

That we care too much about test scores and grades

Junior Secondary Program: Round 2

Teachers give students grades on tests, assignments and general coursework for a number of reasons. They can help to show a students' progress over time, communicate to parents or other teachers how well a student is doing (and identify areas they may need help), and motivate students to work hard. Test scores (such as NAPLAN and the VCE) are also used by schools and the government to evaluate how well teachers are teaching.

However these scores do not always reflect what a student really knows about a subject, or how much they have learnt. Students who care more about tests and grades may choose to only focus on the material that they believe will come up in the test, rather than actually engaging and learning about the subject in a more organic way. On the other hand, every student has different strengths: many students struggle with the pressure of timed assessment, some have difficulty with essays, others are poor visual learners and can't make posters. By using a one-size fits all approach grades and test scores become less accurate.

Please note that this topic is not asking you ban test scores or grades, but rather to compare whether we care too much about them. The affirmative team should argue that we do care too much about test scores, and that that is a bad thing for a number of reasons. The negative team should argue that we do not care too much – this may mean that we care just the right amount, or that we should care more.

Questions

A couple of key ideas to consider:

- Why do students want to get good grades? Why do teachers/parents want students to get good grades?
- What can we learn by looking at a students' grades? Is there another way we could get this information?
- Which skills and abilities are easy to measure using standardized tests? Which ones are not?
- What are some different ways students learn?
- What motivates students to learn?

The Conversation – We all put too much emphasis on test scores

<https://theconversation.com/we-all-put-too-much-emphasis-on-test-scores-99070>

Melbourne Child Psychology – Remembering Why Perfect Grades Aren't Everything

<https://www.melbournechildpsychology.com.au/blog/remembering-why-perfect-grades-arent-everything/>

Education Week – Should we try to make our students care about test scores?

<https://www.edweek.org/education/opinion-should-we-try-to-make-our-students-care-about-test-scores/2010/04>

EduTopia – What does research say about testing

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/what-does-research-say-about-testing/>