

ARE STANDARDIZED TESTS NECESSARY TO MEASURE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ABILITIES?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

DO STANDARDIZED TESTS DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

Origin of Everything | June 8, 2018 | Video

9:08 minutes

Schools around the world use a variety of standardized testing but results, and attitudes about the testing, vary from country to country.

- In 2015, American students, on average, took 112 mandated tests from Pre-k to 12th grade, but on the International PISA test, out of 72 countries, U.S. students rank 40th in reading, 35th in math, and 35th in science.
- When standardized tests were introduced in the U.S. in the 19th century, they were intended to widen access to a college education, but now they cause anxiety, anger, and stress for many students and parents.
- High-performing countries Finland and South Korea only require one mandatory test at the end of high school, but South Korean students face so much pressure over their test performance that it is linked to high suicide rates.
- The harm associated with standardized testing seems to depend on whether tests are overused and how important the students perceive the test results will be for their future.

SHOULD COLLEGES STILL REQUIRE THE SATs AND ACTs?

Above the Noise | October 10, 2018 | Video

5:22 minutes

While the majority of colleges and universities still require the SAT or ACT, one-third have moved to a test-optional application process.

- A standardized college entrance exam was originally adopted by Harvard University in order to diversify the applicant pool, but has turned into a \$2 billion industry.
- Opponents to the SATs and ACTs say they are unfair and inaccurate in predicting student performance.
- There is some evidence that test-optional policies lead to a more diverse student body, but some research refutes these findings.
- Supporters of the SATs and ACTs say the tests are continually evolving, and the scores provide useful information about students in the face of often inflated grade point averages.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

STUDY: COLLEGES THAT DITCH THE SAT AND ACT CAN ENHANCE DIVERSITY

NPR-Ed | April 26, 2018 | Article

731 Words

Colleges that have made testing optional say they have seen a higher proportion of applications from low-income and first-generation students from diverse backgrounds.

- Despite assumptions that going test-optional would lead to less qualified students, some data has shown that these students often graduate at a higher rate.
- Some researchers question the impact of test-optional policies, arguing that diversity of college applicants has increased across the board, but proponents say the tests present one more obstacle for under-served and under-represented populations.
- Admissions officers say that test-optional policies are just one more useful tool in expanding opportunities for students.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Homogeneous
- Data
- Assessment
- Inequity
- Standardized

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.