

Weathering the Dregs of the Standardized Testing Tempest

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Alas, the storm is come again! My best way is to creep  
under his gaberdine; there is no other shelter hereabout: misery  
acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. I will here shroud till the  
dregs of the storm be past.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 2, Scene 2, 33-41.

The homeschooling movement has faced many a tempest in the past twenty-five years, from the Federal Department of Education embracing *No Child Left Behind*, to individual States' adopting *Common Core/ PARCC* Standards, and trickling down to the local school districts as they struggle to create more literate, economically sound communities. The emphasis upon standardized tests, and the process of evaluating students' overall aptitude for success in higher education has been fiercely debated among parents, school administrators, and guidance counselors within public, private, and home schools. Those voices most opposed to the use of standardized tests seem to shout the same anthem – to remove the SAT/ACT from admissions decisions, claiming that such composite score creates intentional bias against the student's overall academic achievement record, and invites prejudice against the student's individual potential for success or failure. In the process of understanding their position within the debate, homeschooled students and their parents must recognize that, although similar, the Fair-Test movement has never championed the cause of homeschooling, nor does it seem likely to do so in the future. Its chief aim is to free students from the shackles of the SAT/ACT in college and university admissions, and thereby give students from *traditionally* disadvantaged or “at-risk” backgrounds a “fairer” advantage in the process. Yet, homeschooled students and their parents also find themselves in the eye of the torrent: either submit to the government-sanctioned, data-mining leviathan's final demand for “proof” of educational worth in the form of the SAT/ACT test, or suffer the “reproof” of academic shaming in the form of denied college or university entrance for exercising the civil right to refuse. This unique and troubling position places homeschooled families in an unusual

disadvantaged situation, – not based upon demography or income, but upon educational ideology; as such, homeschoolers often face criticism and hostility from those who question the validity of their diplomas and achievement records. Hence, one is left to wonder how such disparity can still exist after decades of plans and billions of dollars spent on creating the American system of education.

## The Misery of Mass Educational Reform

At its best, the ideal aim of the local school district is to advocate for better educational delivery, by way of upholding the highest instructional standards, hiring the best available teachers, and creating the best social mechanisms to identify, place and track students for success in a post-industrial economy eclipsed by the digital *blitzkrieg* of Microsoft<sup>1</sup> and Apple<sup>2</sup>. This grand enterprise of compulsory schooling is the fulfillment of the romantic, progressive visions of Robert Owen<sup>3</sup>, Horace Mann<sup>4</sup> and John Dewey<sup>5</sup>; likewise, it has advanced the progressive era of outcome-based education,

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1 Microsoft Corporation, formed on April 4, 1975 in Albuquerque, NM, founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen.

2 Apple Corporation formed on April 1, 1976 in Cupertino, CA, founded by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne.

3 Robert Owen (1771-1858), Welsh textile merchant and social activist who believed that any instruction that does not relate to the economic prosperity of the commonwealth should be eliminated from the rearing and education of the child. Convinced that moral and ethical principles exhaust a child's memory, he wrote in *A New View of Society*, “When you shall acquire a right knowledge of these, of their curious mechanism, of their self-adjusting powers; when the proper mainspring shall be applied to their varied movements you will become conscious of their real value, and you will readily be induced to turn your thoughts more frequently from your inanimate to your **living machines**; you will discover that the latter may be easily trained and directed to procure a large increase of pecuniary gain, while you may also derive from them high and substantial gratification...” (3)  
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0597/72b61b68c3efb89e67cf889d235cb09ae4cb.pdf>

4 Horace Mann (1796-1859), American politician and social activist who sought to reform the system of compulsory education within the States. In his Report Twelve of the Massachusetts School Board (1848), Mann defines education as, “...the great equalizer of the conditions of men, – the balance wheel of the social machinery...” (2); he further identifies education as akin to a socially engineered factory producing a labor force that matches the demands of shifting economic circles. In Mann's view, education is the theoretical bridge between social classes, thereby exposing children to opportunities for success regardless of financial means. <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/democrac/16.htm> Richard Phelps, in Chapter 2 of his book, “*A Standardized Testing Primer*,” provides a clear understanding of Mann's views, and his relationship to Samuel Gridley Howe, a Boston school reformer who shared many of his views. As highlighted on pp. 12-13: “Howe was, like Mann, an admirer of the centralized Prussian school system, bureaucratic hierarchy, defined structure, graded classes, and well-articulated curricula...In 1844, Mann and Howe introduced standardized tests in the Boston Schools...”

5 John Dewey (1859-1952), American politician and educational reformer, defined education as “a process of living and not a preparation for future living...” (*My Pedagogic Creed*, Article 2). Dewey believed that children should be monitored from the year they enter school, their progress evaluated through psychological and achievement testing, and steered toward a 'socially appropriate track, based upon economic demands': “...I believe that it is the business of everyone interested in education to insist upon **the school as the primary and most effective** interest of social progress and reform, in order that society may be reawakened to realize what the school stands for, and aroused to the necessity of endowing the educator with sufficient equipment properly to perform his task...” (*My Pedagogic Creed*, Article 5, sec 8). <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>

first introduced by sociologist William Spady.<sup>6</sup> Yet, as educational policy makers and statisticians continued to lose sight of the fact that local school districts were comprised of *individual* families – parents, grandparents, and legal guardians – whose children are far more than demographic statistics or composite scores – this national ambition to objectify both the process and delivery of education has continued to plunder and assail the individual's right to civil liberties and academic freedom –well beyond graduation from high school.<sup>7</sup> Such a policy shift away from individual, local control of basic literacy toward the “nationalizing” of educational standards and content began in 1989, with the precarious adoption of President George H.W. Bush's “*National Educational Goals/America 2000*” campaign,<sup>8</sup> which President Bill Clinton later repackaged into the bipartisan legislative triumph of “*Goals 2000*”.<sup>9</sup> What was once a polite six-fold suggestion for the States' voluntary participation in national education reform suddenly became an “octopus law” under President Clinton. Although each tentacle resonated with weary State lawmakers who searched for solutions to combat the growing unemployment rate from creeping economic recession, Dr. William Bennett, the former Secretary of Education under President Ronald Reagan, called it a “Trojan Horse.”<sup>10</sup>

By 2000, many states gravitated toward academic accountability through outcome-based standardized testing, and clamored for a “fairer” policy to address the performance disparity between white, black and other minority students<sup>11</sup>. Ironically, high-stakes testing came to fruition *because* of

6 William G. Spady (1940- ), American sociologist and educational theorist. Spady is considered the godfather of the outcomes-based education movement, which promotes parent/school partnerships in order to fulfill the needs of a global economy. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED380910.pdf>

7 Further examples showing the consequences of outcome-based education can be seen in Joel Turtel's, *Public Schools, Public Menace: How Public Schools Lie and Betray Our Children* (New York: Liberty, 2005). In Chapter 3, “Why Are Public Schools So Bad?”, Turtel addresses the question of why millions of students are functionally illiterate after twelve years of compulsory schooling, stating, “Here are the life lessons that OBE teaches children – laziness, dishonesty, irresponsibility, and procrastination. OBE teaches that learning is a con game and that content, knowledge, and reading skills are irrelevant, as long as a student's outcome is to feel good and get along with others. In short, OBE programs can be a menace to your children...” (97). .

8 Peg Luksik and Pamela Hobbs Hoffercker summarize the link between President George H.W. Bush and President Clinton's reforms in *Outcome-Based Education: The State's Assault on Children's Values*, Chapter 5, pp.89-109.

9 Ibid., p.99. The eight national goals (law) involve 1.) school readiness; 2.) school completion; 3.) student achievement and citizenship; 4.) teacher education/professional development; 5.) mathematics and science; 6.) adult basic literacy and lifelong learning; 7.) safe, disciplined, alcohol-and-drug-free schools; 8.) parental participation.

10 Ibid. Bennett went on to say that, “*Outcome-based education can be used to undermine parental authority and traditional moral beliefs.*” Summary Remarks, excerpt from Luksik and Hoffercker, p. 11.

11 Owen Davis, “No Test Left Behind: How Pearson Made a Killing on the US Testing Craze.” *TPM*, 2016. Interestingly,

legislative pressure by civil rights activists to address this issue.<sup>12</sup> When President George W. Bush won the presidency, he invited a veritable Texas posse into the Department of Education, which included Sandy Kress, the architect of the Dallas Schools' accountability program and lobbyist for McGraw-Hill, W. James Jonas, a lobbyist for Pearson, Margaret Spelling, and Houston district superintendent Rod Paige. Thus, in January, 2002, with his bipartisan legislative triumph in *No Child Left Behind*, President Bush revamped the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA]<sup>13</sup>. Likewise, the “Big Three” testing publishers [Pearson, McGraw-Hill, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt] successfully parleyed into multi-million dollar contracts with the Federal Government, controlling 85% of the total publishing market.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, when President Barack Obama took the oath of office in 2009, he appointed former Chicago Superintendent Arne Duncan as Secretary of Education<sup>15</sup>. Because the *No Child Left Behind* initiatives proved difficult to achieve, President Obama offered State Governors an alternative in the form of a new set of national standards, now known as the *Common Core State Standards*<sup>16</sup>. Because no Congressional vote was required, 46 Governors “voluntarily” agreed to

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Davis points out, “...by the late 1990s, many states had latched onto educational accountability, instituting tests and sanctions in equal measures. Liberal groups, too, began to line up behind accountability measures, which were seen as a potential remedy for educational inequities that had grown intolerable, particularly between white and minority students.” <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/features/privatization/four/>

- 12 Jesse Rhodes summarizes this fact: “... civil rights leaders are glad to have federal policies that put the spotlight on vulnerable students –racial minorities, children of poverty, first-time English language learners, and immigrants. By highlighting the educational challenges facing such disadvantaged students, **federally enforced** standards help create political pressure to improve schools serving such students...the law requires schools to track progress not just by all students lumped together, but also by sub-groups such as African-Americans and Latinos, English language learners, poor children, and migrant children...” [Accountability in Education As a Civil Rights Cause, 2012].  
<http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/brief/accountability-education-civil-rights-cause>
- 13 The ESEA has been reauthorized eight times since 1965, and is heavily favored by the standardized testing lobby. *No Child Left Behind* (2002) was the most recent reauthorization. <http://educationpost.org/the-abcs-of-esca-essa-and-no-child-left-behind/> When NCLB expired in 2007, it was replaced in 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA. <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/12/09/congress-replaces-no-child-left-behind-shifts-power-to-states>
- 14 Owen Davis, “No Test Left Behind: How Pearson Made a Killing on the US Testing Craze.” *TPM*, 2016.  
<http://talkingpointsmemo.com/features/privatization/four/>
- 15 Arne Duncan served as Chicago Public Schools Superintendent from 2001-2008 prior to becoming the U.S. Secretary of Education in 2009. He served in that position under President Obama from 2009-2015.  
<https://www2.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/duncan.html>
- 16 Between 2008-2010, the Gates Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided \$35 million to a consortium of two non-government trade associations (the National Governors Association and the the Council of Chief State School Officers) for the purpose of developing and implementing a new educational paradigm for U.S. Schools, called the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI), published in 2008.  
<https://truthinamericaneducation.com/race-to-the-top/> Prior to this, the former CEO of Intel Corp, Craig Barrett (Chairman of the Board), and former CEO of IBM, Louis V. Gerstner, Jr. (Chairman Emeritus) lead a similar movement to build a P-20 database designed to track students nationally, and create 'more meaningful' college and career-readiness standards. The efforts of both parties culminated in the creation and ultimate implementation of the CCSS.

participate.<sup>17</sup> However, if any State considered changing its course, it then faced the specific threat of having its Title I revenue revoked.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Obama Administration successfully launched a covert takeover to federalize education in the form of *Common Core*. In doing so, Secretary Duncan introduced the “*Race to the Top*” Program, which rewarded millions of dollars to those States willing to implement the *Common Core* standards comprehensively.<sup>19</sup> As a result, in 2011, President Obama issued an Executive Order allowing the Family and Educational Rights Privacy Act [FERPA]<sup>20</sup> law to be amended to give the federal government the authority to collect personal information on students and teachers, but more specifically, SAT/ACT testing data.<sup>21</sup> Shortly thereafter, in 2013, the College Board and its president, David Coleman, announced that the SAT and ACT would be revised and aligned to Common Core Standards.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Pearson agreed to accommodate the *Common Core* Standards by revising the GED.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Community Colleges also agreed to accommodate the Common Core Standards by redefining their alliance with the Department of Education through the

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<https://www.achieve.org/achieving-common-core>

- 17 Ibid. Because Race-to-the-Top was a federal grant “competition,” States had to “commit” to adopting the Common Core standards, within two months of filing their applications. Such “commitment” meant no State legislative approval was required, and no comprehensive review of the standards could be conducted prior to their implementation. <https://truthinamericaneducation.com/race-to-the-top/>
- 18 Title I funding was deeply entrenched in the conditions of acceptance. In 2013, the HSLDA published several reports warning of the implications of such stealth funding, and the danger to home-schooled parents regarding the plans to realign the SAT, ACT and GED to the CCSS. <https://www.hslda.org/commoncore/topic7.aspx>
- 19 *Race to the Top* funding was part of the federal stimulus known as *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*; in it, Congress appropriated \$4.35 billion for competitive grants to states to encourage education innovation and reform in four areas: enhanced standards and assessments; improving collection and use of data; increasing teacher effectiveness; and turning around low-achieving schools. See full comparison summary of *RTTT* and *NCLB* by Judith Lohman, at <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2010/rpt/2010-R-0235.htm>
- 20 See section “Changes to Audit/Evaluation & Studies Exceptions,” wherein the specific use of State longitudinal data collection is specifically referenced. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/pdf/parentoverview.pdf>
- 21 Ibid. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/pdf/parentoverview.pdf>
- 22 Dana Goldstein interviewed David Coleman for *The Atlantic* soon after he was named CEO of The College Board. In spite of the fact that the College Board is a non-for-profit organization, David Coleman, CEO, earlier co-founded the Grow Network, a educational tech company devoted to the analytics of standardized tests, which he later sold to McGraw-Hill in 2004; in addition, he co-founded the non-for-profit firm Student Achievement Partners in 2007 to lobby for and promote national curriculum standards as the mechanism to close the achievement gaps, particularly within low-income urban minority and underprivileged communities. In 2009, Student Achievement Partners was hired by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to research, formulate, devise and distribute a new set of academic standards, which we know in its current form as the Common Core State Standards. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/10/the-schoolmaster/309091/>
- 23 The results were better than CCSS advocates had envisioned. The new revised GED tests became less reading comprehension based. One college coordinator from the Bronx Youth Center said that she observed a noticeable increase in the number of students passing the test, from 60 to 75%. <http://hechingerreport.org/the-ged-is-out-and-common-core-is-in/>

Partnership for the Assessment and Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC.<sup>24</sup> In December, 2015, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* was signed into law by President Obama, replacing *No Child Left Behind* as the new measure of federal interpretation and accountability of Title IV funds allocated to the States.<sup>25</sup> Even though President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order in April, 2017 directing current Secretary of Education Betsy DeVoss to conduct a 300-day review of potential federal overreach<sup>26</sup>, the convolution of ESSA, PARCC, and Common Core will take years to unravel. With such a swirling mass of botched educational reforms, lobbyists, million dollar budgets, and questionable policy agendas from both sides of the political aisle over the past twenty five years, is it any wonder that students facing the SAT/ACT are trying to find shelter from each new pounding wave of mixed messages from “educational professionals?”

### **The Origin of the Tempest: IQ and the SAT**

For many students, taking the SAT/ACT exams is akin to participating in an academic Olympiad, froth with the trappings of coaching, drills, preparations, psychological strategies, and review courses, – all “designed” to assist students in their quest for the College Board’s “gold medal:” a perfect 36<sup>27</sup> or 1600.<sup>28</sup> The prospect of taking such “high stakes” exams, like the SAT/ACT, often inspires a myriad of emotional reactions ranging from fear and stress, to panic and dread. In spite of the current contemporary viewpoint of high-stakes testing, the evolution of this present tempest of standardized data-mining/academic tracking can be observed within the confusion, exclusion, and an incoherent disparity between the “Ivory Tower” of higher academia and the perceived “common shanty” of the local K-12 school board. To better synchronize the efforts of the universities to form a “united front” for admission standards grounded in a central curriculum, the College Entrance

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24 PARCC, founded in 2010, is one of two consortia of States funded by the federal government to develop “next generation” assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

25 Block grants are ambiguously classified under the ESSA as “arts education, physical education, and educational technology.” <https://www.ewa.org/topic-essa>

26 <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-signs-executive-order-reviewing-federal-role-education-n751476>

27 <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/scores/understanding-your-scores.html>

28 Delece Smith-Barrow identifies the range of scores for the revised SAT. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2017-07-25/understand-whats-a-good-sat-score-for-college-admissions>



Examinations Board [the College Board] was formed in 1900.<sup>29</sup> While this attempt at greater unification was a laudable intention, the situation became infinitely more complex with the advent of IQ testing in 1905.<sup>30</sup> Invented by the French psychologist Alfred Binet,<sup>31</sup> the first IQ test was designed to “measure” the intelligence of an individual, thus identifying “slow learners” via the classification of “mental age.” Later, during the U.S. Involvement in First World War (1917-1918), the U.S. Army began to put IQ testing methods into practice with the creation of their Alpha/Beta Army General Classification Test [AGCT] to better identify officer candidates.<sup>32</sup> When Harvard professor, Robert Yerkes,<sup>33</sup> first administered the tests to nearly two million recruits, the intended goal was to build a statistical record for identifying the “most intelligent” people in society, – not necessarily to reform education.<sup>34</sup> After the war, Carl Brigham,<sup>35</sup> one of Yerkes' partners in the creation of the AGCT, advocated for its inclusion within the measurement standards of the College Board, and was named chairman of a committee to craft a new test that could be broadly implemented throughout its

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29 Harold S. Wechsler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America* (New Brunswick: John Wiley and Sons), 1977. The College Board was initially a consortium of 12 founding New England institutions including: Barnard College, Bryn Mawr, Colgate, Columbia, Cornell, Rutgers (State University of NJ), Swathmore, Vassar; the “Big Three” – Harvard, Yale, and Princeton – resisted membership from the CEEB initially, but eventually joined in 1904-1905. Other institutions within the Southern Examination Board were invited to apply for membership between 1905 and 1910, most notably The University of Virginia, Vanderbilt, Tulane, and the University of Texas.

30 For more information, please view <http://www.iqtestexperts.com/iq-history.php>

31 Alfred Binet (1857-1911) was an experimental psychologist who modeled many of his “intelligence tests” to mirror certain consistencies and statistical measurements found within artists, mathematicians, and chess players. He is hailed as one of the foremost pioneers of mental measurements—these measurements being eventually incorporated into the development of IQ testing. See more information <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alfred-Binet>

32 Concurrently, in 1943, the Army-Navy College launched an achievement exam [Qualifying Test] to approximately 316,000 high-school seniors from across the U.S., using a multiple choice format, as a way to ascertain functional literacy standards among applicants. See Joseph Zeidner and Arthur J. Drucker's *Behavioral Science in the Army: A Corporate History of the Army Research Institute* (June, 1988).

33 Robert Yerkes (1876-1956) was a comparative psychologist who graduated from Harvard University in 1902. He later served as a professor of psychology at Harvard until 1917, when he assisted the U.S. Army in creating the AGCT. He was later hired as a professor of psychology at Yale in 1924. Many of his methods for testing “lower-mammals” (such as rats, chimpanzees, cats, dogs, etc.) were further incorporated into his multiple choice tests for human beings. See more information at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-M-Yerkes>

34 For an in depth history of the AGCT and its influence, see Joseph Zeidner and Arthur J. Drucker's *Behavioral Science in the Army: A Corporate History of the Army Research Institute* (June, 1988), Part I, Chapter 1, pp.7-21. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3934/cd70538f7ad53a7e3b612e8f755c5a09bea7.pdf>

35 Carl Brigham (1890-1943) was a psychologist out of Princeton University both as a student (BA, MA, and PhD) and professor. He sat on the Advisory Council to the American Eugenics Society and was a leading voice in the pioneering of the field of psychometrics. He was also a leading lobbyist for the eugenics movement, as well as a supporter of anti-immigrant legislation. See further information at: <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/5554c24335ae9d9e7f0000af>



membership, which eventually became known as the SAT.<sup>36</sup> Initially secluded to university applicants, by 1926, the SAT was introduced to high-school students. When James Conant<sup>37</sup> was appointed president of Harvard University in 1933, he inherited the “fairness dilemma” of administering an assessment for the university's scholarship program to identify highly qualified candidates.<sup>38</sup> Traveling to Princeton University, Conant met Brigham, who introduced him to both the methodology of IQ testing and its potential use for “weeding out” scholarship applicants; thus, in 1934, the SAT was first used to determine scholarship awards among Harvard students, and by 1935, was mandated as a requirement for all Harvard applicants.<sup>39</sup> The influence of the SAT was celebrated in 1939, when *all* Ivy League institutions made it a requirement for admissions application.<sup>40</sup> However, as the applicant pools grew rapidly, both administering and scoring the SAT proved to be both labor intensive and time consuming. Thus, by 1947, this manifestation of *en masse* standardized testing schemata lead to the creation of the Educational Testing Service [ETS]; although autonomous from the College Board, the ETS helped serve a useful purpose for university admissions personnel by taking on the responsibility of preparing, administering and scoring many of the tests used in determining a benchmark for college aptitude.<sup>41</sup> In opposition to the growing educational monopoly of the College Board through the use of the SAT through the ETS, a new testing organization called American College Testing Program (ACT)

36 Ibid. See <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/5554c24335ae9d9e7f0000af>

37 James Conant (1893-1978) was a chemist, and true “Renaissance Man,” graduating from Harvard University in 1916. He assisted the U.S. Army regarding chemical warfare during WWI. He later returned to Harvard, becoming a professor of chemistry— being named chairman of the department. During WWII, Conant served in the scientific fields, including the development of the atomic bomb. In 1953, Conant severed as the high commissioner to West Germany before being named ambassador in 1955. He was most known for his vigor in fighting for democracy in the new Germany, and devoted much time and energy to educational theories—particularly in high-school/junior high. His textbooks on chemistry are hailed as some of the best “science books” for the “unscientific mind.” His autobiography entitled, *My Several Lives*, was published in 1970. See more information at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-B-Conant>

38 Jeffery O'Connell false and Thomas E. O'Connell, *James B. Conant: A Giant on Academe's Left, Right and Center, Book Review of James B. Conant, Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age by James B. Hershberg*, 1997 BYU Educ. & LJ 109 (1997) <https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1080&context=elj>

39 Ibid. pp. 110-111. <https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1080&context=elj>

40 Richard P. Phelps, author of “*The Standardized Testing Primer* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007) pp. 11-22.

41 Ibid. In 1947, in part to unburden itself of much of the detail and technical work, the College Board joined with the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to form the ETS. Each of the founding members would unload the responsibility for the continued development and administration of one or more testing programs onto ETS. The Carnegie Foundation contributed the GRE and the Pre Engineering Inventory; the American Council on Education added the National Teacher Examinations and the Cooperative Testing Service, while the College Board turned over the SAT, as well as the Law School Admissions Test, or LSAT....” (p. 21)

emerged as their main rival in 1959; consequently, the main difference between the SAT and the ACT is that the SAT was designed for identifying *aptitude*, the ACT was developed for demonstrating *achievement*.<sup>42</sup> Hence, by the early 1960's, standardized testing had mushroomed from its subtle beginnings to become the overarching norm within college/university admissions, as well as the primary driver of curricula and education reform.

### **The Storm is Come Again: SAT/ACT Revisions**

This “testing tempest” continued to gain national attention when Federal funding for local education became contingent upon student performance on yearly standardized tests, culminating in certain states mandating student participation in the administration of the SAT/ACT as a prerequisite for graduation from public high schools.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, even though the Common Core State Standards are optional for inclusion in parochial school curricula, the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops advised, in April 2014, that although it strongly favors the parental role in the education of children as “a God-given responsibility,” with parents possessing “...*the fundamental right to choose the formative tools that support their convictions and fulfill their duty as the first educators...*”<sup>44</sup>, and although every U.S. Catholic Diocese may control and direct its own curricula, each Bishop and Diocese Superintendent must “...*take into consideration the horizon of the local, state, and national education landscape and the influence and application of the CCSS. To ignore this would place our [Catholic] students at a significant disadvantage for their post-secondary education, which is not an*

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42 Ibid. Phelps further cites that for many years, the SAT was a “curriculum free” aptitude test, whereas the ACT was derived from the National Curriculum Survey, administered to teachers and experts every few years. Also, whereas the SAT was thought to be the test for “Ivy League admissions,” the ACT was marketed as the college admissions test “*for everybody else.*” (pp. 21-22).

43 17 States, thus far, have tethered the SAT/ACT performance to graduation, including Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island; other states, like Arizona, Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, New York and Texas, require that juniors take the test, but may or may not require certain performance scores for graduation. For a complete list, see Catherine Gerwertz' article, “Which States Require Students to Take the SAT or ACT?” <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/states-require-students-take-sat-or-act.html?override=web>

44 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Frequently Asked Questions About the Common Core Standards.” 21 April, 2014. Section 2. [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/common-core-state-standards-faqs.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/common-core-state-standards-faqs.cfm)

*acceptable option for our families. For example, the SAT and ACT assessments, as well as other standardized tests, will be geared toward CCSS. Such realities are among the factors that must be taken into account when judging whether it is best to adopt, adapt, or reject the CCSS....*”<sup>45</sup>

As such, some parochial schools have succumbed to the pressure of test administration to “help” parents, “... *comparing Catholic school to public school when making a decision for their children.*”<sup>46</sup> Since 2010, 100 out of the 195 Catholic dioceses have adopted Common Core State Standards in some form.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, 130 Catholic university professors also expressed their concern for diocesan schools adopting the Core standards, stating that instead of preparing students for serious study of the liberal arts in higher education, the Core represented a trend toward “standardized workplace preparation,” emphasizing that “...*Common Core educated children will not be prepared to do authentic college work. Even supporters of Common Core admit that it is geared ...for community-college-level studies....*”<sup>48</sup> However, many parents have pushed back against these mandates, questioning not only the necessity of the SAT/ACT in determining skills proficiency, but the equity of exemptions for certain groups, or the caveat of delayed testing for students deemed to be “limited English proficient.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, the National Center for Fair and Open Testing [FairTest], founded in 1985 as the outspoken grassroots champion of minority and underprivileged students' rights,

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45 Ibid., from Section 4, “Are Catholic Schools Required to Use the Common Core State Standards?”

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/common-core-state-standards-faqs.cfm>

46 Quote from Alter High School Principle, Lourdes Lambert (February, 2017) when asked why Catholic students at the Ohio high school should be required to take the SAT/ACT. <https://daytondailynews.com/news/too-much-testing-some-schools-angry-with-ohio-act-sat-mandate/5IPdirdJ68luXs1ez7Mv7L/amp.html>

47 Bidwell, Allie. “Common Core : A Divisive Issue for Catholic School Parents Too.” *U.S. News and World Report*. Jan. 13, 2014. As stated in the this article, 100 dioceses signed onto the National Catholic Educational Association's campaign to support the inclusion of the CCSS, known as “Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative [CCCCI]. Part of the NCEA's mission is to “infuse the standards with the faith , principles, values, and social justice themes inherent in the mission of a Catholic school.” <https://www.usnews.com/news/special-reports/a-guide-to-common-core/2014/01/13/common-core-a-divisive-issue-for-catholic-school-parents-too>

48 Strauss, Valerie. “Catholic Scholars Blast Common Core in Letter to U.S. Bishops.” 2 Nov. 2013. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/11/02/catholic-scholars-blast-common-core-in-letter-to-u-s-bishops/?utm\\_term=.4b38dbb1668](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/11/02/catholic-scholars-blast-common-core-in-letter-to-u-s-bishops/?utm_term=.4b38dbb1668)

49 Ibid. Many parents in Ohio schools have expressed concern that “one-size-fits-all” test exemptions cannot address the issues surrounding fairness for students with disabilities not on the “approved” list.

encouraged its members to call for a total elimination of standardized tests for college entrance and admission decisions.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the “Fair Test” movement has yielded impressive results, “...with over 980 bachelor-degree granting institutions as test-optional...”<sup>51</sup>, reporting that over 675,000 students across the U.S. had refused to participate in high-stakes testing in 2015.<sup>52</sup> However, Fair-Testers are not without their critics. Many civil rights organizations sympathetic to the standardized testing lobby in Washington, D.C. are critical of the Fair-Test movement, suggesting that the information provided by the yearly tests provides, “...the only available, consistent and objective source of data about disparities in educational outcomes ...which is used to advocate for greater resource equity in schools, and more fair treatment for students of color, low income students, students with disabilities, and English-learners.”<sup>53</sup>

Concurrently, within the home school community, a similar “testing tempest” was gaining traction, particularly among students who believed “opting out” was their best way to preserve the integrity of their non-traditional, and often religious-centered, curricula against the growing tsunami of Federal and State intrusion.<sup>54</sup> By the time that the College Board announced its intent to change the SAT/ ACT tests to align with *Common Core* and *PARCC* standards<sup>55</sup>, many concerned parents (my own included) were taking action, making difficult decisions: either conform to the revised standards, by forcing their students to comply by taking the test, or reject the revised standards, by allowing their

50 Taken from the Fair-Test mission statement, posted at <https://fairtest.org/about>

51 “Fair-Test Reacts to 2017 ACT Scores.” 6 Sept. 2017. <https://fairtest.org/fairtest-reacts-2017-act-scores> and <http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/SAT%20Scores%202017%20Release.pdf>

52 In December, 2015 Fair-Test.org issued a report stating that 675,000 students across the U.S had refused to participate in high-stakes testing. <http://www.fairtest.org/more-500000-refused-tests-2015>

53 For a complete list of these groups, see <https://civilrights.org/civil-rights-groups-we-oppose-anti-testing-efforts/>

54 In 2011, Christian think tank, Cardus, published *The Cardus Education Survey* which states that in 2004, only 1/3 of homeschoolers reported taking the SAT, and by 2011, homeschooled students were more likely to attend an open-admission university, less likely to attend a prestigious university, and less likely to attend both college and graduate school than conventional college graduates. In 2014, a second Cardus survey was conducted, with results analyzed by David Sikkink and Sara Stiles, in their paper “*Homeschooling and Young Adult Outcomes: Evidence from the 2011 and 2014 Surveys*” which confirmed the earlier results, adding that “...normative trajectory for homeschoolers is less well-defined, less institutionalized...What is demanded for a strong college application may conflict with the approach to education in some homeschooling families. Drilling for the standardized tests, for example, is not why many families choose to homeschool...” <https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/publications/5128/homeschooling-and-young-adult-outcomes-evidence-from-the-2011-and-2014-cardus-education-survey/>

55 College Board President David Coleman outlined his vision for the revamped SAT in 2014; highlights from the roll-out can be seen at <https://www.collegeboard.org/releases/2014/expand-opportunity-redesign-sat>

students to express civil disobedience by skipping the test.<sup>56</sup> For many home school families, choosing to “opt out” of the SAT/ACT had punitive consequences, as many colleges, universities, and private foundations base their admission and scholarship consideration upon how well students perform on these particular standardized tests.<sup>57</sup> Hence, choosing “the road less traveled by<sup>58</sup>,” even though principled, could become a very costly decision for future opportunities and career advancement<sup>59</sup>.

### **Strange Bedfellows Under the Gaberdine: The Fair-Testers and The Opt-Outs**

This issue – “to take or not to take” the SAT/ACT– has, indeed, perpetuated misery for advocates on both sides of the political aisle, and they have become “strange bedfellows” in weathering out this testing storm. Those within the Fair Test movement claim that the SAT/ACT discriminates against students from low-income households disadvantaged by socioeconomic conditions beyond their control.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, those within the home school Opt-Out movement, claim that the SAT/ACT discriminates against students educated within religious curricula, or (at the very least) or programs containing different academic and ethical standards than those adopted by the College Board based upon Common Core.<sup>61</sup> As such, many home schooled students find themselves disadvantaged when

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56 Henry David Thoreau (1817- 1862) famously once stated in his essay, *Resistance to Civil Government* [*Civil Disobedience*] “Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn...” p. 311. Testing Boycotts, such as those occurring within the Portland Public Schools, illustrate this principle. See <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/high-school-notes/2013/02/18/testing-boycott-spreads-to-portland-high-schools-and-beyond>. Home-school parents reason that subjecting students to a CCSS-based SAT/ACT would compromise the integrity and validity of the score because preparation for such tests would require unnecessary expense and time away from current curricula and study.

57 Alexandra Pannoni states this case well, in her April, 2014 *U.S. News and World Report* article, “*High School Grad Requirements Test Opt-Out Movement: Students Who Opt Out of State-Mandated Tests May Run Into Trouble When It Comes Time to Graduate.*” <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/high-school-notes/2014/04/07/high-school-grad-requirements-test-opt-out-movement>

58 Reference to Robert Frost's iconic poem, “The Road Not Taken,” published in 1916.

59 Often, schools may adopt a “SAT/ACT” test optional policy; however, upon greater scrutiny, home-schooled students should be cautious when submitting their information. Many colleges and universities often “require” additional evidence from home-schooled students. This is a highly questionable and subjective practice, which singles students out for further scrutiny based upon their non-traditional status. If home-schooled families resist such “approval” language and scrutiny throughout K-12 experience, then this double-standard in the college sphere must also be challenged in the future.

60 See Fair-Test's report on scholarship and admissions discrimination <https://www.fairtest.org/university-testing-scholarships> and <https://www.fairtest.org/university-testing-bias>

61 There are several articles which highlight the ongoing dissatisfaction among parents, students and advocates for home-school freedom. One pro-homeschool article from 2014 shows parents' reactions in an online discussion, illustrating a profound concern for the impact of a CCSS realigned SAT/ACT: <https://truthinamericaneducation.com/common-core-state-standards/homeschoolers-and-common-core/> Another more critical article from 2014 cited home-school advocate

taking the test because the *framework* of information involved does not accurately reflect the authenticity of their educational experience.<sup>62</sup> Although the “Fair-Testers” and the “Opt-Outs” have similar platforms, under their “gaberline” of collective ambitions for the future of higher education, they are driven by separate and distinct motives. Although the Fair Test movement is gaining traction in 2017, the political agenda driving it can, quite often does, limit opportunities for students in the long term, favoring diversity over other factors in the admissions selection process.<sup>63</sup> Landmark court cases

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Robert Kunzeman as he quotes from HSLDA's Michael Ferris' opinion about the disparity of standardized testing: “...The problem is that all of this is entirely subjective. There is no such thing as an objective standard. A test is fair, according to due process standards, **only if** measures the content of what you've been taught. You'd have to write individualized, content-valid standardized tests for every child that's being homeschooled in America. You just can't do that.” <https://thinkprogress.org/why-conservative-christian-homeschoolers-are-fighting-standards-that-dont-apply-to-them-f28da2c3e343/> However, in the same *ThinkProgress* article, the author, Josh Isreal, is quick to point out that Patrick Henry College, - the school founded by Mr. Ferris in 1999, - still requires applicants to submit SAT or ACT scores, and uses such scores in the admissions vetting process. PHC's requirement of standardized test scores [like SAT/ACT or CLT] as part of its admissions policy will continue to be a source of confusion to parents and students who look to PHC and the HSLDA to provide clear direction on this issue, especially with even further changes looming on the educational horizon.

- 62 Bruce Shortt noted in his book, “The Harsh Truth About Public Schools (Valecito: Chalcedon Foundation, 2004; pp. 268-270), that the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE, founded in 1954], – a coalition of 33 specialty professional associations, – cited diversity, multiculturalism and global perspectives as among the most important standards by which to evaluate those who train teachers. In July, 2013, NCATE and Teacher Education Accreditation Council [TEAC, founded in 1997] merged into a larger coalition called the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, or CAEP. Dr William Koch, CAEP's President, is described as “...a strong proponent of using data to inform policy and establish a P-20 longitudinal data system.” <http://caepnet.org/about/history> . In March, 2016, the Council of Higher Education Accreditation [CHEA] recognized the CAEP as the “gold standard” of P-12 Standards and Accreditation. [http://caepnet.org/~media/CAEP\\_Modification%20of%20Scope\\_March%202016\\_Signed.pdf?la=en](http://caepnet.org/~media/CAEP_Modification%20of%20Scope_March%202016_Signed.pdf?la=en)
- 63 Public Advocates, Inc. (San Francisco, CA) prepared the amicus brief on behalf of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing [FairTest] in response to three cases involving the University of Michigan (*Gratz v. Bolliger*; *Grutter v. Bollinger*; *Schuetz v. BAMN*), contending that “...standardized tests are not the neutral, objective measures of 'merit'...and compensating for the biases of standardized tests and standardized testing **requires admissions offices to consider race as one factor in order to ensure equal treatment** to students of color and to assess equally their true promise for admissions....” In other words, Fair-Testers object to standardized testing because (they contend) the “standard” [basic skills proficiency, reading, writing, quantitative reasoning, etc] differs based upon racial and socioeconomic factors, and must, therefore, be deemed both insufficient and illegitimate in determining college acceptance. <https://www.fairtest.org/supreme-court-brief-shows-test-scores-do-not-equal-merit>



such as *Hopwood v. Texas*<sup>64</sup>, *Gratz v. Bollinger*<sup>65</sup>, *Grutter v. Bollinger*<sup>66</sup>, *Smith v. Washington*<sup>67</sup>, *Schuetz v. BAMN*<sup>68</sup> and *Fisher v. University of Texas*<sup>69</sup> have challenged and amended the Constitutionality of university admissions policies based upon governmental racial preferences to promote diversity. The legal turbulence ensuing from the Supreme Court decision on *Fisher* in 2016<sup>70</sup> may cause even the most hardened standardized test-skeptics to pause and reconsider just how far-

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- 64 1996 case involving University of Texas School of Law applicant Cheryl Hopwood, – a military wife and mother of a handicapped daughter, who was denied admissions because of a dual admissions system that required lower admission qualifications for favored minorities than all other races. The University of Texas offered admission to 62 students from the favored minority track, even though Ms. Hopwood held higher combined GPA and LSAT scores than 85% of those accepted. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Ms. Hopwood, but was later altered in 2003, after a similar case involving the University of Michigan. <https://www.cir-usa.org/cases/hopwood-v-texas/>
- 65 2003 case involving University of Michigan's undergraduate college of Literature, Arts, and Sciences. Unbeknownst to Ms. Gratz when she applied as a high school senior, the University had been analyzing prospective applicants under two separate grid systems: one for “presumptive admits” and the other, for “underrepresented minorities.” Whereas her achievements gave her a competitive chance of gaining admission, if Ms. Gratz had been considered a favored minority applicant, she would have had a 100% chance of admission. <https://www.cir-usa.org/cases/gratz-v-bollinger-grutter-v-bollinger/>
- 66 2003 case involving the University of Michigan's graduate admissions to the School of Law. Ms. Grutter was wait-listed and eventually denied admission to the School of Law, which used a grid system to evaluate potential candidates for admission. A favored minority applicant with the same scores as Ms. Grutter would have had a 100% chance of admission, whereas Ms. Grutter, a white female applicant, had only a 9% chance of admission. The Court ruled against Ms. Grutter, with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor deferring to the School of law in determining whether or not racial preferences are necessary, but limiting the legality of racial preferences to a period of twenty five years. Justice Clarence Thomas dissented, stating that what is unconstitutional twenty-five years from now is also unconstitutional today. Either the Constitution forbids the use of racial discrimination or it does not. <https://www.cir-usa.org/cases/gratz-v-bollinger-grutter-v-bollinger/>
- 67 2002 case involving the University of Washington Law School wherein 21-year old applicant, Katuria Smith, applied with UW undergraduate GPA of 3.65 and LSAT score of 165 (94<sup>th</sup> percentile), and was denied admittance. Because UW had separate admissions standards for minority applicants, and had increased its diversity program enrollment from 17% to 43% in that same year, Ms. Smith filed suit. In 1998, the Washington Policy Center successfully initiated a ballot referendum, I-200, which prohibited racial preferences in Washington State; it passed by 58%, forcing UW to change its university admissions policies. Although the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit ruled in favor of racial preferences, it cannot override the will of the voters. <https://www.cir-usa.org/cases/smith-v-university-of-washington/>
- 68 On November 7, 2006, an amendment to the Michigan State Constitution was approved by 58% of voters, which stated that all Michigan institutions, including public colleges and universities, “*shall not discriminate against or grant preferential treatment to any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education or public contracting.*” The next day, the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action By Any Means Necessary (BAMN) filed suit in a federal court contending that Michigan's new amendment violated the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment. Because a lengthy judicial fight would have delayed implementation of the amendment, Law school applicant Eric Russell filed suit. After a lengthy court battle, the Supreme Court eventually upheld Michigan's amendment in April, 2014, asserting, that, “*...It is demeaning to the democratic process to presume that the voters are not capable of deciding an issue of the sensitivity on decent and rational grounds...*” <https://www.cir-usa.org/cases/schuetz-v-bamn/>
- 69 2008 case involving the University of Texas's use of giving African-American and Hispanic students preferential admissions scores to achieve diversity program goals. Abigail Fisher was rejected for admission, while other minority applicants with the same or lower scores were admitted. The case went to the Supreme Court, wherein Justice Kennedy issued the majority opinion explaining that universities do not receive deference when it comes to the way they administer systems that involve racial preference, suggesting that any judicial review must include an investigation into whether the same objective could be achieved with a race neutral alternative. When Fisher appealed to the Supreme Court for a second time, Justice Kennedy issued a ruling minimizing the role of the Courts, deferring to Universities to shape policy. Justice Alito stated, in his dissent, that such preferences for the privileged “*...is affirmative action gone*



reaching the effects of federal and state regulations for Federal Student Aid could *further* restrict the decision-making freedoms of university and college admissions administrators who are compelled *by law* to base decisions upon factors *other than* academic merit and proficiency.<sup>71</sup> Home-schooled students seeking admission to State-funded colleges and universities are particularly vulnerable to invasive comprehensive oversight because their demographic profile is, to some degree, disfavored.<sup>72</sup> Even if home schooled students seek to apply to colleges or universities friendly to the idea of test-optional admissions, they often encounter “bait-and-switch” tactics because schools have yet to implement clear admission policy to govern home-school coursework/transcript evaluation – such that can withstand the current climate of legal scrutiny.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the “default” position within many colleges and universities is that, if one is home-schooled, the grades and the transcript are somehow disingenuous, and that the convenience and expediency of conventional academic measures, like the SAT/ACT, will somehow provide a “credibility” that is lacking.<sup>74</sup> In other cases, home-schooled

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*wild.”*

- 70 Particularly, with regard to the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Terry Pell, CEO for the Center for Individual Rights, asserts that the Supreme Court's opinion will “*embolden Universities to engage in racial engineering*,”...and , “*in the absence of a Supreme Court willing to enforce a meaningful legal standard, schools will adopt ever more ambitious preferences....*” <https://www.cir-usa.org/2016/06/supreme-court-upholds-unconstitutional-racial-preferences/>
- 71 The ramifications of the June, 2016 Supreme Court's 4-3 decision in *Fisher v. Univ. of Texas* could have an impact on another pending case, involving Harvard University's admissions practices. In May, 2015, 64 Asian-American groups filed a complaint with both the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, citing the Students for Fair Admissions [SFFA] lawsuit against Harvard, calling for a federal investigation into what they claim as the College's “unfair use of race” during the admissions process. Consequently, Harvard was compelled to release data on thousands of applicants from 2009-2015 in the discovery process, – which, by its nature, is an unintended invasion of privacy, after-the-fact, raising the sensitive issue of the very integrity which is supposed to (but often does not) safeguard admissions practices. <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2016/11/7/harvard-admissions-lawsuit-explainer/>
- 72 According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]: In 2011-2012, 83% of home-schooled (school age) children were White/Caucasian; 5% Black/African American; 7% Hispanic; and 2% Asian or Pacific Islander. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91> Also, the National Household Surveys Program also noted, in 2012, that the fastest growing home-school demographic was that of Hispanic households. They also noted that 76% of all home-schooling families evaluated were two- parent households.
- 73 While many colleges and universities are exploring test-optional policies for admissions, there still exists bias towards home-schooled students. In 2015, several test-optional schools had admissions policies in place to exempt students from submitting ACT/SAT , in favor of other measures, like essays, writing samples, or self-reflective short answers; however, upon further scrutiny, it was discovered that such “test-optional” policies did not apply to home-schoolers. See Brandeis University (MA), Temple University (PA), and George Washington University as examples listed. <http://everyday-learning.org/yay-for-college-app-test-out-options-but-read-the-fine-print/>
- 74 The 2017 case of a student “faking” a home-school transcript to gain admission to the University of Rochester highlights this issue. Scott Jaschik interviewed Tom Green, Associate Executive Director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, who stated that he (Green) paid more attention to SAT or ACT scores with homeschooled students than with others, and that he would recommend that admissions officers do so, even in cases where colleges are test-optional or intentionally limit the impact of test scores. Some colleges urge home-schooled students to

graduates face the hyper-examination of overzealous college bureaucrats who are willfully ignorant of home school law<sup>75</sup>. Regrettably, out of a sense of resignation, many home-school students subject themselves to this four-hour ordeal of taking the SAT/ACT, for fear that the promised land of opportunity offered by higher education will somehow slip through their fingers if they dare refuse to submit.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, one home-school graduate even suggested that the SAT score “validated” her home-school education, and gave her “confidence.”<sup>77</sup> Yet, for many home-schooled graduates, opting out of taking the SAT/ACT means bypassing the sphere of higher education altogether, instead choosing to enter the workforce early, adopting a trade, or entering a vocational training school. Yet, whichever option a graduate chooses, his or her vision of a future career – and the process of *how* to achieve it – should emerge from a sense of hope, enthusiasm, and inspired thought, energized by some practical, worthy ambition. Is he or she to find such validation from a single test score? .

### **Shrouding Against the Dregs**

Any meaningful education is the product of patient study and reflective thought over the continuum of one's life. Imagination, apart from a sincere faith in God, is the most potent shroud against the impending waves of academic indifference that threaten to eclipse a student's right to discover and cherish Truth, where it may be found.<sup>78</sup> The search for meaning is one of the most basic fundamental principles taught within the Western Canon, and contending with its motion throughout

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submit SAT II (subject matter) test scores, even if these are optional for other applicants.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2017/09/11/revoked-admissions-offer-rochester-raises-questions-about>

75 The Home School Legal Defense Association [HSLDA] championed many challenges faced by home-schooled graduates in 2017, particularly with regard to Nick Jones and Diablo Community College (CA), <https://www.hsllda.org/hs/state/ca/20170810-Grad-Faces-College-System-and-Wins.asp> Jody Page and Lorrain County Community College (OH), <https://www.hsllda.org/hs/state/oh/20170914-College-Misleads-Homeschool-Grads-Stubbornly-Deliberately.asp>

76 Clear evidence from social media that students believe that there are no alternatives to the stress of high-stakes SAT/ACT tests <https://talk.collegeconfidential.com/sat-act-tests-test-preparation/1789654-my-life-is-getting-ruined-by-the-act.html>

77 Home-school blogger Rachel Novotny discusses her experience with the SAT. <https://getunbound.org/blog/should-homeschool-students-take-the-sat> . Her reaction is somewhat troubling, in that home-school advocacy groups, like the HSLDA, specifically champion the validity and legitimacy of the home-school parents issuing the high school diploma upon the completion of high school, – without any additional mandated requirements, such as the SAT, ACT, or GED.

78 Plato, *Meno* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952) sec. 99, 190.

history requires that students possess the spiritual and psychological maturity to examine it without prejudice.<sup>79</sup> In spite of the myriad of ingenious advancements made through the technological harnessing of knowledge, the measure of a human being's creative, cognitive ability cannot, nor should not, be quantified or analyzed from data on a P-20 longitudinal grid.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, the idea that a human soul can possess and express moral conscience comes from the uniquely Western notion that Virtue, itself, – and Justice, in particular – form the basis of civility<sup>81</sup>, from which society and culture emerge and develop through the cultivation of dialogue and mutual respect.<sup>82</sup> It would seem that post-modern educational theorists wish to challenge this foundation by mandating that students be monitored, recorded, and tracked through every essay question, test, interview, or skills assessment<sup>83</sup>

79 Cicero, *De Legibus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), Bk I, sec. VII, 321. “Therefore, since there is nothing better than reason, and since it exists both in man and God, the first common possession of man and God is reason.”

80 “P-20” stands for “preschool through graduate school,” and refers to a comprehensive Data System tracking students in each State and across the U.S from preschool through post-secondary study. In November 2008, *Achieve* and *The Education Trust* (non-for-profit organizations involved in crafting state standards prior to CCSS) formed an advisory group of business leaders, state and national educational “experts”, called “Measures that Matter;” according to the Achieve website, this joint effort was, “...to provide college and career-ready accountability systems to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready to succeed....” One white paper that emerged from this collaboration was a document, authored by Dr. Nancy J. Smith of the *Data Quality Campaign*, detailing 10 Essential Elements of a Comprehensive Longitudinal Data System, in particular Elements 6, 7, and 9, wherein the intention to question the validity of completed coursework is clearly demonstrated. The Conclusion (p. 15) projects some bone-chilling, Orwellian recommendations: “...There are no technological barriers to building the next generation of assessment, accountability, and data systems. The obstacles are cultural, political, and financial. Culturally, educators and administrators need to learn to embrace the use of data, not fear it. Politically, policy makers need to make the sharing of student level data – while protecting student confidentiality-- not only acceptable, but **mandatory across educational institutions...Interpretations of FERPA that prevent P-12 and post-secondary institutions from sharing student-level data hinder the ability to improve student achievement....**” <https://www.achieve.org/publications/next-generation-state-data-system-what-needed-support-next-generation-assessment-and>

81 Cicero, *De Legibus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), Bk I, sec. VII, 322. “Further, those who share the Law must also share Justice; and those who share these are to be regarded as members of the same commonwealth.”

82 The notion of test score discrepancy and grade inflation has given rise to the discussion of “test security” as a topic of national significance. Richard Phelps, author of “The Standardized Testing Primer (2007), revisited the notion of inaccurate data mining in 2011, and suggested that teachers and administrators were cheating: “...Unlike most other industrialized countries, security for many of our state and local tests is loose. We have teachers administering tests in their own classrooms to their own students, principles administering and collecting test forms in their own schools. Security may be high outside the schoolhouse, but inside, **too much is left to chance**. And as it turns out, educators are as human as the rest of us; some cheat, and not all manage to keep test materials secure, **even when they are not intentionally cheating**.” <https://www.wilsonquarterly.com/quarterly/fall-2013-americas-schools-4-big-questions/teach-to-the-test/>

83 The Association of Test Publishers [ATP] is a global consortia of those groups, businesses, administrators, and policy makers who have a vested interest in furthering the “academic testing” lobby, not only in the U.S., but internationally as well. Their membership includes some of the most formidable names in the industry. In 2016, the ATP submitted comments to Congress regarding the re authorization of ESSA, specifically on the “Opt-Out” policies currently established in several states. In their comments, the ATP stated that, “...the Dept. of Education **provide guidance** in its regulations for how each state should provide **appropriate evidence** to document its efforts to ensure that it meets the 95% participation level, as well as how it will **remedy** any shortfall....” <https://atpu.memberclicks.net/atp-monitors-essa->

from the cradle to the grave, in order to craft a new definition of conscience for a “global community.”<sup>84</sup> All students – whether public, private, parochial or home-schooled – must be willing shroud themselves against these forces which seek their demise through the stealth implementation of measures which attempt to impede independent thought and coerce individual conscience. As such, home-school families remain vigilant in preparing their children – as early as possible – to confront the relentless scrutiny of their academic records which await them at the end of their educational odyssey.

### **Become Exceptional Models for Test-Optional Admissions**

As institutions continue to review the deficiencies of standardized testing, they are beginning to explore new options for comprehensive, academic evaluation which will, in turn, benefit both the student and the institutions. Exploring some of the innovative, “out of the box” thinking among colleges and universities regarding “test optional” policies may provide the solution for surviving this tempest, and returning to the *terra firma* of knowledge and virtue.

When college and university admissions departments make the decision to “go test optional,” they declare their independence from the tether of an imperfect methodology for screening people **out of** academic life based upon one interpretation of proficiency; instead, they seek to stake their future upon a *better* way, – also imperfect – based upon the reticent notion that genius and talent must be **invited in** to the *communitas* of Academia and *engaged*, examined and challenged, so as to discover

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[and-other-issues](#) Earlier in 2015, the ATP lobbied for a seat on the U.S. Department of Education's Negotiated Rulemaking Committee focusing on the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], but were denied. The ATP continues to “monitor” all reports coming from this committee. <https://atpu.memberclicks.net/essa-update>

84 Tablet-based assessments (with the cameras turned on ) are looming on the horizon, and it's only a matter of time, according to the ATP. In this brief, but powerful, article, a student writer comments on a keynote address at the ATP 's Innovations in Testing 2016 Conference. He states, “...*The true paradigm shift however is when **mobile devices' security can be leveraged to test on a massive scale, such as the ACT or SAT. An example of such a system could employ a tablet's camera as a watchful proctor and use its wireless capabilities to even ensure more secure test deliveries...***” <https://atpu.memberclicks.net/tablet-based-testing> Another ATP Keynote speaker, C. Peter McGrath addressed the need for “Smart Assessments,” in which he calls for the globalization of universities as a reflection of the interconnected world: “...*A university that is not fully international is a university in name only – whether it's located in Mumbai, or New Dehli, or Minneapolis-St. Paul, or New York....if countries...wish to compete economically in a ...global economy, they must be internationally smart.*” <https://atpu.memberclicks.net/magrath-keynotes-i-atps-second-annual-conf> Another article addressing the issues surrounding remote proctoring and security was recently published in 2017: <https://atpu.memberclicks.net/jatt-on-remote-proctoring-and-accessibility> .

their intrinsic value which cannot be “scored.” While there are over 900 colleges and universities within the U.S claiming to be “test optional,” many still opt to use ACT/SAT scores as skills assessments prior to admission. My own *alma mater*, Wittenberg University [Springfield, Ohio], is an exceptional model of a “test-optional” university, wherein students are allowed to apply “test free.” Founded in 1845, Wittenberg exemplified the “ground up” approach to what a college could become, given the proper care through determination and the grace of God. Long before the era of tests, scores, statistics, and polls, Wittenberg's founder, Ezra Keller, also faced the “admission decision.” Choosing to admit prospective students on conditions of previously demonstrated skills and moral character, Dr. Keller viewed the undergraduate experience as a vocational journey in spiritual (as well as academic) development. Against all odds, and grown from the financial and moral support of the community, Wittenberg's Board held its first meeting on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1846.<sup>85</sup> Driven by her founding motto, “Having Light, we pass it on to others,” Wittenberg University ponders the question of the passing of knowledge and moral truth, as well as the vocation to pass it on *again*, as its own institutional opus and purpose. Holding to the notion that such fitness for an undergraduate career (and the subsequent duty of “Light passing” that comes with it),<sup>86</sup> Wittenberg remains firmly astute in its position as a test optional university—believing rather that a student's worth is determined not in a test score, but in a comprehensive evaluation of academic skill and moral character (just as Ezra Keller did in 1845). Admitted on the basis of a commitment to service, leadership, and academic accomplishment, Wittenberg University's vision for its future students, quite simply, transcends the numerical quagmire of the SAT/ACT, encouraging intellectual diversity, and discovering talent wheresoever it may be found.<sup>87</sup>

### **What is to Come for the “Test-optional” Homeschooler?**

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85 Kinnison, William, *Wittenberg: An American College* (Xlibris, 2008), 49. Wittenberg University held its first classes in 1845 in the basement of the, now called, Good Shepard Lutheran Church, Springfield OH.

86 Kinnison, William, *Modern Wittenberg* (Xlibris, 2011), 355.

87 For more information, please view <https://www.wittenberg.edu/admission/faq-test-optional-admission-requirements>

As homeschoolers continue their academic quest, hoping to reach their goals in the college/university admission process, they can avoid the current squall of standardized testing and best position themselves for success in an increasingly hostile academic environment. One must always keep in mind that, in lieu of an SAT/ACT, a test optional university will expect a well rounded transcript with areas of extra curricular involvement, and varied skill within the liberal arts—in addition to completion of high-school (via a diploma). With this understanding, parents should reach out to various outlets to reflect this diverse commitment. Likewise, if the particular State will allow, a CCE/dual credit program would also serve as a valuable bulwark against the relentless waves of the current situation. In short, the more credits at the college-level a student can reflect, the less important the SAT/ACT will become, – its influence in the decision whether to admit or not will become irrelevant. The vain predictability of assuming that the higher the score, the more qualified the student, is offensive. Standardized test scores do not define the “worthiness” of a student's academic achievement: they only serve to demonstrate the student's performance accuracy in choosing multiple choice answers on a given day. Standardized test scores cannot predict the success (or failure) of a student's ambitions: they only serve to illustrate *one* measurement of skill on a *solitary* evaluation. The seemingly endless tempest of standardized tests – and those who deem them necessary to reform education – continue to howl in the torrent of political unrest and uncertainty. So, how can homeschoolers weather the dregs, and survive the wreckage? They can do so by working together in *proactive* partnership with test-*optional* institutions, and resisting the relentless waves of angst and doubt that result from recalcitrant policies which suggest that homeschooled students aren't “schooled enough” to warrant unconditional admission.

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