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OpinionEssay

On Standardized Testing by Cece Mastripolito

Most students can agree that standardized testing is not fun. Over recent years, more and more tests have been added to America's curriculum. According to a study from the Washington Post, the average student today takes around 112 tests throughout their twelve years in school. That's eight tests per year. And for something the USA does so often, our testing system is far from perfect. There are issues with accountability, making sure that the test results are accurate, and many people are questioning the value of test results in the first place, since they usually have nothing to do with real-world skills. How did this happen, and what can we do about it?

It won't be easy to remove standardized testing from the American curriculum. It was born as early as the seventh century, in China. To this day, standardized testing in China is much more strenuous than in the U.S. We adopted standardized testing later, around 1845, when schools were becoming much larger and we needed a universal measurement of student ability. Over the years since then, other countries have repeatedly surpassed American students in test scores. These results never fail to upset the U.S. government, who then tests students more vigorously in an attempt to improve scores. In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act was passed, which resulted in even more tests in an effort to support disadvantaged students. The idea was that assessing students with more precision would prevent anyone from slipping through the cracks. However, all it really did was make testing more frequent and less harmonious with the rest of the curriculum. The law is controversial today as Americans search for better options.

Yet, obviously, standardized testing wasn't created just to torture you. It's universally agreed that we need a national framework with which to evaluate and compare students. And standardized tests are the most efficient option. Unfortunately, they are far from the most effective or the most authentic. So, here are some other options that might work, if not nationally, then at least at a smaller scale.

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OpinionEssay

There's a method called stealth assessment, which is data collected over a student's entire academic career through online textbook software, during their normal schoolwork. Although it would provide much more accurate information about students, it requires technology that doesn't really exist yet, because the software is still in its beginning stages. The main benefit of this one is that it wouldn't interrupt the normal curriculum, but it would take a very long time to develop, and transferring almost every class online would take time as well.

Another alternative is social and emotional skills surveys, meant to fix the problem that tests aren't realistic indicators of real-world success. These surveys test for skills such as perseverance, communication skills, and decision-making; these ideally would require no more time or money than our existing system. A viable option could be combining these surveys with traditional testing to get a more rounded view of students' abilities.

Then there are portfolio assessments, which are collections of student work put together by the students themselves. In portfolio-based education, students present these bodies of work along with narrative reflections explaining how the work illustrates their learning. That way, students learn not only skills and information, but also gain an understanding of learning processes. This option would be the most accurate, but the least efficient and practical. Although a completely portfolio-based assessment system is pretty unrealistic, they could be incorporated into school systems on a smaller scale.

The problem is that almost every possible alternative would take more time and money than our current system. Changing the method of assessment would also create new issues with accountability, since more creative methods, such as portfolios, would require more personalized grading. But although a feasible alternative hasn't yet been created, the need for change is clear. After all, standardized tests may claim to measure intelligence or academic potential, but what they really measure is the ability to take tests.

Persuasive Essay

On The Power of The People by Shanti Rosen

We have a problem in our society: Our voices are not being heard. Factions, Gerrymandering and generalized elections have taken away our say in how we live, and left many of us dealing with a government that is not respecting our rights. Governments are built to serve the people, but it is we the people that provide the power of the government and it is we, the people, who need to keep the government in check when it will not check itself. I write this to the people of this country who have seen their own voices, or the voice of others, discounted or ignored. My goal is to educate us on some political situations where this can happen, or has happened, and to show ways to stop it.

We have been warned about factions since the beginning of the American government. James Madison, in Federalist Paper 10, wrote that a republic is preferable over a democracy because democracy is more prone to factions. Factions are defined as a group of people who are united by a common belief, interest or passion, who are more concerned with their goals than with the rights of others. Despite best efforts, our republic still has two major factions today: Democrats and Republicans. With the extreme polarization of beliefs, which politics in America is now known for, Madison's fears outlined in his writing have come true. Public good is often disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties and the beliefs and rights of the perceived minority are often tossed aside under the weight of a majority, not taking into account justice or public good. Madison writes that the cause of factions cannot be dealt with, for the causes are human nature and to suppress human nature is to destroy the very foundation of ideals upon which our country was built. However, there is a way to control the effects of factions. One of the most potent effects, Gerrymandering, plays a large role in getting the people to say just what the leading faction wants to hear.

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Persuasive Essay

Gerrymandering plays a huge role in suppressing the voice of the people. Here's how it works: Voting is often done according to various districts within a state; a party will cut up the districts so that the results of voting will be skewed in their favor. For example, if there is a majority of one group, the party can cut the districts so that that group is the minority where they vote. If they can't do that, they can try to put as many of the majority in the fewest districts so that they get the least say. With Gerrymandering, it usually does not matter which group is voted for most, but which group was in charge of cutting up the voting districts. It is a tool to gain political power. Because of this, many people's voices are obscured and cut out. It can make a minority seem like a majority and vice versa. These results can do even more damage than electing a person that does not truly represent the public majority. Skewed results can make people think that their country and its popular beliefs are unwelcoming to them, when in fact it was just the beliefs of the winning party. Voting by state serves much of the same role on a much larger scale. America has had a history of presidents winning the House of Representatives without a popular vote (John Quincy Adams, Rutherford Hayes, George W. Bush and Donald Trump). As an intrinsic role of the president is to represent the people of their country, it does not seem practical, or fair, that the majority of the nation's citizens did not elect these presidents. However, there is a solution.

A government is the sum of its people, and we are the people. The government's power comes from us, and as such it is our ability and responsibility to change it when it is not protecting our rights. Here are some things you can do: Vote in all the elections. Show to the government you still care and won't lie back while your rights are trampled. Speak up. Be loud. Call your representatives, and don't stop until you have the rights you were promised.

ArtWork



These are two different takes on the same project; the right side is by Sara Giering and the left by Cece Mastripolito. These are two submissions that are coming from Mr. Richardson's first period 2-D design class, a dual credit course through MACCS and CNM. These come from the radial symmetry assignment, an assignment that asks us to draw a shape that is symmetrical around a center point. They both utilize negative space in very different ways. One uses color as more of an accent, while the other uses negative space as the accent. These are both wonderful, creative, pieces of art and are greatly appreciated submissions. –Gotham Smith

AdviceColumn

Dear Athena,

I'm the local class clown and I just love being laughed at. I want to put a pumpkin on my head so that I can always be the center of attention. Thoughts?

Goonish Gourd, age 12

Dear Goonish,

When I was 11, I put a watermelon on my head and shouted, "I hate Teen Nick!" to all my friends who loved Teen Nick. It was so sad and pathetic and it took a swift kick to the head to split open the watermelon, and my watermelon of a mindset. Hope this helps!

*Athen's spooky sister,
Anti-thena*

Dear Athena,

I have a sword in my backpack and it follows me everywhere. Recently my friends have started to say that I have a weird sword and that hurts my feelings a lot. Yesterday, one kid even went as far as to say that I have a big weird sword. My dead dad gave me the sword. Um, advice?

Glum Gladiator, age 17

Dear Glum,

You know, sometimes our dead dads do things that we don't understand, and that can be hard. But I'm sure that he meant for you to do great things with that big weird sword. Swords can cut people. It's time, Glum. You are the chosen one.

*Athena's spooky sister,
Anti-thena*

Dear Athena,

There's this girl that I have a problem with. She's trying to be my friend. Her name is C. Every day she sits by me and asks me for a piece of gum. How do I get her to leave me alone, because I have no more gum?

Gorgeous Gumless, age 11

Dear Gorgeous,

Why are you still at school? Go home. TALK TO PAT KELLY.

*Athena's spooky sister,
Anti-thena*

PS. Hey, can I have a piece of gum?

Horoscope

Capricorn: You've lost all sense of self-identity. Face your maker.

Aquarius: Thanksgiving is a time of renewal.

Pisces: You'll feel slippery and wet, and your friends will love the new you.

Aries: Family and love will work out, or somethin'

Taurus: You can't feel anything anymore. All your nerve endings have been cut off.

Gemini: A child will burst forth from your navel!

Cancer: You'll be pulled in so many different directions! One of them will be pneumonia.

Leo: Everyone will look to you and you'll be forced to say... "I don't know"

Virgo: YOU WILL SUCCUMB TO THE CHERRY LIP BALM.

Libra: A trip to Africa will revitalize your sense of...fear.

Scorpio: You'll turn into a new, healthy bug with 100 suitors!

Sagittarius: You'll start working out with a guy named Brad who hosts a Bible study, and you'll fall in love with him.

MACCS Events

Photos Coming Out Day & Spaghetti Dinner



Upcoming Events

11/3, this Friday, SGA Movie Night:
The Nightmare before Christmas

11/4 and **11/18**, P.E. Saturday

11/10 and **11/17**, All day Science
Fair Work Days

11/22-11/24, Thanksgiving Break

Announcing the 7th Annual MACCS Art and Photo Exhibition

featuring original photos and
artwork by MACCS students

Opening Reception

November 6th, 5pm - 7pm

O'Niell's Restaurant and Pub

4310 Central SE

Albuquerque, NM 87108

Exhibit runs through December 2nd

come out
& support MACCS
photo & art

O'Niell's

MEDIA ARTS
COLLABORATIVE CHARTER SCHOOL