

Abolish Standardized Testing

Desmond Kao

The first standardized test I ever took was the SSAT in 8th grade. Memories of waking up at the crack of dawn and driving down to the cold testing center still give me chills to this day. The importance of that test and its impacts on my future loomed over me. Over and over the ideas of how the test would impact our chances of getting into a good high school put me in a mental state where I felt as if one mistake could jeopardize my future. With every bubble I filled in with my number 2 pencil my heart felt like it was beating faster. Something about the idea of standardized testing doesn't sit well. In my opinion, standardized testing is largely influenced by socioeconomic status in that the idea that a child from a rich family whose parents invested in tutors and courses just to raise their kid's scores would get a better chance at getting into a good high school as an opposed to someone from a lower socioeconomic background that can't afford do invest in the resources for them to get an advantage doesn't seem just. It doesn't feel equal nor does it feel fair. To have a more thriving society where everyone has equal opportunities standardized testing must be eliminated. I believe that opportunities should be accessible to all. Standardized testing is an unfair system that systemically excludes students from the lower economic status from succeeding.

To apply for high schools during 8th grade, the SSAT was required alongside our essays. A large portion of 8th grade was spent preparing for this very test, understanding how it worked, and ways we could outsmart the people who wrote it. Much of our class time that could have been spent teaching us new useful things was spent learning about this old fashioned style of test. I understand that high schools want to be able to gauge the excellence of the students they are

admitting but seeing as the way the world works is adapting every day, seeing if someone is capable of great things should not be purely based on a number. The mental state of students around the time of taking the SSAT was horrible. The classes, studying, and discussion about the upcoming test made most people feel anxious, depressed, and frustrated. According to the National Education Association News (nea.org), “70% of educators believe that standardized testing is not developmentally appropriate.” From my own experience, whenever someone would bring it up I felt a sinking feeling in my chest. Thinking about how my score on this test could dictate whether or not I got into my top school of choice. “The Anxiety and Depression Association of America states that feelings of disappointment, anger, helplessness, and fear are typical reactions to test anxiety,” proving that these types of tests are not healthy for the mental state of children. Given that kids this age are going through many developmental changes, standardized tests seem unfit for them to take at this stage in their life.

Despite the many flaws in standardized testing I recognize that it does serve a purpose in evaluating a student's ability to grasp the material and to utilize tools learned in class. For this, I suggest an alternate method to evaluate students. The key factor in deciding whether a person is a fit for your school shouldn't be an antiquated test but rather their own personal essay. A student applying to a school shouldn't be purely a number that shows how well they did on a test that doesn't accurately portray their knowledge. The school should look at what the student has done in their life, what their passions are, and why they belong at their school. Instead of critiquing a test score, they should look at a broader view of what their applicant has done in their time as a student. Interviews also serve a crucial purpose in the school getting to know a student and what they have done and how they handle and articulate certain points on the spot. With the absence

of a standardized test, just looking at essays and interviews, schools have an abundance of information on their applicant and whether or not they would be a good fit.