difference in life, no doubt, but doing well in college tends to be about doing well over time with the possibility to revise, rethink, and do better.

Next Steps: Should You Retake the SAT?

The students shocked by the June 2018 SAT will have a couple more chances to retake the test. View [upcoming SAT test dates.](https://www.princetonreview.com/college/sat-test-dates)  But what if the same thing happens in October or November, when seniors often take their last shot at the exam? We have to hope that this exam is an anomaly, and the College Board won’t be administering too many more “easy” tests.

We would be completely and utterly shocked to see the College Board rescale the exam, as many students and families are demanding. It is important to note that college admissions officers are not going to weigh how how many questions a student got wrong. They will look at the sores. Nor will they discount a June 2018 SAT score as somehow compromised. If a student did well on the June exam, she or he should be proud and not worry at all about admissions officers thinking that the June test was a bad one.

## Contention 3. Admissions Processes can function without standardized tests

#### Tribune: Effects of not using a standardized test:

Valerie Strauss "What one college discovered when it stopped accepting SAT/ACT scores - Chicago Tribune. September 23, 2019. $publisher, Web. September 23, 2019. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-what-happens-when-colleges-stop-taking-sat-act-scores-20150927-story.html>

**Strauss 19**

Hampshire College is a liberal arts school in Massachusetts that has decided not to accept SAT/ACT scores from applicants. That's right - the college won't accept them, a step beyond the hundreds of "test-optional" schools that leave it up to the applicant to decide whether to include them in their applications. So what has happened as a result of the decision?

For one thing, U.S. News & World report has refused to include Hampshire in its annual rankings. For another, Hampshire officials say, this year's freshman class, the first chosen under the new rules, is more qualified by other measures than earlier classes.

Hampshire College was founded in 1970 as an alternative private liberal arts college that experiments with curriculum and relies on portfolios of work and narrative evaluations rather than distribution requirements and grades. It is one of the top colleges in the nation in terms of the proportion of its graduates who go on to graduate school.

Here's an explanation of what the college did regarding SAT/ACT scores and why, from President Jonathan Lash, who is also a director of the World Resources Institute, a D.C.-based environmental think tank, where he previously served as president. He chaired former President Bill Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development and was Vermont's environmental secretary and commissioner. He holds a law degree and master's degree in education from Catholic University of America and a bachelor's from Harvard College.

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From Lash:

You won't find our college in the U.S. News & Word Report "Best Colleges" rankings released this month. Last year Hampshire College decided not to accept SAT/ACT test scores from high school applicants seeking admission. That got us kicked off the rankings, disqualified us, per U.S. News rankings criteria. That's OK with us.

We completely dropped standardized tests from our application as part of our new mission-driven admissions strategy, distinct from the "test-optional" policy that hundreds of colleges now follow. If we reduce education to the outcomes of a test, the only incentive for schools and students to innovate is in the form of improving test-taking and scores. Teaching to a test becomes stifling for teachers and students, far from the inspiring, adaptive education which most benefits students. Our greatly accelerating world needs graduates who are trained to address tough situations with innovation, ingenuity, entrepreneurship and a capacity for mobilizing collaboration and cooperation.

We weighed other factors in our decision:

- Standardized test scores do not predict a student's success at our college.

- SATs/ACTs are strongly biased against low-income students and students of color, at a time when diversity is critical to our mission.

- We surveyed our students and learned not one of them had considered rankings when choosing to apply to colleges; instead they most cared about a college's mission.

- Some good students are bad test takers, particularly under stress, such as when a test may grant or deny college entry. Multiple-choice tests don't reveal much about a student.

- We've developed much better, fairer ways to assess students who will thrive at our college.

In our admissions, we review an applicant's whole academic and lived experience. We consider an applicant's ability to present themselves in essays and interviews, review their recommendations from mentors, and assess factors such as their community engagement and entrepreneurism. And yes, we look closely at high school academic records, though in an unconventional manner. We look for an overarching narrative that shows motivation, discipline, and the capacity for self-reflection. We look at grade point average (GPA) as a measure of performance over a range of courses and time, distinct from a one-test-on-one-day SAT/ACT score. A student's consistent "A" grades may be coupled with evidence of curiosity and learning across disciplines, as well as leadership in civic or social causes. Another student may have overcome obstacles through determination, demonstrating promise of success in a demanding program. Strong high school graduates demonstrate purpose, a passion for authenticity, and commitment to positive change.

We're seeing remarkable admissions results since disregarding standardized test scores:

- Our yield, the percentage of students who accepted our invitation to enroll, rose in a single year from 18% to 26%, an amazing turnaround.

- The quantity of applications went down, but the quality went up, likely because we made it harder to apply, asking for more essays. Our applicants collectively were more motivated, mature, disciplined and consistent in their high school years than past applicants.

- Class diversity increased to 31% students of color, the most diverse in our history, up from 21% two years ago.

- The percentage of students who are the first-generation from their family to attend college rose from 10% to 18% in this year's class.

Our "No SAT/ACT policy" has also changed us in ways deeper than data and demographics: Not once did we sit in an Admissions committee meeting and "wish we had a test score." Without the scores, every other detail of the student's application became more vivid. Their academic record over four years, letters of recommendation, essays, in-person interviews, and the optional creative supplements gave us a more complete portrait than we had seen before. Applicants gave more attention to their applications, including the optional components, putting us in a much better position to predict their likelihood of success here.

This move away from test scores and disqualification from the U.S. News rankings has allowed us to innovate in ways we could not before. In other words, we are free to innovate rather than compromise our mission to satisfy rankings criteria:

- We no longer chase volumes of applications to superficially inflate our "selectivity" and game the U.S. News rankings. We no longer have to worry that any applicant will "lower our average SAT/ACT scores" and thus lower our U.S. News ranking. Instead we choose quality over quantity and focus attention and resources on each applicant and their full portfolio.

- At college fairs and information sessions, we don't spend time answering high school families' questions about our ranking and test score "cut-offs." Instead we have conversations about the things that matter: What does our unique academic program look like, and what qualities does a student need to be successful at it?

- An unexpected benefit: This shift has saved us significant time and operational expense. Having a smaller but more targeted, engaged, passionate, and robust applicant pool, we are able to streamline our resources.

How can U.S. News rankings reliably measure college quality when their data-points focus primarily on the high school performance of the incoming class in such terms as GPA, SAT/ACT, class rank, and selectivity? These measures have nothing to do with the college's results, except perhaps in the college's aptitude for marketing and recruiting. Tests and rankings incentivize schools to conform to test performance and rankings criteria, at the expense of mission and innovation.

Our shift to a mission-driven approach to admissions is right for Hampshire College and the right thing to do. We fail students if we reduce them to a standardized test number tied more to their financial status than achievement. We fail students by perpetuating the myth that high standardized test scores signal "better" students. We are in the top one percent of colleges nationwide in the percentage of our undergraduate alumni who go on to earn advanced degrees - this on the strength of an education where we assess their capabilities narratively, and where we never, not once, subject them to a numerical or letter grade on a test or course.

At Hampshire College, we face the same financial challenges as many colleges. But these challenges provide an opportunity to think about who we are and what matters to us. We can not lose sight of our mission while seeking revenues or chasing rankings. We are committed to remaining disqualified from the U.S. News rankings. We're done with standardized testing, the SAT, and ACT.

#### Holistic Review Colorado

Test-Optional Policies And. (2019) Standardized Tests Now Optional for Admission to CC • Colorado College. Retrieved September 11, 2019, from <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/newsevents/newsroom/standardized-tests-now-optional-for-admission-to-cc>

Colorado College is adopting a [test-optional admission policy](https://www.coloradocollege.edu/admission/application/testing/admission-test-optional.html) in an ongoing effort to increase the diversity of its student body. A test-optional policy means applicants will choose whether or not to submit standardized test scores, such as the SAT or ACT, as part of their admission application.

The change in admission policy will begin with first-year and transfer students applying for entry in fall 2020.

The test-optional policy aligns with CC’s admission philosophy of holistic review, where students are valued as more than “a number” and students’ strengths beyond their test scores are considered. The change also supports the college’s strategic plan on increasing access.

“Standardized test scores do not always reflect the academic potential of students from disadvantaged backgrounds,” says Colorado College Assistant Professor of Psychology Kevin Holmes, who served on the Committee on Admission and Financial Aid. “The new test-optional policy removes a barrier to admission for these students.”

“Test scores are only one of many criteria that are considered in an applicant’s academic portfolio,” says Mark Hatch, vice president for enrollment at CC, noting that given the college’s holistic review of applicants, standardized test scores add little to predicting success in college.

CC’s Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid spent 2018-19 academic year considering whether Colorado College should adopt a test-optional admission policy. A number of studies have found that retention and graduation rates remain relatively unaffected by test-optional policies and that the high school GPA is a stronger indicator of academic ability and a more reliable predictor of college success than standardized test scores.

Additionally, studies in recent years around standardized testing have increasingly made clear the cultural, social and economic biases of test design. This also includes access to preparation materials such as study guides and prep courses. Such design and preparation strategies can have a significant impact on scores, with the results being standardized test scores tend to be higher for wealthier students and for white students.

Colorado College moved from a standard testing policy (requiring students to submit SAT or ACT scores) in 2010 to a flexible testing policy, which allows applicants to submit three test scores from a variety of testing sources. The current policy requires one critical reasoning/verbal test, one quantitative test and a third score of the students’ choosing. Since the implementation of the flexible testing policy, the number of first-year students applying to the college has doubled and the applicant pool and student body has become more diverse.

# NEG

# 1NC – SLOW

IFF LAY JUDGE:

Before I begin my arguments, when I say a name and a number I’m reading a piece of evidence, or a card. For example, if I say Smith 19, I’m then going to read the piece of evidence written by John Smith and published in 2019.

I negate the resolution: “**Resolved: In the United States, colleges and universities ought not consider standardized tests in undergraduate admissions decisions.”**

**My Value is the Common Good.** The common good is defined as that which benefits society as a whole, in contrast to the private good of individuals and sections of society. In respect to the resolution, The Common Good is what’s best for all those involved in the undergraduate admissions process.

**My Value Criterion is Gradualism.** Gradualism is defined as the policy of approaching a desired end by [gradual](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gradual) stages. Just because the status quo isn’t perfect doesn’t excuse overthrowing well-established institutions. We should approach the issue of standardized tests with small gradual changes, rather than a sudden, complete overhaul.

**My goal here today is not to prove that Standardized tests are on balance good, but that drastic removal of them would be detrimental while small reforms would be better.**

**Contention 1. There are some benefits to standardized tests and situations where they are necessary**

**Subpoint A. Benefits to standardized testing**

Lazrin 14

Used properly, tests are invaluable tools for teachers who want to augment their practice to reach struggling students, for parents who want to understand how their children are doing in reading and math, and for equity advocates who need assurance that all students are receiving a high-quality education. We simply need to get smarter about how and when we use them.

Crocker 05

In the highly mobile twenty-first century, students migrate with their parents across state and national borders, attend colleges thousands of miles from home, and apply for employment and graduate or professional studies in areas where their transcripts and other credentials cannot be measured on a common metric by those making the selection decisions. Standardized tests have become critical tools for decisions regarding college admission, college credits for high school work, graduate or school professional admission, and licensure for many blue-collar and white-collar professions. Put simply, no one becomes a physician, lawyer, teacher, nurse, accountant, electrician, fire-fighter, cosmetologist, or real estate broker without taking a series of tests. Caring, effective teachers should want to prepare their students for these future testing situations. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Location 4378). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

Furthermore the test-taking skills required by the short-essay or performance assessments, which now accompany the objective-item formats of many standardized assessments, have additional application to many real-world contexts in which individuals encounter demands for spontaneous written communications. Consider, for example, the following requests: "Explain why you have come to the clinic today and describe your symptoms;" "Describe how the accident occurred, and use diagrams, if necessary;" or "Describe your qualifications for the position." The ability to respond to a set of structured questions in a specific format has become a communications skill that is as vital in the repertoire of today's student as rhetoric was to the student of the nineteenth century. It is certainly as appropriate for teachers to impart these skills to students as it is for them to instruct them in other forms of oral and written communication. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 4383-4385). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

**Subpoint B. Necessary Situations where standardized tests are needed**

Thompson 09

standardized tests can improve prediction and selection for gifted programs, college, scholarships, or employment. Results can be highly effective in identifying needs of exceptional students.

homeschooling where grades can be especially subjective if present at all.

Powell, 18

Know that test scores matter. College admissions consultants and officers say tests, like SAT Subject Tests, are helpful in the admissions process to gauge whether a student excels in a certain area.

Experts say even schools that are test optional usually require home-schooled or international students to submit scores from standardized tests.

**Contention 2. Reformation, not removal of standardized tests**

**Subpoint A. Reformation is needed**

Atkinson & Geiser 13

For these reasons, we believe that prediction will recede in importance, and other test characteristics will become more critical in designing standardized admissions tests in the future. We will still need to “validate” our tests by demonstrating that they are reasonably correlated with student performance in college; validation remains especially important where tests have adverse impacts on low-income and minority applicants. But beyond some acceptable threshold of predictive validity, decisions about what kinds of assessments to use in college admissions will be driven less by small statistical differences and more by educational policy considerations. In contrast to prediction, the idea of achievement offers a richer paradigm for admissions testing and calls attention to a broader array of characteristics that we should demand of our tests: Admissions tests should be criterion referenced rather than norm referenced: Our primary consideration should not be how an applicant compares with others but whether he or she demonstrates sufficient mastery of college preparatory subjects to benefit from and succeed in college. Admissions tests should have diagnostic utility: Rather than a number or a percentile rank, tests should provide students with curriculum-related information about areas of strength and areas where they need to devote more study. Admissions tests should exhibit not only predictive validity but face validity: The relationship between the knowledge and skills being tested and those needed for college should be transparent. Admissions tests should be aligned with college preparatory coursework: Assessments should be linked as closely as possible to materials that students encounter in the classroom and should reinforce teaching and learning of a rigorous academic curriculum in our high schools. Admissions tests should minimize the need for test preparation: Although test prep services will probably never disappear entirely, admissions tests should be designed to reward mastery of curriculum content over test-taking skills, so that the best test prep is regular classroom instruction. Finally, admissions tests should send a signal to students: Our tests should send the message that working hard and mastering academic subjects in high school is the most direct route to college. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 882-885). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

**Subpoint B. Removal is a patchwork solution**

PERRY 19

On the other hand, scores from the SAT and ACT tests are good proxies for the amount of wealth students are born into. Income tracks with test performance. The more money a student’s parents make, the more likely it is he or she will have a higher score, according to College Board data. The less money you make, the more likely you’ll be [denied a chance at a selective institution](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/papers/coll_mrc_paper.pdf). The divide between the rich and the poor has widened slightly. The score gap between those who make less than $80,000 and those who make more than that amount has increased from 2012 to 2016, [according to a 2016 ACT report](https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/R1604-ACT-Composite-Score-by-Family-Income.pdf).

Standardized tests are better proxies for how many opportunities a student has been afforded than they are predictors of students’ potential.

Consequently, tests weed out budding low-income students instead of creating equitable access to institutions that help build wealth. This is why many selective colleges have made [standardized tests optional](https://www.fairtest.org/university/optional). But ignoring test scores won’t make wealth gaps disappear. We must go to the source of the problem.

The wealth gap — caused mostly by racism — undoubtedly also has a bearing on educational outcomes. From bestowing the ability to move to a more resourced school district to providing more enrichment activities, wealth influences educational outcomes. In 2016, white families had the highest median family wealth at $171,000, compared to black and Hispanic families, which had $17,600 and $20,700, respectively, according to the Federal Reserve’s [most recent numbers](https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/recent-trends-in-wealth-holding-by-race-and-ethnicity-evidence-from-the-survey-of-consumer-finances-20170927.htm), based on the Survey of Consumer Finances.

Students who’ve been disenfranchised by racism need more than an adjustment to a standardized test. Students can’t eat a test score. They can, however, feed themselves if given the same opportunities for wealth bestowed upon their white peers.

Inconclusion, there are benefits and situations were standardized tests are necessary, but reformation is needed. Also, any idea of removing tests completely should be understood as knew-jerk and a patchwork solution ignoring real issues.

NOW ON TO Addressing my opponents claims

## Value + Criterion definitions

**My Value is the Common Good.** The common good is defined as that which benefits society as a whole, in contrast to the private good of individuals and sections of society. In respect to the resolution, The Common Good is what’s best for all those involved in the undergraduate admissions process.

**My Value Criterion is Gradualism.** Gradualism is defined as the policy of approaching a desired end by [gradual](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gradual) stages. Just because the status quo isn’t perfect doesn’t excuse overthrowing well-established institutions. We should approach the issue of standardized tests with small gradual changes, rather than a sudden, complete overhaul.

#### Definition of Gradualism

Merriam-Webster. (2019) Gradualism | Definition of Gradualism by Merriam-Webster. Retrieved October 05, 2019, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gradualism>

the policy of approaching a desired end by [gradual](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gradual) stages

#### Definition of Common Good

[Simon Lee](https://www.britannica.com/contributor/Simon-Lee/9345819) (2019) Common good | philosophy | Britannica.com. Retrieved October 05, 2019, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/common-good>

Common good, that which benefits society as a whole, in contrast to the [private good](https://www.britannica.com/topic/private-good) of individuals and sections of society.

## Contention 1. There are some benefits to standardized tests and situations where they are necessary

### Subpoint A. Benefits to standardized testing

#### CAP agrees tests are good when used properly

Melissa **Lazarin**, October 20**14**, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Lazrin 14

Used properly, tests are invaluable tools for teachers who want to augment their practice to reach struggling students, for parents who want to understand how their children are doing in reading and math, and for equity advocates who need assurance that all students are receiving a high-quality education. We simply need to get smarter about how and when we use them.

#### Developing test taking skills supports minority students

Linda Crocker University of Florida, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Crocker 05

Many teachers view teaching of test-taking skills as a tawdry practice. They may avoid it or undertake instruction geared to preparing students to demonstrate their knowledge in a particular format—multiple choice, essay, and performance assessment—in a shamefaced or clandestine fashion. This unfortunate situation, largely engendered by critics of standardized testing, impedes student performance and harms teacher morale. Yet, more than 20 years ago, McPhail (1981) offered two worthy reasons for teaching test-taking skills: (a) "to improve the validity of test results" (p. 33) and (b) "to provide equal educational, employment, and promotional opportunity" (p. 34) particularly for disadvantaged students who often do not have access to additional educational resources enjoyed by their middle-class cohorts. This rationale remains compelling today. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 4368-4372). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Developing test taking skills is important to be licensed in many professions

Linda Crocker University of Florida, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Crocker 05

In the highly mobile twenty-first century, students migrate with their parents across state and national borders, attend colleges thousands of miles from home, and apply for employment and graduate or professional studies in areas where their transcripts and other credentials cannot be measured on a common metric by those making the selection decisions. Standardized tests have become critical tools for decisions regarding college admission, college credits for high school work, graduate or school professional admission, and licensure for many blue-collar and white-collar professions. Put simply, no one becomes a physician, lawyer, teacher, nurse, accountant, electrician, fire-fighter, cosmetologist, or real estate broker without taking a series of tests. Caring, effective teachers should want to prepare their students for these future testing situations. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Location 4378). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Test taking skills have applications in real world contexts

Linda Crocker University of Florida, 2005, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Furthermore the test-taking skills required by the short-essay or performance assessments, which now accompany the objective-item formats of many standardized assessments, have additional application to many real-world contexts in which individuals encounter demands for spontaneous written communications. Consider, for example, the following requests: "Explain why you have come to the clinic today and describe your symptoms;" "Describe how the accident occurred, and use diagrams, if necessary;" or "Describe your qualifications for the position." The ability to respond to a set of structured questions in a specific format has become a communications skill that is as vital in the repertoire of today's student as rhetoric was to the student of the nineteenth century. It is certainly as appropriate for teachers to impart these skills to students as it is for them to instruct them in other forms of oral and written communication. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 4383-4385). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Everyone agrees there are diagnostic benefits to standardized testing

Richard Phelps, Third Education Group, 2005, ). Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

For the sake of both brevity and clarity, I divide the benefits of testing into three groups. First, there is the benefit of information used for diagnosis (e.g., of a student's or teacher's problems or progress). Standardized tests may reveal weaknesses or strengths that corroborate or supplement a teacher's or principal's analysis. Information for diagnosis, however, may be obtained from no-stakes standardized tests. For that, and other reasons, virtually no one disputes this benefit, and so it is not a part of the literature review here. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1673-1677). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

### Subpoint B. Necessary Situations

#### Standardized testing important to determine prediction and selection for gifted programs

Debbie Thompson, 2009, Why Standardized Testing is Important in the Homeschool Environment, <http://www.triangleeducationassessments.com/standardizedtesting.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Secondly, standardized tests can improve prediction and selection for gifted programs, college, scholarships, or employment. Results can be highly effective in identifying needs of exceptional students. Standardized test scores are an additional source of information to assess academic performance and a student’s coursework, day-to-day test scores, homework, portfolios, and projects are other means of assessment. Achievement and ability tests can help describe a student’s learning abilities, academic accomplishment and give reliable predication for college success

#### homeschooling where grades can be especially subjective if present at all.

Farran Powell, 18, 7-18-2018, "How Home Schooling Affects College Admissions," US News &amp; World Report, https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2018-07-18/how-home-schooling-affects-college-admissions

Know that test scores matter. College admissions consultants and officers say tests, like SAT Subject Tests, are helpful in the admissions process to gauge whether a student excels in a certain area.

If a student is applying to a school that requires taking the SAT or ACT, the scores are really important, admissions officers say.

Experts say even schools that are test optional usually require home-schooled or international students to submit scores from standardized tests.

"Any student that does more, it's going to demonstrate more rigor. If we have a student, for example, who is taking one or two [advanced placement courses] in their sophomore year, that is definitely showing us that they're on track with what a lot of students at public and private schools would be doing," Dorow says.

## Contention 2. Reformation, not removal of standardized tests

### Subpoint A. Reformation is good

#### Should develop effective standardized admissions tests

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

For these reasons, we believe that prediction will recede in importance, and other test characteristics will become more critical in designing standardized admissions tests in the future. We will still need to “validate” our tests by demonstrating that they are reasonably correlated with student performance in college; validation remains especially important where tests have adverse impacts on low-income and minority applicants. But beyond some acceptable threshold of predictive validity, decisions about what kinds of assessments to use in college admissions will be driven less by small statistical differences and more by educational policy considerations. In contrast to prediction, the idea of achievement offers a richer paradigm for admissions testing and calls attention to a broader array of characteristics that we should demand of our tests: Admissions tests should be criterion referenced rather than norm referenced: Our primary consideration should not be how an applicant compares with others but whether he or she demonstrates sufficient mastery of college preparatory subjects to benefit from and succeed in college. Admissions tests should have diagnostic utility: Rather than a number or a percentile rank, tests should provide students with curriculum-related information about areas of strength and areas where they need to devote more study. Admissions tests should exhibit not only predictive validity but face validity: The relationship between the knowledge and skills being tested and those needed for college should be transparent. Admissions tests should be aligned with college preparatory coursework: Assessments should be linked as closely as possible to materials that students encounter in the classroom and should reinforce teaching and learning of a rigorous academic curriculum in our high schools. Admissions tests should minimize the need for test preparation: Although test prep services will probably never disappear entirely, admissions tests should be designed to reward mastery of curriculum content over test-taking skills, so that the best test prep is regular classroom instruction. Finally, admissions tests should send a signal to students: Our tests should send the message that working hard and mastering academic subjects in high school is the most direct route to college. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions (Kindle Locations 882-885). Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

#### Criterion-referenced tests that measure achievement should be used in admissions

Richard Atkinson & Saul Geiser, 2013, Saul Geiser is a Research Associate in the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley. He is former Director of Research for Admissions and Outreach for the University of California system, Richard C. Atkinson is President Emeritus of the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Soares, Joseph A. (2011-09-30). SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions, Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Criterion-referenced tests, on the other hand, presuppose a very different philosophy and approach to college admissions. Their purpose is to certify students’ knowledge of college preparatory subjects, and they help to establish a baseline or floor for judging applicants’ readiness for college. Along with high school grades, achievement test scores tell us whether applicants have mastered the foundational knowledge and skills required for college-level work.

### Subpoint B. Removal is a patchwork solution

#### Students need a boost in wealth more than a boost in SAT scores

ANDRE PERRY, 5-17-2019, "Students need a boost in wealth more than a boost in SAT scores," Hechinger Report, <https://hechingerreport.org/students-need-a-boost-in-wealth-more-than-a-boost-in-sat-scores/>

Standardized tests that are used for the purposes of college admissions don’t predict for college success very well. Scores on the widely used SAT and ACT predict adequately only for grades [earned in a student’s first year in college](https://offices.depaul.edu/enrollment-management-marketing/test-optional/Documents/HISSDefiningPromise.pdf). And those scores are [worse predictors](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/01/26/new-research-suggests-sat-under-or-overpredicts-first-year-grades-hundreds-thousands) for black and brown students.

On the other hand, scores from the SAT and ACT tests are good proxies for the amount of wealth students are born into. Income tracks with test performance. The more money a student’s parents make, the more likely it is he or she will have a higher score, according to College Board data. The less money you make, the more likely you’ll be [denied a chance at a selective institution](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/papers/coll_mrc_paper.pdf). The divide between the rich and the poor has widened slightly. The score gap between those who make less than $80,000 and those who make more than that amount has increased from 2012 to 2016, [according to a 2016 ACT report](https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/R1604-ACT-Composite-Score-by-Family-Income.pdf).

At least one testing company is trying (sort of) to eliminate the barrier of income.

We should be trying to level the playing field by providing historically disenfranchised people opportunities to build wealth rather than retrofitting test results around inequality.

On May 16, the College Board, the not-for-profit company that prepares the SAT, said it would assign an “adversity score” to each student who takes the college admissions exam, [according to news reports](https://www.wsj.com/articles/sat-to-give-students-adversity-score-to-capture-social-and-economic-background-11557999000). The score is made up of 15 factors, including neighborhood and demographic characteristics, including crime rate and poverty. The adversity score doesn’t take into account the race of the student. The Wall Street Journal reported that 50 colleges used the score last year and 150 will use it in the fall. Only college admissions officials will have access to the adversity scores, not students.

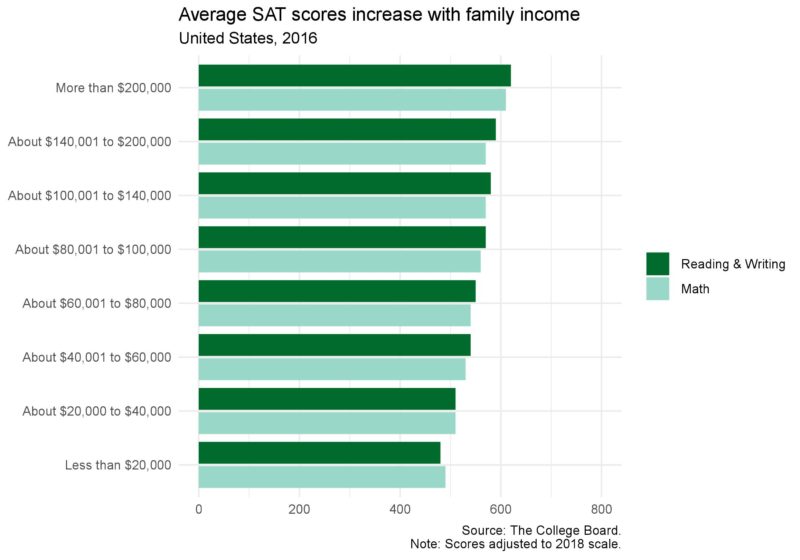
Test score differences are a symptom of systemic discrimination, which robs black and brown communities of wealth-building opportunities. Attempts at addressing the wealth gap, which stems from the history of slavery, segregation, racism and discrimination, should be encouraged and lauded. I’m all for acknowledging wealth disparities wherever we can, but policymakers and institutional leaders shouldn’t forget that programs that directly attempt to close the wealth gap will have more bearing on how students score on a standardized test.

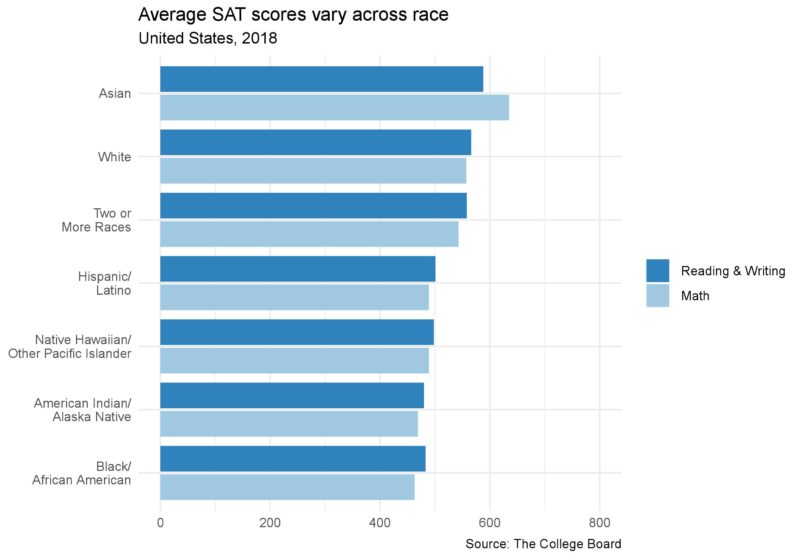
Standardized tests are better proxies for how many opportunities a student has been afforded than they are predictors of students’ potential.

Researchers, including those who work for the test companies, have known wealth is strongly correlated with outcomes on standardized tests for years. There are several reasons why. Wealthy students attend higher-ranked schools within more financially resourced districts. Richer families can afford more tutoring, test prep and enrichment activities. The College Board seldom publicized the fact that test prep could improve scores until it was available for free online, at which point the [evidence of improvement](https://www.collegeboard.org/releases/2017/average-score-gains-on-redesigned-sat) came rolling in.

Consequently, tests weed out budding low-income students instead of creating equitable access to institutions that help build wealth. This is why many selective colleges have made [standardized tests optional](https://www.fairtest.org/university/optional). But ignoring test scores won’t make wealth gaps disappear. We must go to the source of the problem.

As SAT scores assign a numeric value to nearly every college-bound senior in the country, they provide a glimpse into how race and socioeconomic class impact educational outcomes for students. The College Board releases average scores on a yearly basis [across various levels of income, race and levels of parental education](https://reports.collegeboard.org/pdf/2018-total-group-sat-suite-assessments-annual-report.pdf), among other categories. The three charts below reflect those national averages for the 2018 test, except in the case of family income level, for which 2016 data are the latest available. SAT scores from 2016 have been converted to the 2018 scale.





The wealth gap — caused mostly by racism — undoubtedly also has a bearing on educational outcomes. From bestowing the ability to move to a more resourced school district to providing more enrichment activities, wealth influences educational outcomes. In 2016, white families had the highest median family wealth at $171,000, compared to black and Hispanic families, which had $17,600 and $20,700, respectively, according to the Federal Reserve’s [most recent numbers](https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/recent-trends-in-wealth-holding-by-race-and-ethnicity-evidence-from-the-survey-of-consumer-finances-20170927.htm), based on the Survey of Consumer Finances.

These numbers show the interrelatedness of wealth and educational outcomes. Students can’t pick their parents, but policy can level the playing field. For the efforts of the College Board to have a serious effect, they must complement true wealth-building opportunities. For instance, Darrick Hamilton, who serves as the director of Ohio State University’s Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, and Duke professor William Darity Jr. proposed what they coined [“baby bonds”](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227301907_Can_'Baby_Bonds'_Eliminate_the_Racial_Wealth_Gap_in_Putative_Post-Racial_America) as an attempt to reduce wealth inequality among Americans.

Every child born in the U.S. would receive $1,000 in a bonded savings account run by the Treasury Department. Each year, the government would make contributions based on the child’s family size and income. The lower a family’s income, the greater the contribution would be. Children would receive an [average of $25,000 upon turning 18](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-04-05/-baby-bonds-could-help-the-u-s-wealth-gap). Those from the poorest backgrounds could expect as much as $60,000. The money would then be restricted to wealth-building activities such as attending school, starting a business, or purchasing a home. The program would cost less than 3 percent of the federal budget.

Students who’ve been disenfranchised by racism need more than an adjustment to a standardized test. Students can’t eat a test score. They can, however, feed themselves if given the same opportunities for wealth bestowed upon their white peers.

# MISC

#### No Alternative to Testing

Gregory Cizek, professor of educational measurement and evaluation, 2005, Gregory J. Cizek teaches courses in applied psychometrics, statistics, program evaluation and research methods. Prior to joining the faculty, he managed national licensure and certification testing programs for American College Testing, served as a test development specialist for a statewide assessment program, and taught elementary school for five years in Michigan. Before coming to UNC, he was a professor of educational research and measurement at the University of Toledo and, from 1997-99, he was elected to and served as vice-president of a local board of education in Ohio, Defending Standardized Testing, Kindle edition, page number at end of card

Cizek 05 Some critics of high-stakes testing have suggested that these assessments may increase students' test scores, but not students' learning. However, that argument has not been made clearly. More importantly, a clear method for or logic regarding how to measure increases in learning in ways that would not show up in test score gains has not been put forward. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1351-1354). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Con Evidence Biased

Richard Phelps, Third Education Group, 2005, ). Defending Standardized Testing, page number at end of card

Phelps-05 Third, many, if not most, studies finding testing benefits are simply not to be found stored in the more common research literature data bases. Research data bases tend to be biased toward the work of academic researchers, and academic researchers may be biased against testing. Researchers with a predisposition against testing are more likely to work in academe, where they are not required to perpetuate a practice of which they disapprove. Researchers with more favorable dispositions toward testing are more likely to work in the field, for testing companies or state education agencies, for example. (2005-03-23). Defending Standardized Testing (Kindle Locations 1745-1747). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

#### Finland Example [CUT]

Valerie Strauss. (2019) The truth about Finland’s great schools: Yes, kids do get homework, and no, they didn’t stop teaching individual subjects. - The Washington Post. Retrieved October 07, 2019, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/08/30/what-finland-is-really-doing-improve-its-acclaimed-schools/>

Finland has been paid outsized attention in the education world since its students scored the highest among dozens of countries around the globe on an international test some 20 years ago.

And while it is no longer No. 1 — as the education sector was hurt in the 2008 recession, and budget cuts led to larger class sizes and fewer staff in schools — it is still regarded as one of the more successful systems in the world.

In an effort to improve, the Finnish government began taking some steps in recent years, and some of that reform has made for worldwide headlines. But as it turns out, some of that coverage just isn’t true.

A few years ago, for example, a change in curriculum sparked stories that Finland was giving up teaching traditional subjects. [Nope](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/03/26/no-finlands-schools-arent-giving-up-traditional-subjects-heres-what-the-reforms-will-really-do/).

You can find stories on the Internet saying Finnish kids don’t get any homework. Nope.

Even amid its difficulties, [American author William Doyle,](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/05/07/i-have-seen-the-school-of-tomorrow-it-is-here-today-in-finland/) who lived there and sent his then-7-year-old son to a Finnish school, wrote in 2016 that they do a lot of things right:

What is Finland’s secret? A whole-child-centered, research-and-evidence based school system, run by highly professionalized teachers. These are global education best practices, not cultural quirks applicable only to Finland.

Here is a piece looking at changes underway in Finnish schools by two people who know what is really going on. They are Pasi Sahlberg and Peter Johnson. Johnson is director of education of the Finnish city of Kokkola. Sahlberg is professor of education policy at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. He is one of the world’s leading experts on school reform and is the author of the best-selling “[Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn About Educational Change in Finland](http://www.finnishlessons.com/)?”

Finland has been in the spotlight of the education world since it appeared, against all odds, on the top of the rankings of an international test known as [PISA](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/), the Program for International Student Assessment, in the early 2000s. Tens of thousands visitors have traveled to the country to see how to improve their own schools. Hundreds of articles have been written to explain why Finnish education is so marvelous — or sometimes that it isn’t. Millions of tweets have been shared and read, often leading to debates about the real nature of Finland’s schools and about teaching and learning there.

We have learned a lot about why some education systems — such as Alberta, Ontario, Japan and Finland — perform better year after year than others in terms of quality and equity of student outcomes. We also understand now better why some other education systems — for example, England, Australia, the United States and Sweden — have not been able to improve their school systems regardless of politicians’ promises, large-scale reforms and truckloads of money spent on haphazard efforts to change schools during the past two decades.

Among these important lessons are:

* Education systems and schools shouldn’t be managed like business corporations where tough competition, measurement-based accountability and performance-determined pay are common principles. Instead, successful education systems rely on collaboration, trust, and collegial responsibility in and between schools.
* The teaching profession shouldn’t be perceived as a technical, temporary craft that anyone with a little guidance can do. Successful education systems rely on continuous professionalization of teaching and school leadership that requires advanced academic education, solid scientific and practical knowledge, and continuous on-the-job training.
* The quality of education shouldn’t be judged by the level of literacy and numeracy test scores alone. Successful education systems are designed to emphasize whole-child development, equity of education outcomes, well being, and arts, music, drama and physical education as important elements of curriculum.

Besides these useful lessons about how and why education systems work as they do, there are misunderstandings, incorrect interpretations, myths and even deliberate lies about how to best improve education systems. Because Finland has been such a popular target of searching for the key to the betterment of education, there are also [many stories about Finnish](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/03/26/no-finlands-schools-arent-giving-up-traditional-subjects-heres-what-the-reforms-will-really-do/) schools that are not true.

Part of the reason reporting and research often fail to paint bigger and more accurate picture of the actual situation is that most of the documents and resources that describe and define the Finnish education system are only available in Finnish and Swedish. Most foreign education observers and commentators are therefore unable to follow the conversations and debates taking place in the country.

For example, only very few of those who actively comment on education in Finland have ever read Finnish [education law](https://minedu.fi/en/legislation-general-education), the [national core curriculum](https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/new-national-core-curriculum-basic-education-focus-school) or any of thousands of curricula designed by municipalities and schools that explain and describe what schools ought to do and why.

The other reason many efforts to report about Finnish education remain incomplete — and sometimes incorrect — is that education is seen as an isolated island disconnected from other sectors and public policies. It is wrong to believe that what children learn or don’t learn in school could be explained by looking at only schools and what they do alone.

Most efforts to explain why Finland’s schools are better than others or why they do worse today than before fail to see these interdependencies in Finnish society that are essential in understanding education as an ecosystem.

Here are some of those common myths about Finnish schools.

First, in recent years there have been claims that the Finnish secret to educational greatness is that children don’t have homework.

Another commonly held belief is that Finnish authorities have decided to scrap subjects from school curriculum and replace them by interdisciplinary projects or themes.

And a more recent notion is that all schools in Finland are required to follow a national curriculum and implement the same teaching method called “phenomenon-based learning” (that is elsewhere known as “project-based learning”).

[All of these are](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/03/26/no-finlands-schools-arent-giving-up-traditional-subjects-heres-what-the-reforms-will-really-do/) false.

In 2014, Finnish state authorities revised the national core curriculum (NCC) for basic education. The core curriculum provides a common direction and basis for renewing school education and instruction. Only a very few international commentators of Finnish school reform have read this central document. Unfortunately, not many parents in Finland are familiar with it, either. Still, many people seem to have strong opinions about the direction Finnish schools are moving — the wrong way, they say, without really understanding the roles and responsibilities of schools and teachers in their communities.

Before making any judgments about what is great or wrong in Finland, it is important to understand the fundamentals of Finnish school system. Here are some basics.

First, education providers, most districts in 311 municipalities, draw up local curricula and annual work plans on the basis of the NCC. Schools though actually take the lead in curriculum planning under the supervision of municipal authorities.

Second, the NCC is a fairly loose regulatory document in terms of what schools should teach, how they arrange their work and the desired outcomes. Schools have, therefore, a lot of flexibility and autonomy in curriculum design, and there may be significant variation in school curricula from one place to another.

Finally, because of this decentralized nature of authority in Finnish education system, schools in Finland can have different profiles and practical arrangements making the curriculum model unique in the world. It is incorrect to make any general conclusions based on what one or two schools do.

Current school reform in Finland aims at those [same overall goals](https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/) that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — which gives the PISA exams every three years to 15-year-olds in multiple countries — as well as governments and many students say are essential for them: to develop safe and collaborative school culture and to promote holistic approaches in teaching and learning. The NCC states that the specific aim at the school level is that children would:

* understand the relationship and interdependencies between different learning contents;
* be able to combine the knowledge and skills learned in different disciplines to form meaningful wholes; and
* be able to apply knowledge and use it in collaborative learning settings.

All schools in Finland are required to revise their curricula according to this new framework. Some schools have taken only small steps from where they were before, while some others went on with much bolder plans. One of those is the [Pontus School](http://www.pontuksenkoulu.fi/) in Lappeenranta, a city in the eastern part of Finland.

The Pontus School is a new primary school and kindergarten for some 550 children from ages 1 to 12. It was built three years ago to support the pedagogy and spirit of the 2014 NCC. The Pontus School was in international news recently when the [Finnish Broadcasting Company](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/parents_file_complaints_over_failure_of_new_school/10924016) reported that parents have filed complaints over the “failure” of the new school.

But according to Lappeenranta education authorities, there have been only two complaints by parents, both being handled by Regional Authorities. That’s all. It is not enough to call that a failure.

What we can learn from Finland, again, is that it is important to make sure parents, children and media better understand the nature of school reforms underway.

“Some parents are not familiar with what schools are doing,” said Anu Liljestrom, superintendent of the education department in Lappeenranta. “We still have a lot of work to do to explain what, how and why teaching methods are different nowadays,” she said to a local newspaper. The Pontus School is a new school, and it decided to use the opportunity provided by new design to change pedagogy and learning.

Ultimately, it is wrong to think that reading, writing and arithmetic will disappear in Finnish classrooms.

For most of the school year, teaching in Finnish schools will continue to be based on subject-based curricula, including at the Pontus School.

What is new is that now all schools are required to design at least one week-long project for all students that is interdisciplinary and based on students’ interests. Some schools do that better more often than others, and some succeed sooner than others.

Yes, there are challenges in implementing the new ideas. We have seen many schools succeed at creating new opportunities for students to learn knowledge and skills they need in their lives.

It is too early to tell whether Finland’s current direction in education meets all expectations. What we know is that schools in Finland should take even bolder steps to meet the needs of the future as described in national goals and international strategies. Collaboration among schools, trust in teachers and visionary leadership are those building blocks that will make all that possible.

# Workshop

#### The Center for American Progress supports testing, just appropriate use

Melissa Lazarin, October 2014, Center for American Progress, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/LazarinOvertestingReport.pdf> DOA: 10-26-15

Used properly, high-quality assessments can be a valuable tool for teachers to determine where students are struggling, for parents to understand their children’s progress and knowledge gaps, and for policymakers and advocates who need assurance that all students are receiving a high-quality education. We simply need to get smarter about when, where and how we use them.

#### American Federation of Teachers (AFT) supports reasonable testing

Randi Weingarten , President, American Federation of Teachers , July 2013, Testing More, Teaching Less: What America’s Obsession with Student Tests Costs in Money and Loss Instructional Time,” <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/news/testingmore2013.pdf> DOA: 10-25-15

Last summer, delegates to the AFT convention went on record in support of testing that informs, rather than impedes, teaching and learning, and in favor of studies that shed light on the real costs of testing. *Testing More, Teaching Less* is part of deliver­ing on our commitment to provide guidelines, stud­ies and other helpful information to our members and the broader public about the nature, amount and costs of student assessments. Many other stakeholders have voiced their concerns about the impact of standardized tests and have taken action to curtail overtesting and its consequences. In Texas, lawmakers cut the number of high school end-of-course exams required for graduation from 15 to five, and eliminated the requirement that results would count for 15 percent of a student’s overall grade. The Orchard Park Central School District Board of Education in New York took a stand with a resolution proposing that this year’s state assessments be used for “measuring the state’s progress in introducing the Common Core Learning Standards rather than for measuring student performance or educator effectiveness.” Lawmakers in New Mexico called for an analysis of the cost, both in instructional time and money, of all student assessments. And just this month, the *New York Times* ended a strongly worded editorial about the dangers of “testing mania” with a call for the country to “reconsider its obsession with testing, which can make education worse, not better.”

Gregory Cizek,

#### Even Ravitch concedes testing has a role

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

Children in the early elementary grades need teachers who set age-appropriate goals. They should learn to read, write, calculate, and explore nature, and they should have plenty of time to sing and dance and draw and play and giggle. Classes in these grades should be small enough— ideally fewer than twenty— so that students get the individual attention they need. Testing in the early grades should be used sparingly, not to rank students, but diagnostically, to help determine what they know and what they still need to learn. Test scores should remain a private matter between parents and teachers, not shared with the district or the state for any individual student. The district or state may aggregate scores for entire schools but should not judge teachers or schools on the basis of these scores.

#### Ravitch supports diagnostic standardized testing

Diane Silvers Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 2013, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools, Kindle Edition, page number at end of card

More testing does not make children smarter. More testing does not reduce achievement gaps. More testing does nothing to address poverty and racial isolation, which are the root causes of low academic achievement. More testing will, however, undermine the creative spirit, the innovative spirit, the entrepreneurial spirit that have made our economy and our society successful. Used wisely, to identify student learning problems, testing can be useful to teachers. But testing should be used diagnostically, not to hand out rewards or punishments. Surely, there is value in structured, disciplined learning, whether in history, literature, mathematics, or science; students need to learn to study and to think; they need the skills and knowledge that are patiently acquired over time. Just as surely, there is value in the activities and projects that encourage innovation. The incessant demand for more testing and standardization advances neither. Ravitch, Diane (2013-09-17). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (Kindle Locations 1538-1543). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

#### Data necessary to make improvements for minority children

Kevin Huffman is a fellow with New America and served as commissioner of education in Tennessee from 2011 to 2015, October 30, 2015, Washington Post, We Don’t Test Students as Much as People Think We Do, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-test-students-as-much-as-people-think-we-do-and-the-stakes-arent-really-that-high/2015/10/30/3d66de1c-7e79-11e5-beba-927fd8634498_story.html> DOA: 10-31-15

Administration officials understand that it would be completely irresponsible to ditch standardized testing. There is a reason that most civil rights groups [support annual exams](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/04/14/why-civil-rights-groups-support-standardized-tests/): They believe that [only through measurement and reporting](http://www.civilrights.org/press/2015/anti-testing-efforts.html) can we ensure that minority children make enough progress to pursue their dreams. It’s not unreasonable to take 2 percent of the school year and use it to measure the progress made during the other 98 percent.

#### Standardized tests serve many important purposes, they just must be limited, appropriate, and high quality

US Department of Education, October 24, 2015, Fact Sheet: Testing Action Plan, <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-testing-action-plan> DOA: 10-31-15

One essential part of educating students successfully is assessing their progress in learning to high standards. Done well and thoughtfully, assessments are tools for learning and promoting equity. They provide necessary information for educators, families, the public, and students themselves to measure progress and improve outcomes for all learners. Done poorly, in excess, or without clear purpose, they take valuable time away from teaching and learning, draining creative approaches from our classrooms.  In the vital effort to ensure that all students in America are achieving at high levels, it is essential to ensure that tests are fair, are of high quality, take up the minimum necessary time, and reflect the expectation that students will be prepared for success in college and careers.

In too many schools, there is unnecessary testing and not enough clarity of purpose applied to the task of assessing students, consuming too much instructional time and creating undue stress for educators and students. The Administration bears some of the responsibility for this, and we are committed to being part of the solution.

No one set out to create situations where students spend too much time taking standardized tests or where tests are redundant or fail to provide useful information. Nevertheless, these problems are occurring in many places—unintended effects of policies that have aimed to provide more useful information to educators, families, students, and policymakers and to ensure attention to the learning progress of low-income and minority students, English learners, students with disabilities, and members of other groups that have been traditionally underserved. These aims are right, but support in implementing them well has been inadequate, including from this Administration. We have focused on encouraging states to take on these challenges and to provide them with flexibility. One of the results of this approach is that we have not provided clear enough assistance for how to thoughtfully approach testing and assessment.

What follows is a set of principles and steps to correct the balance, protecting the vital role that good assessment plays in guiding progress for students and evaluating schools and educators, while providing help in unwinding practices that have burdened classroom time or not served students or educators well. In addition, a [report from the Council of the Great City Schools](http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf) released today will help deepen the nation’s understanding of these issues.

**Principles for Fewer and Smarter Assessments**

Assessments must be:

1. **Worth Taking:** Testing should be a part of good instruction, not a departure from it. A good assessment is aligned to the content and skills a student is learning, and it requires the same kind of complex work students do in an effective classroom – or in the real world. Assessments should present useful information and questions that push students’ critical thinking skills, so that students gain valuable experience even while taking them. And assessments should provide timely, actionable feedback to students, parents, and educators that can be used to guide instruction and additional supports for students. They should also aid leaders’ decisions to target resources and supports. Assessment should happen only when necessary to accomplish those goals. No standardized test should ever be given solely for educator evaluation.
2. **High Quality:** High-quality assessment results in actionable, objective information about student knowledge and skills. Assessment systems should measure student knowledge and skills against state-developed college- and career-ready standards in a way that, as appropriate:
   * **Covers the full range of the relevant state standards** to ensure a full picture of what students know and can do;
   * **Elicits complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge** and skills so that teachers and parents know that students are prepared for the real world;
   * **Provides an accurate measure of student achievement** for all students, including for high- and low-achieving students, so that all educators have the information they need to provide differentiated supports to students; and
   * **Provides an accurate measure of student growth** over time to recognize the progress that schools and educators are making to help students succeed.
3. **Time-limited:** While it is up to states and districts how to balance instructional time and the need for high-quality assessments, we recommend that states place a cap on the percentage of instructional time students spend taking required statewide standardized assessments to ensure that no child spends more than 2 percent of her classroom time taking these tests. Parents should receive formal notification if their child’s school exceeds this cap and an action plan should be publicly posted to describe the steps the state will take to review and eliminate unnecessary assessments, and come into compliance. States and school districts should carefully consider whether each assessment serves a unique, essential role in ensuring that students are learning.   
     
   Moreover, low-quality test preparation strategies must be eliminated.  States, districts, and educators should eliminate “drill-and-kill” test prep that is a poor use of students’ and educators’ classroom time.  Students do best on high-quality assessments that actually measure critical thinking and complex skills when they have been exposed to strong instruction, which should be the focus.  Districts should take concrete steps to discourage and limit the amount of test preparation activities.
4. **Fair – and Supportive of Fairness – in Equity in Educational Opportunity:** Assessments should be fair, including providing fair measures of student learning for students with disabilities and English learners. Accessibility features and accommodations must level the playing field so tests accurately reflect what students really know and can do. The same assessments of subjects like reading, writing, science, and math should be given consistently statewide, so that teachers and leaders have a clear picture of which students are meeting expectations and which students need additional supports and interventions to succeed. Likewise, policymakers and educators need to know which schools are seeing success with all groups of students, and which schools are struggling and in need of different and greater supports. States and districts should also ensure that assessments are only used for the purposes for which they were intended and designed. Annual statewide tests are an essential part of guiding that support.
5. **Fully Transparent to Students and Parents:** States and districts should ensure that every parent gets understandable information about the assessments their students are taking, by providing information to parents on any tests students are required to take, including (1) the purpose, (2) the source of the requirement, (3) when the information about student performance is provided to parents and teachers, (4) how teachers, principals, and district officials use the information about student performance, and (5) how parents can use that information to help their child.  Parents, educators and, as appropriate, students should also get the results of assessments in a timely and understandable manner, to have a shared understanding of how students are doing, and how educators and parents can help them succeed.
6. **Just One of Multiple Measures:** Assessments provide critical information about student learning, but no single assessment should ever be the sole factor in making an educational decision about a student, an educator, or a school. Information from sources such as school assignments, portfolios, and projects can help measure a student’s academic performance. In addition, factors including chronic absenteeism, student surveys, and indicators of discipline and school climate can help create a comprehensive understanding of students’ needs and how schools are doing. For educators, observations of practice, student surveys, and contributions to the school community can provide highly valuable information to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of performance, and to help educators strengthen their skills for the benefit of their students.
7. **Tied to Improved Learning:** While some tests are for accountability purposes only, the vast majority of assessments should be tools in a broader strategy to improve teaching and learning.  In a well-designed testing strategy, assessment outcomes are not only used to identify what students know, but also inform and guide additional teaching, supports, or interventions that will help students master challenging material.

# Stuff