

Testing, Testing...is the SAT working?: Supplements Needed for Success! Lauren Takakjian

Growing up in America, there are plenty of benchmarks that children share. Some are momentous - getting money in exchange from the mysterious Tooth Fairy or learning how to ride a bike. Some are mundane - like learning how to flip an omelet or completing your chores for the week. The rest are expectations that simply exist to gauge development throughout the formative years before adulthood. While most benchmarks along to one of the above categories, there is one, however, that seems to elude confinement to any one particular grouping. This benchmark is usually achieved at some point before high school graduation and carries a lot of weight as students cross the line into early adulthood. This benchmark is detested by many and yet a large majority of high school students complete this benchmark as a way to continue their academic pursuits. This benchmark has received seemingly endless critique surrounding its validity and continued use, but somehow is still a staple benchmark that [66%](#) of American students complete before graduation. This benchmark is the SAT. And this benchmark sucks.

Feared by many and hated by most, the SAT is probably one of the most renowned standardized tests in the American educational system. Used as a predictive assessment to determine student's performance during their freshman year, this standardized test has become an integral part of the college application process. Although it has never been the most important piece of the application, there is immense pressure for students to perform at a high level. Anything short of a "perfect

score” could bar students from achieving an even more important benchmark: attending a college of their choice.

Many critics of the SAT are quick to question the assessment’s validity. Is it truly assessing students’ future successes in any college across the country? The short and perhaps surprising answer is yes.

Despite [well documented and pervasive gender, race, and intelligence biases](#) as well as [correlational differences among levels of socioeconomic status](#), the SAT still tends to hold its own because of its extreme objectivity and ability to provide reliable results in just a matter of hours. Alternative methods to predict academic success for higher education often include more narrative, holistic approaches such as considering high school grades or [emotional and social factors](#) of an individual. Although these methods too are effective at predicting success, they are no better than the SAT which is able to produce the same measurement in much less time with less energy and resources gone to waste.

The way I see it, the SAT serves a purpose. One I would even go as far to say as an important one. The SAT exists as a tool for colleges to gather information and rank potential students by. However, despite its highly predictive powers, it would be and presently is a disservice to students everywhere to say that it measures all students equally. It is of the utmost importance that individuals at every level within the educational system, from test-taker to test-maker, recognize that the SAT only tests two

kinds of intelligences. Unsurprisingly, these intelligences are of the logical-mathematical and linguistic variety.

According to [Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory](#) there are eight distinct forms of intelligences. While appreciated in certain disciplines and professions, these alternative intelligences are generally neglected by traditional education. It is unclear if this is a cause or effect of "teaching to the test" however it is certain that alternative intelligences are not weighted nearly as heavily when it comes to applying to college. Students have the opportunity and are strongly encouraged to provide evidence of being "well-rounded" Renaissance scholars. (Like, let's say, knowing how to play the piano and being the captain of the soccer team while maintaining a high grade point average.) However, this opportunity is limited only to qualitative information.

I know because this is what I was forced to do as a high school student when I was applying to colleges. My college essay and its various supplements were a hodgepodge of humble brags meant to convey that even though I had impressive grades in advanced placement courses and managed SAT and ACT scores that made my parents proud, I was so much more than just that. I was a piano-and-soccer-playing Girl Scout with leadership qualities and a serious knack for photography who conducted research at a local college and was a member of stage crew in her spare time. In order to express my other skills, or intelligences, I was forced to portray this information in the only way that was possible: crammed into a run-on sentence that really wasn't going to

impress anyone. Knowing this would not better my chances of admission, I resorted to writing about just one of the aforementioned skills.

Imagine instead the ability to convert this information into a quantitate format that, like the SAT, can be both objective and efficient. This would provide colleges the opportunity to rank student ability across all kinds of skills and intelligences, allowing students who perform poorly on traditional tests due to [anxiety](#) an opportunity to shine in other but equally important ways. It would provide colleges an earlier opportunity to identify students that may excel in certain majors and areas of study, allowing college to more appropriately target specific students and offer academic scholarships. It would also provide colleges a way to quantify diverse kinds of talent across many kinds of backgrounds - something that has never existed before in the academic world. Finally, and most importantly, this would provide students with the ability to actively choose how they identify themselves. They would no longer be defined by a Scantron - they would be defined by what makes them intelligent.

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<50>	<40>	<20>
<9>	<8>	<7>
<4>	<3>	<2>
<1>	<0>	<0>

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It is presumptuous of the educational system to instill the idea that certain kinds of intelligences are more valuable than others and consequently, that individuals with alternative forms of intelligences must conform to the more traditional forms of intelligences. A [quotation](#) that speaks directly to the heart of this issue reads as follows: “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid”. Students should not be defined by school curriculum, nor should they be ranked solely by their ability to memorize and regurgitate information via a four hour exam which is [soon to consist only of multiple-choice questions](#). Students should have the ability to highlight their skills and be empowered by their kinds of intelligences, not held back because of archaic standardized testing methods. The combination of the traditional SAT in addition to [student elected supplementary standardized tests](#) would effectively eliminate any critique, complaint, or concern that presently exists regarding the continued use of the SAT.

While the SAT is an efficient standardized test, it is far from sufficient without the help of additional standardized tests. These additional tests would allow for a more effective method of accepting students to higher level of education, ensuring that everyone truly has a chance to shine. It is imperative that these proposed change occur if we are to expect success of our children, our students, our futures.