

UK Parents Oppose the SATs

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Category : Education/Family

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **boycott** / 'bɔɪ kɒt / (n) – the act of refusing to participate in an activity
Example: Students are organizing a **boycott** against the national test.
- 2. **opposition** / ,ɒp ə'zɪʃ ən / (n) – the act of being against something
Example: The organization wrote a letter to express their **opposition** to the new law.
- 3. **passing rate** / 'pæs ɪŋ reɪt / (n) – the number of students who passed a test
Example: Our school was recognized for having the highest **passing rate** in the SATs.
- 4. **coerce** / kəʊ'ɜrs / (v) – to force or pressure someone to do something
Example: Parents are worried because their children are **coerced** into doing a lot of homework during weekends.
- 5. **breakdown** / 'breɪk daʊn / (n) – the condition of losing control over one’s thoughts or feelings
Example: I’m worried that she’ll have a **breakdown** because of stress.

Article

Read the text below.

Parents in the United Kingdom called for a **boycott** of the Standard Assessment Task (SAT) because of mental health concerns among students.

The organization Let Our Kids Be Kids, which aims to protect children from test-related pressure, urged parents to pull out their 10- to 11-year-old children from the SATs. The organization also wrote a letter that highlights issues on the tests. Parents can use this letter to request for their children’s withdrawal from the SATs or to notify headteachers that their children will not attend school due to their **opposition** to the tests.

Although the SATs are not a requirement for students, a high **passing rate** among takers means that teachers will receive a high performance-based salary. The government can also remove the management of schools that get low overall test scores. These circumstances may be the reasons why children are **coerced** into studying hard and doing a lot of schoolwork, even during holidays.

But according to School Standards minister Nick Gibb, the pressure from test-taking can result in anxiety among children. In fact, a 2017 report from The Key, which equips schools with leadership support, revealed that children tend to experience a **breakdown** during tests.

On a similar note, results of a survey conducted by the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers showed that test-related mental health problems often lead to self-harm and eating disorders.

Parents have long recognized these mental health concerns. In 2016, some parents even held a strike in order to withdraw their children from school for a day to express their disapproval of the SATs.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- In your opinion, at what age should children get serious when taking exams?

- If you were one of the parents, would you also withdraw your child from taking the SAT? Why or why not?

Discussion B

- What do you think are the other factors that greatly affect children’s mental health? Discuss.

- How do you think parents can ensure that their children maintain a stable mental health?