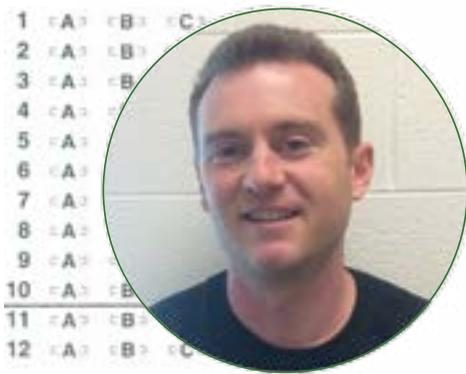


How We Measure Up

Standardized testing fails to represent skills unmeasurable on scantrons



Nathan Coates, English department head

“If you can survive this battery of tests and these different disciplines over that long period of time, it’s showing that you can, again, read something at a college level or something that you might have to read in a workplace.”

Sheila Raghavendran | Editor-in-Chief
Gina Deaton | Online Editor

This year, approximately 1126 students took a total of about 2185 Advanced Placement exams at Mason High School. Their scores may reflect their knowledge of the subject, but these standardized tests are just a few of many that do not measure a student’s inclination for art, music or athletics.

The number one ACT and SAT myth is that “the SAT and the ACT are tests of intelligence, and my scores are a good indication of how I will do in college,” according to *The Princeton Review*.

The article debunked this myth because “your test scores reflect how good you are at taking the SAT or ACT, as well as how much time you spent preparing—and that’s about it. Your score does not measure how intelligent you are, serve as a final grade for your four years of high school, or predict how successful you will be in life.”

Former President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 set the requirements for yearly standardized testing in reading and math for students between the third and eighth grades. On top of this, students in grades 10-12 must be tested once. This year, Ohio implemented Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing and Ohio Air testing, two series of exams students in the third through ninth grades are subject to take—being told that it will predict their performance in college.

According to *Cleveland.com*, for students, PARCC testing counts for “nothing, officially.” But according to Assistant Principal Dave Hyatt, it is now a graduation requirement.

“The state has chosen to eliminate the OGT for this year’s freshman class and those grades below,” Hyatt said. “They’ve actually created three different pathways to meet a graduation requirement, with the first, and probably the most important (being) the end-of-year or End of Course exams that students have to accumulate scores—it’s not a pass/fail—but they need to accumulate a certain number of points over the seven tests to meet the graduation requirement. So it’s still a graduation requirement per se, but there’s also two additional

pathways kids can go through if they don’t meet this 18-point requirement.”

The *Washington Post* listed 33 flaws in standardized testing, including that standardized testing can “lead to neglect of physical conditioning, music, art and other, non-verbal ways of learning”, can “penalize test-takers who think in non-standard ways” which it said is common among high school students, and that standardized tests cannot predict future success.

Digital Image Design teacher Aaron Roberts said this neglect of art is seen on standardized tests like PARCC, which fail to represent creativity.

“Creativity is really hard to mark on a scantron,” Roberts said. “...One of my bigger issues with standardized testing...is that it’s completely unindividualized, while art is a great opportunity to be extremely individual.”

Band Director Bob Bass said he agrees—musical “subjectivity is very hard to measure”, even impossible. But according to Bass, each music college or university weighs ACT and SAT scores differently.

“If you’re looking at a conservatory and they’re all music students, I would say the ACT score and the SAT score (have) no basis whatsoever because it’s purely based on talent,” Bass said. Conversely, for example, at Northwestern, standardized test scores are “major piece(s) in order to be accepted as a musician. You have to be talented and you have to meet the criteria for that university...Basically it depends on what institution you apply for.”

Freshman and Honors Concert Choir member Sam Terribilini said that PARCC testing is “ridiculous” and he wishes he could have his talent better recognized on a scantron.

“College prep tests are important, because they focus on the building blocks for specialized talents, but they fail to give credit for talents where credit should be given,” Terribilini said. “...Would I want to express my love for art and poetry and singing? Of course.”

Terribilini said that though he cannot reflect his musical ability on standardized tests, he understands and values their purpose in measuring college readiness.

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Aaron Roberts, Digital Image Design teacher

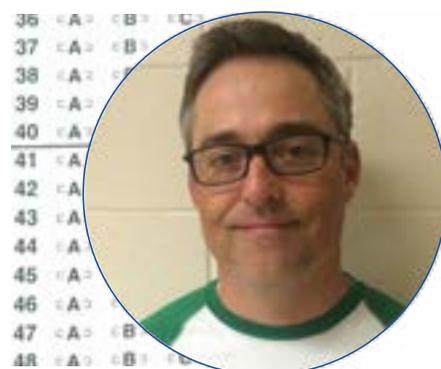
“The Columbus College of Art and Design—it doesn’t require test scores. UC DAAP, on the other hand... they don’t look at your portfolio at all, they only look at scores, and your GPA, and your resume, and your essays and all that traditional college application stuff.”



Bob Bass, Band Director

“The creativity that is involved in the arts is not as measurable as something that’s concrete. What is concrete in music? Well, rhythm is concrete. There’s only one way it should go, and that can be measured.”

“Work ethic, and determination and fighting through failure—these are all things that you learn as an athlete that if you’re going to continue in athletics you have to persevere through those tough times, and I think as a student that’s often the case as well, particularly if you’re not a good test taker.”



Curt Bly, English teacher