

Confidence in standardized tests woefully misplaced

With respect to Senate Bill 1, what the public needs to realize is that standardized tests in general, and the CATS tests in particular, are not nearly as valid, reliable or meaningful as many of their proponents claim.

These tests all have inherent validity and reliability problems that are often overlooked.

Children from affluent families consistently score higher on standardized tests than do their counterparts from poorer families or from those in disadvantaged or historically oppressed groups.

Therefore, the socioeconomic status and racial or ethnic background of individual students, as well as the composition of entire schools, should be taken into account when interpreting test scores. This is simply not done.

Our obsession with standardized tests has also created an entire culture that values preparing students to take tests over teaching for basic knowledge and comprehension. We are raising an entire generation who can perform well on tests but are not adequately prepared for life.

Standardized tests do have a role to play in evaluating students, teachers and schools.

But they should constitute only one relatively minor component of a larger, more comprehensive assessment system that is designed to tell us about capabilities in a more global and realistic sense.

It can be done.

Aaron W. Hughey

Department of Counseling and Student Affairs
Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green

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