

EXERCISE

READ THE PASSAGE BELOW. THEN, MAKE NOTES OF WHAT SUGGESTIONS/CHANGES MIGHT YOU SUGGEST TO THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARGUMENT?

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Argument Paper

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Standardized Testing in schools is problematic. With the birth of the No-Child-Left-Behind act, many schools are capitalizing on the idea of offering standardized testing to enforce the learning of concepts for graduation. However, the key word is enforcement not learning. Also, the main concern here is assessment for graduation not pass or fail measures for graduation.

First, when a student sits down for a test, the idea is that the student will know or not know the answer to the question. Second, there is a preconception that a student will always take their time on the test and answer the questions carefully. Finally, in terms of questions, there is the perception that each question is written well enough for anyone to answer it, regardless of their literacy background or English ability. Yet, honestly, that's not the case. Students succumb to being underprepared. Students succumb to test anxiety (losing faith in their ability to pass the test and/or feeling that the testing situation is intimidating enough to warrant failure as a option to completing the test and suffering the loss of time). Students also tend to rush through the test, seeing it as hurtles to quickly complete.

Second, No-Child-Left-Behind is a stop-gap measure for improving education in the United States. This act, along with standardized testing, is simply a way of establishing accountability of teachers, yet it does not affect student learning. If people really wanted to improve learning, we would first get rid of the nine month school year and switch to a twelve month school year (which would encourage students to retain knowledge and make learning seamless). Additionally, the economy would not suffer the loss of production/work given to families with children staying at home throughout the entire summer. It is cheaper and it is more effective to do this.

There are a few different alternatives to standardized testing. For example, there is portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment offers a unique way of allowing the student and the administrator to observe the progress and development of the student. In portfolio assessment, the teacher directs the student to keep a portfolio of his or her best work and offers an evaluation of the work including strengths and difficulties. The information used in the portfolio may be used to assess if the student needs additional coursework in any one area and provides an excellent method perhaps for colleges to assess incoming students from high schools.

In some cases, portfolios have replaced grades in higher education. Evergreen College in Washington is one such school. Evergreen does not have conventional grades for students. Instead, they simply use a portfolio for students, where samples of writing, math work, and tests are kept. Additionally, there are notes from instructors in regards to the student's work. The placement for medical students, law students, and students seeking professional and/or graduate degrees outside of the college has been one hundred percent since the institution of this form of assessment. Grades and tests really don't matter that much. And, honestly, most students don't like them.