

More Thoughts on Testing

Testing is a measurement of learning. Therefore, a test should be prepared over the material which a student has covered. Just like an ending paragraph to a paper should provide no new material, a test should inquire about items which the student has already seen.

A good example of a test is the driving test. When a person takes a driving test, he gets the preparation book and studies the specifics which are found therein. Then the test is taken and the questions reflect the material in the study manual. If he misses a question, it is possible to look up the answer in the manual, study again, retake the test, and pass. The purpose of the test is to evaluate the potential driver's ability to know the rules of the road. The hope is that the potential driver will learn the rules, obtain his drivers license, and drive safely.

Standardized testing is MUCH different. First of all, there is no list of specific objectives which must be mastered in order to perform well on this exam. The possibilities for questions are endless. Your performance could be swayed by the version of the test you receive.

Also, often the questions are not asked in a straightforward manner. The format of the questions is foreign to everyday life. When is the last time that you had an analogy discussion over dinner? What would be the harm of asking the meaning of a word instead of comparing its meaning to three other difficult words? Would there be any harm in giving a list of 500 words or even 1000 words which all students should know and then testing over a finite list?

Unless you purchase a copy of your child's test*, you have no idea what your child missed. This defeats the purpose of the test because a test should be used to determine what areas the student needs to study. A raw score of 78% in grammar does not tell the student whether gerunds or adverbs were a problem for him. Also, no learning comes from any test which is never reviewed and corrected

What are the purposes of the standardized testing writers? Do they wish for your child to succeed or are they providing a hurdle which only a select few can surmount? The tone of the articles selected by standardized testing authors is often humanistic, hedonistic, and feministic. Why is this measurement used by Christian colleges? Most Christian colleges test their incoming students in English and math with their own exams. Could they do without a standardized test score by using their own measurements?

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