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Emphasis On Test Scores in Education

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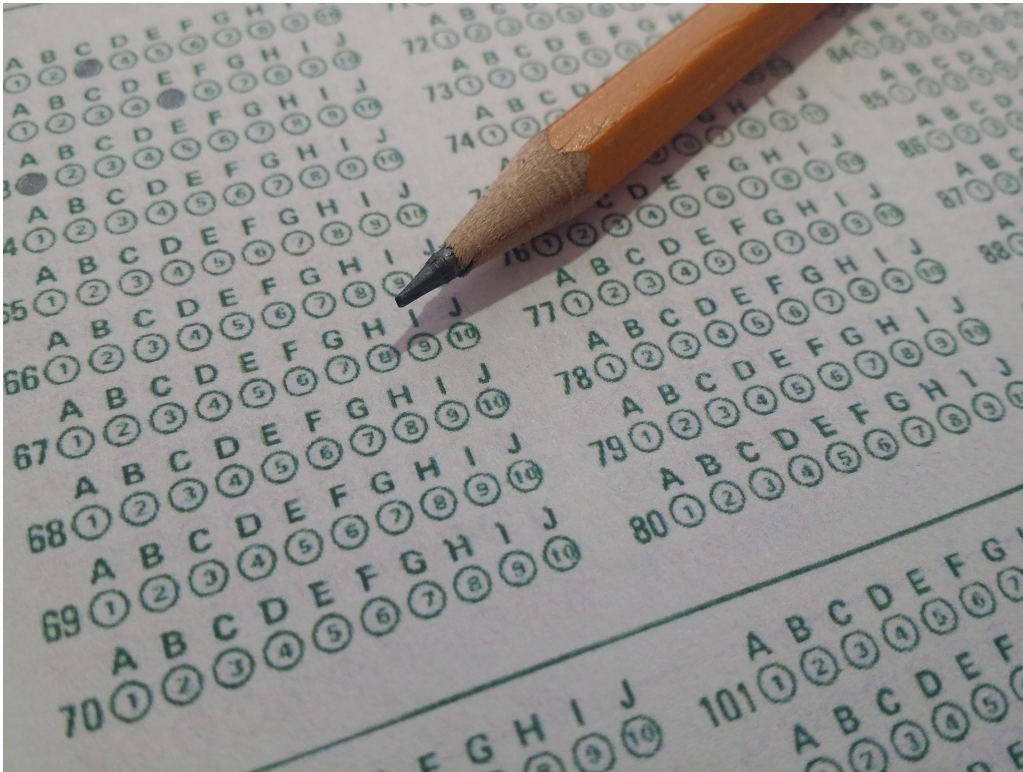
Emphasis on Test Scores in Education

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Abstract

This article discusses how too much emphasis on standardized testing can affect student learning as well as teaching in the classroom. It includes a personal interview with a high school teacher as well as an article from the Washington Post regarding a study that was completed involving testing students.



Beginning in third grade, I began taking a state administered standardized test every year until eighth grade, and then once more in eleventh grade. From third to eighth grade, the test was called South Dakota Step Test and consisted of four sections involving: math, science, reading, and English. The tests never seemed to be all that difficult for me and I usually fell between proficient and advanced with my results. However, once I reached eleventh grade, the test changed to Smarter Balanced testing. The test scores from THIS test, were substantially low. This test was by far the hardest test I had taken before and had content on it that I had never even seen before. This is why I think there is too much emphasis on test scores in education.

Before starting this essay, I emailed my high school History teacher and asked him what his concerns are in today's education and any present issues he sees. His response really triggered my research and got me thinking.

One topic he discussed that really stuck with me, further pushing me to choose this topic to write about, was test scores. Here is what his response about test scores stated:

"The biggest issue in my opinion is the emphasis on test scores. More specifically, the obsession with collecting data for determining progress or proficiency. Again, this is my opinion, but I believe the main job of a high school teacher is not to teach content proficiency, but to inspire higher learning. I could care less if you learned the Amendments while taking Government class from me, but my hope is that you saw how interesting learning can be, and then applied that passion to something you have an interest in." Kamden Miller, Kimball High School

I couldn't agree more with this statement. I don't think we should be defined by a single test score as students, but rather encouraged to learn aside from what's taught in a lecture. I found an article in the Washington post that I thought related well to this topic.

Study says standardized testing is overwhelming nation's public schools

This article discusses how many standardized tests are given to students per year and how much time students spend taking standardized tests. The article even includes a statement from past president Barack Obama regarding controlling the amount of testing done in schools.

Something interesting about the article was the discussion of testing companies providing more and more "new and improved" tests every year, adding to the number of standardized tests that can be given to students. Not only is over-testing students a concern for students themselves and educators, but for parents as well. Several school districts across the nation have cut down on testing to what they can control. Obviously, states and the Department of Education have control over standardized tests and state-administered tests, but as far as testing that is done in classes can be contained by educators and administrators. Certain school districts have limited the amount of time in the classroom that can be used for testing as well as the number of final exams given to students at the end of semesters.

Something Barack Obama said in his statement that stood out to me reads, "But I also hear from parents who, rightly, worry about too much testing, and from teachers who feel so much pressure to teach to a test that it takes the joy out of teaching and learning, both for them and for the students." (Layton, 2015)

Limiting teaching and learning to one specific set of standards with hopes of seeing good scores on a test, doesn't allow students to expand their learning. I am not saying eliminate standardized testing. I am suggesting that states and education systems not put so much emphasis on the results of these tests. I understand that it is important for the Department of Education to have an idea of the progress of students, but we must expand on the content that data is being gathered on.

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