

IDEA 20 Standardized testing: A measurement that perpetuates inequalities

The bad news: the paper, “Past and present: Eugenics, standardized tests, and politics of school reform: Hoosier connections and challenges” reveals the underbelly and political motivations behind the concept of standardized testing. Influenced by Indiana’s passage of America’s first Eugenics Law (1907) which legalized “normalcy” and sterilization of mental “defectives,” standardized testing arose to help schools track students and sort/rank people.

The good news: assessment, not standardized testing, is a natural part of the learning process—giving/getting feedback (“trial & error”) fosters learning.

More bad news—the standardization of high stakes testing is based on:

- “normalcy” and is epitomized via norm-referencing tests where some will always fail regardless of actual achievement <http://study.com/academy/lesson/norm-vs-criterion-referenced-scoring-advantages-disadvantages.html>
- a history of racial discrimination associated with the testing--particularly in how tests are calibrated--as well as the cultural bias associated with intelligence measurement such as IQ
- the Eugenic deficit model of humanity, a model with neither scientific nor moral merit

Even more bad news: If there were a state in America which has reason to discredit and abandon the current era of high stakes standardized testing and use strength-based multi-measurements to assess student learning and schools, it is Indiana.

These fairer and more enlightened methods of assessments will challenge the Indiana legacy of bias and discrimination that dates back to Eugenic-inspired measures of intelligence (IQ tests) which we Hoosiers helped create.

<http://kinumedia.org/vorcreatex2/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Past-present-Eugenics-standardized-tests-the-politics-of-school-reform-Hoosier-connections-challenges.pdf>