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Special Education Legal Alert

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This month's update identifies a pair of recent court decisions that illustrate differences in adjudication of IDEA eligibility and related issues. For related publications and earlier monthly updates, see **perryzirkel.com**.

On August 11, 2023, the federal district court in Nevada issued an unofficially published decision in *W.T. v. Douglas County School District*, addressing the issue of IDEA eligibility. When the child was in second grade, the district determined that he was eligible for an IEP with the classification of specific learning disability (SLD). In fifth grade, his triennial reevaluation noted a previous diagnosis of ADHD but regression in his behavior specific to problems of defiance rather than attention. Considering other health impairment (OHI) as well as SLD, the IEP team concluded that he was no longer eligible because the data showed that he was capable of accessing the general education curriculum without specially designed instruction. The team's conclusion was that his performance deficiency was due to choosing not to complete work that did not interest him. Despite various accommodations during the rest of grade 5, his behavior worsened and his grades dropped. At the end of the year, the district agreed to fund an independent educational evaluation (IEE) and a functional behavior assessment (FBA). The IEE produced multiple diagnoses, including ADHD and Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder, and recommended an IEP. The FBA concluded that a behavior intervention plan (BIP) was not warranted because he was benefiting from universal classroom supports. The IEP team consider these reports and again determined ineligibility. At the end of grade 6,

after another FBA, which did recommend a BIP, the team maintained its earlier determination. The parents filed for a due process hearing (and Nevada is one of the handful of states with a second, review-officer level). After the hearing officer and the review officer ruled in favor of the district, the parents brought the case to federal court.

The parents' first claim was that the triennial reevaluation did not adequately consider OHI based on the state law's additional requirements for this classification.	The court agreed, finding that the team did not meet the Nevada requirement for a "health assessment" (here specific to ADHD) and "a school nurse or other person qualified to interpret [the health] assessment." The court proceeded to the next claim to determine whether this procedural violation resulted in substantive loss.
The parents' substantive claim was that their child was eligible based on the need for special education as a result of OHI.	The court agreed based on (a) the IEE's insight about the relationship of ADD and the purported willful behaviors; (b) the FBAs' findings about the child's difficulties in the general education classroom; and (c) his grades and conduct without an IEP.
The parents also sought remedial relief and attorneys' fees.	The court postponed this determination subject to the parties' briefs on whether and to what extent the parents were

	entitled to equitable relief and attorneys' fees.

Although this unofficial federal court decision in Nevada warrants caution against overgeneralization, it illustrates the difficulties of (a) interpreting the impact of ADHD and other such diagnoses on what appears to be willful student misbehavior, and (b) determining the boundaries of the "need prong" for eligibility, including the role of classroom behaviors as compared to academic abilities. In this case, the court expressly declined to follow the general judicial deference to school authorities and hearing/review officers based on these ambiguities.

On March 3, 2023, a federal district court in Pennsylvania issued an unofficially published decision in *Brooklyn S.-M. v. Upper Darby School District*, which addressed various issues including IDEA eligibility. In kindergarten, in response to the parents' request for a special education evaluation for their daughter, the school district notified them that due to the child's satisfactory academic performance, the evaluation would be limited to suspected speech or language impairment (SLI). Based on this evaluation, the team determined that she was eligible as SLI and provided an IEP for speech and language therapy (SLT). Upon a reevaluation midway in grade 2, the team exited the child based on a determination, with which the parents agreed, that she no longer needed SLT. However, at about the same time, after the child expressed suicidal ideation in an annual checkup with her family physician, a mental health specialist evaluated her, yielding a diagnosis of Other Specified Depressive Disorder and provided private therapy. At the end of grade 2, the parents discontinued the therapy due to conflict between the therapist's limited availability and the child's extracurricular activities. However, after the first few months in grade 4, they took her to a psychologist, who diagnosed Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder and resumed regular mental health therapy sessions. The parents

promptly requested that the school district provide her with a 504 plan. In the resulting evaluation report in December, the school psychologist determined that the child did not qualify under the classifications of SLD or emotional disturbance (ED) under the IDEA but recommended a 504 plan for her social and emotional difficulties. The district provided the child with a 504 plan for the second half of grade 4. When the child's emotional problems persisted at home, the parents filed for a due process hearing midway in that semester. They also hired a private, certified school psychologist to review the evaluation report. Based on a records review and an interview with the child's mother, this psychologist disagreed with the SLD, not the ED, eligibility determination. At the end of the summer before grade 5, the hearing officer ruled against the parents' IDEA claims. However, because Pennsylvania is one of the few states that provide its IDEA hearing officers with jurisdiction to also address claims under Section 504, the hearing officer ruled that the 504 plan was too general to address the child's social and emotional difficulties. The remedies were for the district to promptly revise the 504 plan and to provide one hour of compensatory education for each week from the January 504 eligibility meeting until said revision. The parents appealed to the federal district court.

The parents claimed that the district violated child find under the IDEA by limiting its kgn. evaluation and grade 2 reevaluation to SLI.	The court ruled that the district did not have reasonable suspicion of ED or other IDEA classification based on social-emotional problems because the parents did not share any private diagnosis until after both of these evaluations.
The parents also claimed that the district erred as a matter of law upon not finding the child eligible under the IDEA in the grade 4 evaluation.	The court ruled that the district's evaluation was more comprehensive than that of the private school psychologist and, even if weighted equally, the testimony of the child's

	teachers tipped the scale based on their extensive classroom experience and their continuous in-class observations of the child.
Finally, the parents claimed that the compensatory education award under Section 504 was "shockingly" inadequate.	The court summarily rejected this claim for lack of any specified basis in the record of the case other than the circular reasoning that that "the award … is inadequate because [the child] must 'certainly require' a greater amount."
Comparing this decision with the one on the first page confirms the often controlling and often confounding criterion of the "need prong" for eligibility and, on a correlated but less strict level, child find claims under the IDEA. This comparison also reveals the variance in the state systems for administrative adjudication under the IDEA and, to a more limited extent, Section 504.	

Buzz from the Hub

All articles below can be accessed through the following links:

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-aug2023-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz2023-july-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz2023-june-issue2/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz2023-june-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-may2023-issue2/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-may2023-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-april2023-issue2/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-april2023-issue1/

Bullying and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Needs

Children with disabilities are at an increased risk of being bullied. Any number of factors—physical vulnerability, social skill challenges, or intolerant environments—may increase the risk. Bullying can include making fun of kids because of their allergies or exposing them to the things they are allergic to. What to do? Check out this article from StopBullying.gov, and its **accompanying tipsheet in PDF**.

Back-to-School Checklists from Bookshare

Bookshare is a fantastic resource for students with learning differences who need reading support. Are you a parent that needs to find your child's schoolbooks in alternative formats? Follow these steps to ensure a smooth back-to-school experience. (Bookshare also offers **an attractive poster** that Parent Centers, schools, and community organizations can use to tell families about the books available and the benefits to all of registering for Bookshare's services.)

Small Steps for Big Vision: An Eye Health Info Tool Kit for Parents and Caregivers

The National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness partnered with the National Head Start Association to create this online resource to provide parents and

caregivers with the information, suggested actions, and assistance they need to be empowered partners in their children's vision and eye health, and to care for their own vision and eye health. Also check out *Parents Need to Know*, which includes multiple articles in English and in **Spanish** to help parents and caregivers address children's vision needs (e.g., *10 take home messages; Signs of vision problems in children; Vision and classroom behaviors;* and *10 steps from vision screening to eye exam*).

The **results of the Parent Center data collection for 2021-2022** are now posted on CPIR's website, and we invite everyone to take a detailed look at the impact that Parent Centers have. We also share with you:

An Action-Packed Year for Parent Centers | Here's the infographic CPIR produced with the data Parent Centers submitted. It's 2 pages (designed to be printed front/back to become a 1-page handout or mini-poster). It's a stunning portrait of what can be achieved by a few, extremely dedicated people for the benefit of so many.

Adaptable Infographic for Parent Centers to Use | This infographic is designed so Parent Centers can insert just their Center's numbers, data results, and branding into key blocks of information. Adapt the PowerPoint file, and shine the spotlight on the work of your Center!

Quick Guide to Adapting the Infographic | This 2-page guide shows you where to insert your Center-specific information, just in case having such a "checklist" would be helpful.

Summer and Sensory Processing Issues
*(Available in Spanish | **El verano y los problemas de procesamiento sensorial**)*
For children with sensory processing issues, summer can be a challenging time. Think about summer's onslaught of unfamiliar sounds, smells, and places: beach sand, fireworks, an amusement park, the shriek of animals at the zoo. Yet with preparation and planning, parents can help kids with sensory issues get the most out of summertime. Other articles in the series include:

Strategies for a Successful Summer Break | *Estrategias para que las vacaciones de verano sean un éxito*

13 Tips for Helping Anxious Kids Enjoy Summer Camp | *13 consejos para ayudar a los niños ansiosos a disfrutar el campamento de verano*

Summer Activities for Kids With Learning Disorders | *Actividades de verano para niños con trastornos del aprendizaje*

Summer Success Kit for Kids With ADHD | *Kit para que los niños con TDAH tengan un verano exitoso*

15 Tips for Self-Advocates

(Also available in multiple languages; see list below)

Youth and young adults with disabilities may need services and supports to reach their goals. This often means communicating with agencies and systems that offer services to people with disabilities. It can also mean attending meetings and advocating for themselves. This fact sheet includes tips to help youth prepare for meetings, develop a service plan, and resolve conflicts that may arise in the process. Available in: Spanish, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Farsi (Persian), Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Applying for a Job: The Young Adults Guide *(Revised 2023)*

This is a 5-page tip sheet for youth and young adults with serious mental health conditions about finding, applying for, and interviewing for jobs.

Resources for Afghan Families

This webpage at the U.S. Department of Education is loaded with helpful connections for Afghan families–organizations to consult, workbooks and illustrated stories in Pashto and Dari for children, and lessons to help Afghan families learn English.

Resource on Confronting Racial Discrimination in Student Discipline

*(Also available in Spanish: **Recurso para evitar la discriminación racial en la disciplina***

estudiantil)

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division jointly released the *Resource on Confronting Racial Discrimination in Student Discipline*. The departments recognize and appreciate school administrators, teachers, and education staff across the nation who work to administer student discipline fairly, and to provide a safe, positive, and nondiscriminatory educational environment for all students, teachers, and other educators.

How Technology Changes Families

(Also available in Spanish: Cómo la tecnología cambia a las familias)

This newsletter connects you with multiple articles on the impact of technology on families. Articles include such titles as *Is Internet addiction real?* and *Managing stress caused by social media with mindfulness*.

Supporting the Child Vaccination Decision Process

(Also available in Spanish: Apoyo al proceso de decisión de vacunación infantil)

Learn information about the science behind and benefits of child vaccines to more fully engage with families as they make decisions regarding their children's health. View this course for free after creating an account at Better Kid Care On Demand.

Resources for Families with Children who have a Genetic Condition

(Also available in Spanish: Recursos para las familias con niños que tiene una condición genética)

Do you have a child with a genetic condition? Here's help in English and in Spanish, from the National Genetics Education and Family Support Center (Centro Nacional de Educación Genética y Apoyo Familiar).

Updated Resources and Proposed Regs for Schools to Deliver Health Care to Eligible Students

ED and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a *Notice of Proposed Rule Making* under IDEA to streamline Medicaid services consent provisions when billing for

Medicaid services provided through a student's individualized education program. They've also updated *A Comprehensive Guide to Medicaid Services and Administrative Claiming*.

Suspension, Expulsion & Informal Removals: Unexpected Realities in Preschool

This is the 6th blog in OSEP's series on *Discipline Discussions*. Focus? How exclusionary discipline in preschool can create stressful and isolating experiences for children and their families.

Sports and Children with Disabilities

All children can benefit from the exercise, energy release, and pure enjoyment of playing sports. This includes children with disabilities. This article talks about the benefits of sports, the types of sports for children with special needs, and how to get started with sports.

Fun Activities to Stay Active with Physical Disabilities

Just because a child is in a wheelchair or has other physical disabilities does not mean that he or she can't stay active. There are plenty of games and sports that children can play when properly modified. (Example: Lower the basketball hoop for children in wheelchairs or place a ball on a tee instead of having it be pitched.) Let children try a variety of activities and adapt those activities to their needs. From PediaPlex.

Physical Activity for Students with Disabilities

Check out this 5-step plan from Action for Healthy Kids that starts with "safety first" and includes consideration of each child's IEP and how wellness activities can support the overall educational plan for each child. After explaining the steps in the plan, the article also covers general inclusion ideas for all students and concludes with ways to adjust physical activities to include students with disabilities.

Action for Healthy Kids offers lots of resources in *Spanish*. See the list at: **https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on-activity-library/?activity_spanish%5B%5D=162**

Including All Children: Health for Kids With Disabilities

Also from Action for Healthy Kids is this lengthier article that takes a look at barriers to participation across various types of special needs (e.g., medical, sensory-communication, social-psychological, mobility, cognitive), possible physical activity limitations associated with each, and inclusion tips for each.

Exercise And Activities For Kids With Physical Disabilities

Here are insights and suggestions from a physical therapist, with respect to kids and teens that use walkers, crutches or canes for mobility; kids and teens that use a wheelchair for mobility; and kids with significant movement limitations. From Pediatric Therapy Essentials.

Inclusion Resources

Need info on inclusion of children with disabilities in school and in the community? This site has a wealth of information, including videos on strategies and best practices for inclusion. Great stuff!

The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) seeks to help

people with disability and other chronic health conditions achieve health benefits through increased participation in all types of physical and social activities, including fitness and aquatic activities, recreational and sports programs, adaptive equipment usage, and more. Here are two sections of their website to explore in particular:

Factsheets | Factsheets describe various disabilities and health conditions, as well as physical activity, exercise, and overall health considerations and recommendations associated with each.

Home Workout Videos | Videos for kids and adults to guide their exercise at home; some videos are short, others are 20 minutes or more.

And last but not least from NCHPAD:

Love Yourself: Self-Care For People With a Disability

This 3-page article urges people with disabilities to "take some time to show yourself some love." It highlights some ways they can do that, like foot checks, deep cleaning their wheelchair, or finding some movement that's right for them.

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

May is Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. Check out the events, collections, exhibits, and collections available throughout the month from U.S. government agencies such as the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian to celebrate the influence, contributions, and achievements of AAPI communities in the United States.

Identity and Cultural Dimensions

NAMI is an excellent go-to source of info and guidance on mental health issues of all kinds. In this section of NAMI's website, you'll find individual pages examining the mental health realities of diverse communities such as Asian American and Pacific Islander; Black/African American; Hispanic; Indigenous; LGBTQI; and People with Disabilities.

Reinforcing the Resilience of Native American Parents and Youth

As part of supporting Native families, reminding Native families and youth of their innate resilience is extremely important. CPIR offers two resources on resilience to help Parent Centers and the Native families with whom they work: (1) *How Parent Centers Can Support American Indian and Alaska Native Parents* (linked above); and (2) ***Bouncing Back from Setbacks: A Message for American Indian and Alaska Native Youth***.

The 7 Most Important De-escalation Strategies for Challenging Behaviors

De-escalation is the process of calming down a situation before it escalates further. Learning to de-escalate situations is not always easy. It requires practice and a toolbox of techniques. What de-escalation strategies can educators and parents use when kids and teens are overwhelmed, upset, or engaging in challenging behaviors? This article describes the 7 more important.

Tailored Youth Suicide Prevention Efforts

Research shows that youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth are at higher risk of suicide than White and heterosexual youth, which suggests the importance of tailoring prevention approaches to the populations most in need of support. This Child Trends' new brief offers three powerful recommendations to help community-based organizations tailor their youth suicide prevention efforts to the unique needs and strengths of Asian, Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and LGBTQ+ youth.

Self-Assessment of Cultural and Linguistic Competency

Dispute resolution systems must be culturally and linguistically competent to meet the interests and needs of diverse populations residing in the United States, territories, and tribal nations. CADRE offers this self-assessment tool, which can be useful in determining the level of cultural and linguistic competence in a dispute resolution system. It's part of a much larger package on the subject, including a User's Guide, a webinar, and recommended supplemental resources (e.g., *A Guide to Engaging Underserved Families in the CLC Assessment Process*).

RTI/MTSS May Not Be Used to Delay or Deny IDEA Evaluation

In March 2023, OSEP emailed copies of two memoranda to IDEA Part B Directors and Section 619 Coordinators regarding the child find requirements in IDEA. OSEP took this action in response to concerns that initial evaluations to determine whether a child has a disability have sometimes been delayed or denied by LEAs until a child goes through a state's multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) process, sometimes referred to as Response to Intervention (RTI). Read OSEP's correspondence and connect with the memos at the link above.

Outreach and Engagement of Underserved Populations

Effective community engagement and outreach takes careful planning and acknowledgement that each population that we work with is unique and offers us opportunities to broaden our understanding of what makes a community. Lots of useful resources can be found in this article, which shares 6 essential strategies for inclusive engagement and culturally competent outreach. From the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE).

Partnering with Hard-to-Connect Families

Often, when people with disabilities consider seeking employment, their families strongly influence the decision. Especially with transition-aged youth, family influence can sway whether a consumer decides to try working. There is still a persistent belief that work income will cancel out any benefits the person with disability receives. Also from VRTAC-QE.

Native American Resource Collection

Don't forget about this invaluable resource collection designed expressly for Parent Centers to support new and current staff in their outreach to Native American parents of children with disabilities. The collection is organized in 4 tiers of learning that reflect what we know about journeys of multicultural growth. Each product within contains current information about the traditional culture and contemporary issues important to Native families. Consider, for example, articles such as ***Cultural Awareness and Connecting with Native Communities*** and ***The Impact of Traditional Native Values on Transition Planning***.

Corporal Punishment in Schools Fact Sheet

From the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), issued Sept 2022, updated March 2023
The CRDC (Civil Rights Data Collection) defines corporal punishment as paddling, spanking, or other forms of physical punishment imposed on a child. The data reported in this **factsheet** is for K-12 students and includes data by sex, by race/ethnicity, and by state.

Dear Colleague Letter (March 24, 2023)

The Department issued this *Dear Colleague Letter* calling for the end to corporal punishment in schools. The letter reinforces the Department's position that corporal punishment in schools should be replaced with evidence-based practices, such as implementing multi-tiered systems of support that create a safe and healthy school environment. The Department included specific recommendations for evidence-based practices to give students what they need to learn and grow.

Discipline Discussions | Informal Removals Matter

Valerie C. Williams, Director of OSEP, writes about the pattern of informally removing students with disabilities from school classrooms as a way to address disruptive behavior. The parents get a call from the school that their child has caused a disruption and must be picked up immediately to help their child "calm down." This blog post from OSEP will connect you with the extensive **2022 federal guidance on discipline under IDEA**, many parts of which are also available in Spanish. OSEP ends this blog post by asking CPIR (yes, us!) to answer 4 specific questions about disciplinary practices, including "What are possible next steps a parent can take

if their child's school repeatedly calls them to pick up their child from school due to their behavior?"

Bipolar Disorder in Teens and Young Adults: Know the Signs

*(Also available in Spanish: **Trastorno bipolar en adolescentes y adultos jóvenes: Conozca los signos**)*

Bipolar disorder is not the same as the typical ups and downs every kid goes through. The mood swings are more extreme and accompanied by changes in sleep, energy level, and the ability to think clearly. Learn the signs and symptoms.

Borderline Personality Disorder

*(Also available in Spanish: **Trastorno límite de la personalidad**)*

Learn more about the disorder, how it's diagnosed, and how to find support.

Advancing Racial Equity in Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education

This 9-page fact sheet provides key information and supporting evidence about racial disparities and inequities for young children with a disability, and questions for state and local leaders seeking to advance equity for all children with disabilities and their families. From the ECTA Center.

Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Supports to Increase Reach of Mental Health Services and Professionals in Schools

The Biden-Harris Administration today is announcing a $2.6 million award to support mental health services and professionals in schools, further delivering on a key priority of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA). The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System will establish a national Mental Health Evaluation, Training, Research, and Innovation Center for Schools (METRICS) to increase support and offer new resources for schools nationwide on training mental health professionals and providing school-based mental health services. This award is made possible by the historic Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which President Biden signed into law on June 25, 2022. Over the next five years, BSCA will invest over $1 billion in school-based mental health programs, making substantial progress towards the President's goal, as part of his Mental Health Strategy, to double the number of school counselors, social workers, and other mental health professionals available to support students' mental health needs.

Research shows the shortage among mental health professionals is a primary reason students lack access to the mental health services they need. This center will help close this gap by providing schools with the tools they need to strengthen the pipeline of high-quality mental health professionals and increasing access to critical mental health services in high-need schools. These funds have the potential to meaningfully change lives by building a mental health infrastructure in schools and communities across the country.

"The youth mental health crisis continues to be among the top concerns raised to me by the students, parents, families, educators, and school leaders I've visited in 43 states across America," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "Thanks to President Biden's leadership in securing the resources of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, we are making unprecedented investments in mental health that will help states, districts, and schools Raise the Bar for students' overall well-being and academic recovery. This new nationwide technical assistance center, run by the University of Wisconsin system, is an exciting step forward that will

help equip education leaders with the most effective strategies for integrating mental health services in their schools."

The new METRICS Center will support grantees of the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) two programs for increasing the number of mental health providers in schools—School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Mental Health Services Professionals (MHSP). METRICS will also distribute resources to states, districts, and schools nationwide to help them implement high-quality projects to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of PK-12 students and increase the number of school-based mental health services providers.

The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, in partnership with the University of South Florida, School Mental Health Collaborative; the University of Iowa, Scanlan Center for School Mental Health; and University of California, Santa Barbara's International Center for School-Based Youth Development, which is an Hispanic Serving Institution, will support the 264 new MHSP and SBMH grantees and disseminate resources and information to state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), institutions of higher education (IHEs), and other stakeholders through METRICS. This new resource is critical to increasing the numbers of providers and skills of the existing workforce, in a time when the health and well-being of our nation's children and youth has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated pre-existing inequities.

The Department has made increasing access to mental health care a key focus area of the Raise the Bar: Lead the World initiative because it is critical that every student has access to the support they need. In addition, research shows that students are more likely to seek and sustain mental health care when those services are available at school. Expanding access and integrating mental health services into our nation's schools is also a key component of President Biden's Mental Health Strategy. Since day one, the Biden-Harris Administration has committed to taking a whole of government approach to enhancing mental health services for young people.

U.S. Department of Education Announces 2023 Blue Ribbon Schools

The U.S. Department of Education today recognized 353 schools as National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2023. The recognition is based on a school's overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student groups on assessments.

"The honorees for our 2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Award have set a national example for what it means to Raise the Bar in education," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "The leaders, educators, and staff at our National Blue Ribbon Schools continually inspire me with their dedication to fostering academic excellence and building positive school cultures that support students of all backgrounds to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. As the Biden-Harris Administration partners with states and schools to accelerate academic success and transform educational opportunity in this country, we take tremendous pride in the achievements of these schools and their commitment to empowering educators, serving students, and engaging families."

With its 40th cohort, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,700 schools. The National Blue Ribbon School award affirms and validates the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in striving for – and attaining – exemplary achievement. National Blue Ribbon Schools represent the full diversity of American schools and serve students of every background.

While awardee schools represent the diverse fabric of American schools, they also share some core elements. National Blue Ribbon School leaders articulate a vision of excellence and hold everyone to high standards. They demonstrate effective and innovative teaching and learning, and the schools value and support teachers and staff through meaningful professional learning. Data from many sources are used to drive instruction and every student strives for success. Families, communities, and educators work together toward common goals.

National Blue Ribbon Schools serve as models of effective and innovative school practices for state and district educators and other schools throughout the nation. A National Blue Ribbon

School flag gracing a school's entryway or on a flagpole is a widely recognized symbol of exemplary teaching and learning.

The Department recognizes all schools in one of two performance categories, based on all student scores, subgroup student scores and graduation rates:

- **Exemplary High-Performing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.
- **Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's student groups and all students. Nominated schools also complete an extensive narrative application describing their school culture and philosophy, curriculum, assessments, instructional practices, professional development, leadership structures, and parent and community involvement.

Up to 420 schools may be nominated each year. The Department invites nominations for the National Blue Ribbon Schools award from the top education official in all states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and the Bureau of Indian Education. Private schools are nominated by the Council for American Private Education.

U.S. Department of Education Awards Nearly $199 Million to Improve Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities Through Partnerships

The U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) announced today it will fund 20 model demonstration projects focused on improving economic self-sufficiency for children and youth with disabilities by creating systemic approaches to enhance post-school outcomes.

The nearly $199 million in funding for the Pathways to Partnerships innovative model demonstration project supports collaborative partnerships between state vocational rehabilitation agencies, state and local educational agencies, and federally funded centers for independent living to help individuals with disabilities seamlessly transition to life after high school, preparing them for independent living, competitive integrated employment and community integration. Pathways to Partnerships is the largest discretionary grant ever administered by RSA.

"The Department is committed to providing children and youth with disabilities the supports they need to access self-advocacy training, career pathways and independent living. The Pathways to Partnerships will bridge gaps from school to adult life, independent living, and career success," said Glenna Wright-Gallo, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), which oversees RSA. "This investment will not only require state and local agencies to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities by finding innovative ways of working together, but it will also look to unlock post school and career success for those individuals."

Pathways to Partnerships, part of the Disability Innovation Fund program aimed at increasing for youth and other individuals with disabilities, serves as a step to improving economic self-sufficiency and decreasing the unemployment disparity between youth without disabilities and youth with disabilities.

This announcement builds on a key component of the Department's "Raise the Bar: Lead the World" initiative to support individuals from underserved communities, ensure every student has a pathway to college or a career, and improve transition services for students with disabilities.

The Department awarded recipients of the Pathways to Partnership grants the full funding for a five-year project period – meaning successful applicants receive all project funds at the beginning of year one. Through the five-year project period, award recipients will pilot, refine

U.S. Department of Education Announces Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge Learning Community

The U.S Department of Education (Department) is announcing the launch of the Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge Learning Community, a multi-state effort to make kindergarten a transformational experience at the start of each student's formal education journey. State education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) will be invited to participate in a community of practice where they can benefit from peer learning, receive technical assistance, and share best practices to transform how students experience kindergarten including the transitions into kindergarten and 1st grade.

"Getting kindergarten right has to be top of mind for all of us, because what happens there sets the stage for how a child learns and develops well into their elementary years and beyond," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "Ensuring that kindergarten is a sturdy bridge between the early years and early grades is central to our efforts both to Raise the Bar for academic excellence and to provide all students with a more equitable foundation for educational success. The kindergarten year presents an opportunity to meet the strengths and needs of young learners so they can continue to flourish in the years to come."

Kindergarten is critical to our efforts to Raise the Bar for academic excellence because it opens the door to two timely and consequential opportunities to meet the strengths and needs of diverse young learners essential for later school success Kindergarten provides the first formal at-scale learning opportunity for students to receive many of the critical supports and interventions that are essential for on-track development. Children arrive at kindergarten from diverse settings and experiences, with a wide range of developmental and linguistic strengths, learning differences, developmental delays, and disabilities. In this way, attending kindergarten is a critical lever for meeting physical and behavioral health needs that would otherwise go undetected, undiagnosed, and untreated. Kindergarten also presents a crucial opportunity to build partnerships and trust with parents and families, and to work with them on nurturing the habits and routines, including

everyday attendance, that are essential to accelerating learning recovery and assuring early and long-term school success.

This announcement comes as Secretary Cardona is embarking on his "Back to School Bus Tour 2023: Raise the Bar" featuring stops in Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Throughout the week, Secretary Cardona, Deputy Secretary Cindy Marten, and Under Secretary James Kvaal will join national, state, and local school leaders to speak with students, parents, and educators for events that celebrate the back-to-school season and underscore the Administration's commitment to helping students recover from the impacts of the pandemic and continue on the road to success. As part of the bus tour, Administration officials will highlight academic and mental health programs and efforts to recruit and support educators funded by President Biden's American Rescue Plan, which provided historic resources to K-12 schools, colleges, and universities to reopen schools and help students of all ages recover.

Many states and school districts across the country are already making progress on these opportunities. The Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge Learning Community builds on the U.S. Department of Education's continued commitment to advancing early learning and school readiness for the nation's youngest learners. In December 2021, the Department launched two new multistate communities of practice to support states in addressing the impact of lost instructional time from the pandemic on students' mental health and academic well-being. The Department has also been working with states and stakeholders to identify ways to leverage federal funding to support high quality early learning and the early learning workforce, including by leveraging $1 billion in Title IV, Part A funds of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act to support preschool-aged students who are served by high-need LEAs through a range of allowable activities that encourage students' healthy growth and development.

The Biden-Harris Administration has also proposed a first-ever preschool incentive demonstration program at the U.S. Department of Education to expand access to high-quality preschool in school and community-based settings for children eligible to attend Title I schools. This proposed $500 million investment in President Biden's FY24 budget request to Congress would further support school districts and participating schools in aligning high-quality preschool programs with kindergarten through 3rd grade instruction, facilitating a successful

transition from preschool to kindergarten and from kindergarten to 3rd grade. Consistent with President Biden's Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers—a first of its kind, government-wide commitment to support caregivers, direct care workers, and families caring for children, people with disabilities, and aging loved ones—this fall, the Department will issue additional guidance to school districts and grantees on utilizing federal funds to expand access to high-quality preschool in high-need schools.

Additionally, the Department's current Full Service Community Schools competition includes an invitational priority for applicants to focus on effective strategies for transition between early childhood settings and the early grades, promoting cross-sector collaboration and family engagement . Awards will be issued in late 2023.

A Survey on the Perspectives of Secondary Educators Toward High-Stakes Testing

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Abstract

Standardized testing has been a controversial issue in the field of education. On record, a positive outlook of implementing this kind of system in the United States was to determine areas of weakness when comparing schools to one another (Greer, 2018). However, none were able to anticipate the written historical circumstance of the hurdles that certain populations needed to fight through to be seen and heard in education (Sonnert et al., 2020; Tefera, 2019). This survey presented to secondary educators posed to examine their opinions on the idea of standardized testing when looked at through an overall lens, the lens of an educator, and the lens of a student. The results of this survey indicated numerous trends, including that many teachers disagree that these tests were not written to engage students or connect them to their personal lives.

Key Words: Standardized Testing, Consequences for Students with Disabilities, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS), Socioeconomic Inequality

Introduction

What is considered the main goal of education? What do teachers, administrators, and parents strive for in schools to provide to the generations proceeding them a quality education? How can educators present this high-quality education while making it equitable to all students? How can all of this be judged to be sure that all children in a wide area obtain this similar aspect of education? These are the crucial questions that society debates daily when discussing the future of the world.

Education is a powerful tool in society. A common purpose that this provides to society is to be able to gear the younger generations into sustaining society by providing the youth with the tools they need to operate in the world around them. By providing the youth with core courses (English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science), students should be given the fundamentals of how the world works.

Still, education is a lot more than providing the foundations. In more detail, education primarily serves to provide students with the opportunity to build upon skills necessary to promote individuality. Specifically, providing students with critical thinking techniques and exploring abstract thinking strategies to implement the knowledge obtained in the core courses is critical. This idea would allow individuals to effectively research and piece together their own opinions and be active members of their society.

However, the questions remain: what is an accurate measurement tool to use to judge this aptitude of thinking and how can this be tested for a wide population range? After all, when focusing on the United States, there are fifty states in the country, each with its own individual portions of the population. So, what can be done to be sure that every student in this country obtains a fair education?

The answer that was brought forward. Standardized testing. While standardized testing is nothing new in the educational field, it was brought into the public eye under President Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) (Greer, 2018). Passed through the United States Congress with tremendous popularity, the goal was to bring the power of education to the Federal Government by providing states with the standards that all children should follow and be proficient at by 2014 (Greer, 2018). In more detail, the goal was to have schools obtain an adequate yearly progress (AYP) bar, which was a federal setpoint at which specific populations of individuals pass the standardized exam (Heilig, 2011). It was a radicalizing policy, as it would unite all the states with the specific standards needed to be sure that every child would learn the same material no matter what state they attend school.

However, like many policies, it did have its drawbacks. While the central theme centered on the common goal of making sure that all students obtain an adequate education, the layers beneath the surface hid some darker truths that go against this model ideal. In more detail,

instead of providing positive reinforcement of the use of incentives to schools that provide the textbook model of student proficiency, the law decided to undergo the opposite tactic: a negative punishment that would remove valuable resources that schools need to succeed. Specifically, regarding the teaching and administrative perspective, schools are being held accountable for the failure of their students; meaning, the failure of students on the exam can lead to situations where the school faces trouble with the government in which schools may not receive federal funding (Polleck & Jeffery, 2017; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). This could lead to major setbacks for a district, including the measures of staff changes to the extreme choice of the district being forcibly handled by the state (Katsiyannis et al., 2007). As a result, this situation causes a change in the curriculum of schools, focusing on preparation for standardized testing and leading to the common saying of "teaching to the middle" (or a "one size fits all approach"), in which students that either needs extra help or are gifted are out of luck as they would not be able to obtain the education that they need to grow as a learner (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Tefera, 2019).

In addition, the students that need extra help are also placed in a situation where they are being underserviced in their schools due to fear of losing funding. In more detail, the NCLB places the power of judging student progress on the states; so, in some instances, states have been caught in situations where they purposely exempt these students from testing to avoid facing repercussions (Heilig, 2011). Specifically, populations such as English Language Learners were targeted by schools to exempt them from standardized testing to manipulate the system to avoid their potential scores on testing from destroying school reputations (Heilig, 2011). Thus, the same laws that are emphasizing making sure every child receives an adequate education are also placing boundaries on the success of this task.

Also, while not obtaining the education that they need is an issue, there lies the problem of the progression of these students in schools. While the goal of the NCLB was to increase progression and graduation rates while decreasing retention rates, studies indicate that the opposite trend could have occurred since the implementation of accountability measures such as the NCLB (Carnoy, 2005; Heilig, 2011).

However, even with the data beginning to unfold of the accountability era of education in the lives of students and educators, the Federal Government doubled down on this aspect during President Obama's era in the White House, where he aided in the implementation of the

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in 2015
(Greer, 2018). Like the NCLB, the CCSS was written to provide the chance for students in the
United States to be able to compete with other nations in the workforce by providing specific
guidelines in English and Mathematics to be taught in schools (Greer, 2018). Once again, these
standards doubled down on accountability in schools and greatly tightened the grasp that the
government had on the curriculum in schools (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016).

As a result, the goal of this study was to provide more insight into this debate on the use
of standardized testing in the field of education. This study was warranted as there is a huge
debate in education regarding the use of standardized testing in schools and whether this was
important to students obtaining a higher level of education. When examining standardized
testing, there tends to be a struggle in creating an ideal authentic assessment to measure student
success in maintaining the material (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Longo, 2010). In addition,
many sources suggest that standardized high-stakes exams can create disadvantages for different
portions of the student population and there tends to be a decrease in the motivation of students
to continue to secondary education due to the stress these high-stakes exams can bring (Carnoy,
2005; Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Giambo, 2017; Katsiyannis et al., 2007; Kearns, 2011; Koca,
2017; Heilig, 2011; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Sonnert et al., 2020; Tefera, 2019).

This study examined the thoughts of secondary teachers regarding their opinions on
standardized testing. Specifically, this study was presented through a Google Forms poll that
utilized selective and optional extended response items on the thoughts of teachers on the
standardized testing methods in their schools concerning three ideas. The first section discussed
their perceptions of standardized testing, with some questions diving into the validity of
Common Core and standardized testing with its overall use in education as well as the
appropriateness of it in judging a kid's ability to succeed in college. Secondly, there was a
section on standardized testing relating to the teacher's own classroom, with questions relating to
the amount of power one has in what is taught in the classroom as well as the flexibility of how it
can be taught. Third, the survey discussed the teacher's thoughts on the student perception of
standardized testing and whether standardized testing affects student motivation in class as well
as whether the teachers experienced specific groups of students doing better over other groups of
students.

Literature Review

A Long and Complicated History

While standardized testing has made its way into the controversial lens in the field of education, these tests are not necessarily new. In fact, one of the oldest examples of a standardized test is the IQ test (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). However, the intent of this type of test was not through a beneficial means, as this test was designed to test students on whether they would be able to thrive in post-secondary institutions; in other words, students that demonstrate high intellect would be granted success and opportunities for post-secondary education (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). Similarly, the SAT came approximately twenty years later, with the similar purpose of hindering student opportunities to access post-secondary education (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). This demonstrates that right off the bat, standardized assessments (that have been valued in society) have been obstacles to individual advancement in obtaining higher-level knowledge (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016).

Switching gears toward public pre-graduate education, standardized testing has been implemented in the mid-nineteenth century, in which an individual named Horace Mann determined the success of students in the schools in Boston in the classroom (Longo, 2010). This emphasis on obtaining knowledge became more emphasized when the United States became involved in World War II and the Cold War, where the rolling out of well-educated students in society became a necessity (Longo, 2010). Thus, in 1965, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) was passed to distribute federal funding to school districts, which the expectation that lower leveled schools (labeled Title I; out of five distinct titles) would be able to catch up in producing educated students (Greer, 2018; Longo, 2010). In other words, this act would be a financial incentive for schools to dole out higher-quality students while the federal government avoided the use of direct interference in the education of students (such as curriculum adjustments, etc.) (Greer, 2018). Unfortunately, this expectation of schools appropriately utilizing the funds to the benefit of their students was miscalculated, as the higher-ups in schools used that money for their own luxuries (Greer, 2018).

Thus, the next law, the *National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP) went after schools more directly, introducing the first set of standards that tested certain age levels (nine,

thirteen, seventeen-year-olds, and "young adults") on one of ten subjects; each of which had a "proficiency" standard (Greer, 2018). These exams, however, started not being the simple recall methods of the materials through multiple choice means, but instead used more writing and applicable questions; as time progressed, recall questions snuck their way back into testing as other means of providing questions (such as oral and visual means) were scrapped due to budget issues in schools and newfound educational theories (such as the item-response theory of 1984) (Greer, 2018).

Following the attempts of the 1960s and 1970s of revitalizing the means of standardized testing, President Ronald Reagan came into office wanting to make some more drastic changes of his own, as he attempted to take down the ESEA, the NAEP, and the Department of Education in a means of controlling the Federal Government's power over the states (Greer, 2018). Some of these changes involved changing the federal budget, in which the federal budget of 1981 ended up cutting some of the funding to Title I schools (Greer, 2018). President Reagan argued for educational change through the report called *A Nation at Risk*, which demanded that schools (not society) needed to face accountability for the failure of providing an adequate education to students while also pointing out the need for higher standards so America can be economically competitive to other countries (Greer, 2018; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). Thus, the report states that the way to bring about this needed change was to raise the intellectual challenge of curriculum, raise expectations and time for learning, and better prepare incoming teachers for the field (Greer, 2018). This resulted in schools creating stronger core requirements for students while pushing students toward obtaining a college education (while doing so, undervaluing vocational education) (Greer, 2018).

Another call for change comes into the educational field through President Bill Clinton, where before he was president, he attended the 1989 Education Summit with other state governors and created the topics of "content standards" and the label of "mastery" (Greer, 2018). When he rose to the presidency, Clinton passed the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA) in 1994, where the goals were to initiate annual testing and recommend states invent state-targeted accountability systems (Greer, 2018; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). Adding to this, the IASA approved the motion that English Language Learners and special education students can be spared from the accountability process in states because these students can bring the success

rates of accountability down (Greer, 2018). However, with these topics in mind, the United States still had several key issues: the states all had different accountability systems, each inconsistent with the other as well as the state standards for these accountability systems failed to mirror what was on the exam that the states provide to their schools (Greer, 2018).

These needs result in one of the biggest laws in the field of education: President George W Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002. Here, the adjustment in power goes through the opposite transition from President Reagan's, where the power moves toward the Federal Government from the states in means of education (Greer, 2018). In general, the Federal Government invented a goal of adequate yearly progress (AYP) (each different between different sectors of the population, which the scores will also be reported in this manner) in which scores on standardized assessments will solely judge the students' understanding of the material as well as individual advancement in school (Greer, 2018; Heilig, 2011). In addition, before 2014, the goal was to have all students learning material at grade level based on state standards (Greer, 2018).

So, what were the results of this law being put into place? Lots of issues and unfair treatment of students. First, there has been an unnatural rise in students being relocated to special education services to avoid the risk of these students harming the accountability scores (Greer, 2018; Heilig, 2011). Greer (2018) refers to these students as the "bubble kids," as these students would be the learners that would be impacted by the accountability process by being unfairly moved to special education services and having their daily routines cut (such as having recess removed) to place a greater emphasis on classroom learning. Heilig (2011) refers to the same process, labeling it the "Texas Miracle"; but, in addition to this, the other problem that was encountered was that there was no universal method of accountability, meaning that each state had to find a method to account for themselves. This creates a whole new problem, where Heilig (2011) demonstrated that when Texas originally used the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to account for English learner dropouts in the late 1990s to when the state utilized the standards for the National Center for Education Statistics after 2005, there was a 7.1% jump in the dropout rate. Thus, states could have been undercounting their accountability measures to seem appeasable to the rest of the country. In addition to this, these accountability standards created toxic environments where teachers and students were held accountable to the standards and

standardized test scores where students' lives were placed in jeopardy as some students could not progress through school and graduate due to the high expectations (Greer, 2018). Lastly, the reporting of tests through categories involving race, ethnicity, and income completely avoids any other systemic issues that could bring about achievement gaps between different groups of people (Greer, 2018).

Nonetheless, the Federal Government enforced this law anyway, and even doubled down on its involvement in education during President Barack Obama's terms in office, especially through the creation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and the administration of the *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) (Greer, 2018; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). Similarly, to the *A Nation at Risk* report, the goal of the ESSA and CCSS was to implement nationwide standards in English and Math that will allow future students in the United States to compete with other nations of the world (Greer, 2018). The implementation of these standards was also incentivized through the *Road to the Top* program, which involved the distribution of federal funds to successful schools (Greer, 2018).

Historically, while there were laws that were passed to implement standardized testing in schools in the United States, the various courts in the United States did have some thoughts of their own in this process. First, in 1981, the case *Debra P. v. Turlington* ruled that there must be an adjustment period of four to six years when adding a new standard so schools and students alike can revise strategies as needed (Katisyannis et al., 2007). Second, in *Brookhart v. Board of Education* (1983), the courts ruled that students with disabilities need to pass the state-developed exit test to receive their diploma (and failure to obtain a diploma due to this situation did not impact the student receiving a free and appropriate public education (FAPE)) (Katisyannis et al., 2007). Third, *GI Forum et al. v. Texas Education Agency* (2000) ruled that while there is a negative trend in standardized testing and minority populations, it was not strong enough to bring about a national issue (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). Next, the case *In Rene v. Reed* (2001) ruled that a student with a cognitive disability with accommodations mentioned in their IEP may not have to be provided on the standardized exam (Katisyannis et al., 2007). Following this, *Student 1 v. Driscoll, C.A.* ruled that students with disabilities that continuously flunk the standardized test could still receive their diploma, a ruling that raised a lot of controversy due to the possible theory of these students being neglected in their studies (Katisyannis et al., 2007). A court case

in Oregon corrected this trend by having students with disabilities in their state that continuously fail the exam take a different pathway to receive their diploma rather than remain stuck in the cycle (Katisyannis et al., 2007). Lastly, *Alexander Noon et al. v. Alaska* clarifies in their state the conditions of an alternate program for their students with disabilities (Katisyannis et al., 2007).

In general, through this complex historical narrative of standardized tests, it does demonstrate that both sides of the political aisle find these exams beneficial in schools, as they feel that a high-quality education system can fuel a prosperous economy (Wearne, 2018). As a result, while some studies debate along this idea, some parents tend to view school performance on standardized testing as a priority when given the power to decide what school to send their children to (which favor of school choice being more popular as time progresses) (Wearne, 2018). However, some parents upright refuse to have their children involved in standardized testing, stating that other priorities should be centered on in schools and the future of their children (Wearne, 2018). However, there are more opinions to share regarding the teachers' and students' viewpoints on the testing process.

The Impact of Standardized Testing on Curriculum and Teaching Practices

It's easy for people to use the history of standardized testing and the relevance it has in American society to justify its use in the present day. However, it is important to examine the implications of its use on the two groups most affected by it: teachers and students. Take the perspective of Joshua Starr, a superintendent of a school district who also had two children in school (Starr, 2017). As a parent, he stated to his children the background of these tests and their significance in society but also went about saying that these tests would not impact them in the long term; but as an administrator, Starr knew the importance of accountability that these tests held in his district and the educational system while understanding the dark truths of these tests and their effect on minority populations and special education students (Starr, 2017). Starr pointed out the unspoken contradiction in testing: "Standardized testing can help show that the system is broken, but in a sense, standardized testing *is* the system" (Starr, 2017, p. 72).

Tefera (2019) expands upon the problem of standardized tests in the curriculum as it forces teachers into a "one-size-fits all" educational plan. Another way of putting this is known as "teaching to the middle," which Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) describe as the teaching

methodology where educators cannot dedicate their time to the extremes of the class (i.e., the lower sector and higher sector of the class) but instead place their energy on the center of the curve (the average students). In other words, attention is given to the majority to be sure that they can pass the standardized test (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012). Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) also take the socioeconomic approach to this topic as they refer to the idea that children from all over the country are required to be compared to each other in the environment of standardized testing; in other words, no matter the ability of students to obtain particular resources to boost their odds, they are still judged on the same standard to students who come from an environment that naturally have these resources. Thus, students in lower socioeconomic environments are taught in a way shaped more directly to a test than students in higher socioeconomic environments to catch them up (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012).

Part of the issue that teachers have regarding standardized testing was that the extreme restrictions the test has on the type of instruction being taught to the students. For instance, Journell (2010) outlined this battle when describing Chicago's government courses, in which all students take a culminating exam known as the Constitution Test. Here, the study was conducted during the 2008 election, so the test was to determine whether teachers would connect students to current events even with the pressures of teaching to the exam (Journell, 2010). The results were discouraging, as many of the participants (especially those in either the lower-funded or more mainstream classrooms) tended to limit discussion of the event and emphasized the scripted curriculum that would lead to the standardized test (Journell, 2010). These same results came after the previous interviews with these teachers stating that they would hope to utilize current events more often in the classroom (Journell, 2010). On the flip side, with these discussions, the students (for the most part) had their interests piqued when contributing to these conversations, but unfortunately, with the stress of the exam, instructors had to shut their ideas down due to constraints (Journell, 2010). Similarly, Laughter's (2016) paper focused on a particular ELA instructor that wanted to focus curriculum on social change and allowing students to develop critical thinking skills but was forced by administration and society to focus on getting students to pass the tests.

In conjunction with the history and English teachers, science educators also had issues with standardized testing, especially when the standards that were tested conflicted with reforms

in the field of science education (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012). In more detail, when comparing the standards to science education reforms, educators believed that the techniques that could be taught in this field (whether it be "inquiry-centered instruction," the "understanding by design model," and critical thinking methods) were unable to be discussed and primed due to the constrictions of the curriculum (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Longo, 2010). Next, science teachers believed that the limitations of teaching to the test limited opportunities for the exploration of student attraction to the subject; in other words, educators are unable to expand upon what the students want to learn (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012). Specifically, in the survey presented by Aydeniz and Southerland (2012), 37% of instructors asked believed that they could not educate students on science the way they thought it should be taught due to the impact of standardized testing, 86% of instructors were urged by their higher-ups to adjust their lessons relating to the standards of the test, and 60.5% of instructors thought that doling out standardized tests would not increase the quality of learning science principles.

One reason for this claim can be because of the need to design an assessment strategy around the standardized test that the student needs to take. Specifically, Heilig (2011) demonstrated the apprehension of solely teaching to the test within classroom instruction within Texas schools when preparing for the TAKS exam, as many instructors resorted to educating their students through test preparation booklets; with the conundrum being that the system was blocking teachers from completing the sole mission of teaching the youth. The survey from Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) gave more statistical data on the issue, as 93% of respondents needed to alter how they assess their students because of the test, and 75% of respondents felt like this change was needed to give students a fair opportunity to taking the test as it would be unfair otherwise.

In addition to the limiting of curriculum that standardized exams bring about in all fields of education, much research has also demonstrated the mismatch of curriculum standards to the actual test itself. Polikoff et al. (2011) weighed in on this claim with three observations of their own: first, their statistical analyses of various post-NCLB standardized exams indicated that some tests were misguided from the standards (more than they could have been) and that some items on certain exams did not even have a correlating standard at all; second, tests and standards in certain circumstances did not compare in regards to weight; and third, the items on these

exams were tested at the wrong skill level of students taking the exam. Aydeniz and Southerland (2012) also emphasize the third result of Polikoff et al.'s (2011) observations, with secondary educator respondents depicting that they feel that students were not challenged when answering the questions as they feel that the questions test the student's rudimentary knowledge.

Similarly, another paper was done analyzing the effectiveness of the NCLB on Illinois' school districts, and there were similar outcomes regarding testing as shown in Polikoff et al.'s (2011) report (Harman et al., 2016). In more detail, Harman et al. (2016) stated that since the implementation of the NCLB, grades did not necessarily rise in a ten-year radius (2003-2013) on Illinois' standardized test (the Prairie State Achievement Examination or PSAE) in the subjects of reading and math since the implementation of state accountability standards. In addition, it seemed like schools in Illinois that were examined in this study were ineffective in organizing their data on the students when it comes to these exams, as the study reported that there were missing or replications in the information presented to the researchers (Harman et al., 2016). Also, the researchers informed their readers that Illinois had no unique strategy on how to record the spending tactics of schools in their state, so they were unable to determine if the money went to the need of creating more beneficial outcomes in testing (Harman et al., 2016). This led the authors to create tangible theories for this situation: the tests were useless in the aspect that they either did not test the standards that they report to examine or that society itself does not prioritize the need for students to understand what is being investigated with these tests, but also called into question the benefits of the NCLB and the current educational policy that was reported to help students in the system (Harman et al., 2016).

As stated in the previous section, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been the most recent development of a standardized curriculum (Greer, 2018; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). With these new standards, all states that have adopted these standards needed to change their assessments to accommodate them. Polleck and Jeffery (2017) conducted a study on the New York State English Regents Examinations about the change they needed to make to apply for the CCSS. The consensus of this change based on the authors' analysis was that the new version of the exam had greater requirements for students in reading (Polleck & Jeffery, 2017). In addition, the new Regents exam also (whether directly or indirectly) decreased the variety of content relating to the student (or the wide variety of students taking the exam) by removing

reading aids (such as white space), limiting reading sections to passages written by predominantly white and male authors, increasing the challenge of particular words found in reading passages, and removed the writing prompt that would allow the student to answer a question based on the learning they have conducted in their classroom (Polleck & Jeffery, 2017). In general, the article warns that the new exam would more likely focus on the idea of "college equivalence" rather than prepare students for college; as this study went so far as to compare the Regents to the respective Advanced Placement exams, with the result indicating that in some respects, the new Regents exam is harder than the AP exams (Polleck & Jeffery, 2017).

While most of the focus with standardized tests seemed to be focused on teaching the curriculum to students, not many studies tend to examine the emotional impact that it had on teachers and their willingness to continue serving in this field. A major situation of standardized testing and teachers was that standardized testing was a major involvement in the professional development and evaluation of teachers (some sources suggest that standardized testing can count as much as 50% of the teacher's score), causing damage in their relationship not just to their administration, but to their students and students' parents as well; thus, creating the effect of teachers quitting their jobs in droves (Barret et al., 2016). In some instances, it has also made the teaching environment itself toxic, since some circumstances resort to teachers competing against one another for tenure or bonuses, thus, avoiding the idea of collaboration and the universal idea of working towards the best interest of the students entirely (Barret et al., 2016). An example of a school district falling back on standardized test scores for teaching evaluations was documented in Laughter's (2016) paper which stated how a school used ACT scores in their judgment of instructors; this teacher fell victim to the pressure of standardized testing in the field and eventually left the profession. As a result, it has been well documented that the mental health of teachers has been harmed due to the connection between standardized testing and evaluation (Barret et al., 2016).

Lastly, it was worth exploring the aspect of how to prepare future educators for the newly impacted teaching industry due to standardized testing. Being raised in the environment of standardized testing requirements, current newly trained teachers have the student perspective on taking the tests while building on their minds as educators (Cho et al., 2020). Particularly, when discussing standardized assessments, some of the following trends occurred: self-motivation and

stress rose as they increased grade level; secondary educators were less worried about teaching to the test compared to primary educators; and primary educators were less likely to agree with the aspect of standardized testing is an appropriate measurement of learning success than secondary educators (Cho et al., 2020). While the debates occur in this industry, there was still one question that all educators were concerned with: with standardized exams on the mind, how can educators create lessons that engage students while adhering to standards that will be on standardized exams (Cho et al., 2020)? However, the overall presumption of Cho et al.'s (2020) survey was that the newly trained teachers were up to the task to find the stability of educating to the test and developing lessons to engage student absorption of the material.

Standardized Testing and Student Inequality

As stated previously, all sectors of the school population have been affected by standardized testing. The last section discussed the impact of these tests from the perspective of teachers; but now, it's time to change the scene and focus on the students. With their lives beginning to blossom through the means of primary and secondary education, academia itself was important for them to succeed in, as society placed the stigma on them that success in school can equivalate to success in life. However, like life, school placed boulders in the road for students to overcome in this success story, which this process can already be struggling when students were also stressed by the objective of trying to find themselves and their purpose in society. Standardized testing was another one of these bumps, but this obstacle has been documented to be particularly troublesome for some factions of the student population. Specifically, these tests, whether intentionally done or not, along with the idea of state accountability discussed earlier, end up harming multiple subpopulations of students in the sense that these students were put in positions by schools to either be exempt from testing or held back (which can lead to dropouts) to make schools look better towards the general population in the public eye (Carnoy, 2005; Katsiyannis et al., 2007). This idea could result in students that consistently underscore on these exams being negatively impacted in their adult lives, and possibly undergoing some alternative methods to get them through life that could result in criminal proceedings (Katsiyannis et al., 2007). This section of the literature review will focus on the darker truths of the historical undertakings of testing as it relates to the inequities of students

mainly through racial means, a disability perspective, and through the lens of English Language Learners.

Racial Inequality

It is no surprise that these standardized testing exams benefit a subpopulation of students compared to others. But to help discuss possible solutions, it is also necessary to discuss the preceding issues in the system that affect the minority populations that can cause a decrease in test scores compared to the majority population. For instance, Koca (2017) discussed some of these factors in schools that led to the wide achievement gap between White students and minority populations as well as the achievement gap between socioeconomic sectors of school populations. In more detail, Koca (2017) expanded upon factors that schools can control such as the forming of positive relationships between educator and student and the creation of zero tolerance policies, which have been especially utilized in schools with predominantly large minority populations (especially harming the African American male sector in school and testing success); but also elaborated upon more systemic issues that children in marginalized communities are more likely to face compared to White students, such as the inclusion of parents in the raising of their children and the conflict of poverty in child development and familial interactions.

Regarding testing for the African American population, the results were not too friendly. In more detail, Koca's (2017) study of a school district in Indiana suggested that Black students placed worse scores compared to their White and Hispanic counterparts in ELA and Math, with only 28.1% of Black students passing both exams compared to Hispanics (43.3%) and Whites (52.5%). Koca (2017) also suggested that because of the zero-tolerance policies affecting the Black population the most often, there could have been a huge shift in the gap because of this. Similarly, Koca (2017) tested the socioeconomic theory of the student population and found that 38.9% of lower socioeconomic status students (labeled as the "Reduced/Free Meal" program) were successful in the ELA and Math tests while 62.0% of higher socioeconomic students (labeled as "Paid Meal") were successful in both exams. Similarly, Carnoy (2005) provided similar insight, as when testing between state accountability and progression, there was little to no significance between the two for white students, but there has been a harmful effect for Black and Hispanic students; leading to the conclusion in his paper that accountability of the state by

the Federal Government does not automatically assume that progression and graduation rates will rise.

Students from Indigenous cultures were also placed in a complicated position, as they were also affected by testing in the United States. Overall, these students have scored low on their tests based on reading, math, and science compared to White students (Dupuis & Abrams, 2017). But, when diving deeper into the issue with this population of students, when discussing the topic of science education in Montana, Dupuis and Abrams (2017) found that the way that Indigenous people learn the methods taught in Western science teaching through an alternative method and for specific outcomes related to their own means; thus, when entering a school that mainly focuses on Western teachings, these students were out of luck since they lagged. However, when questions about Indigenous culture were placed on standardized tests, these Indigenous students scored better on these questions than the majority population (Dupuis & Abrams, 2017).

However, from a societal standpoint, some cultures take pride in the schools and trust that the schools will have their child's best interests in success. For instance, in Latino culture, there were the ideas of *con respeto* (respect of families towards the educational system and its educators) and *confianza* (societal confidence in the system) (Heilig, 2011). So, this leads to two situations: first, these parents were more likely to be hands-off in their child's learning as they feel that it was not their responsibility to voice their concerns with the system; and secondly, since these parents (particularly the lower income Latino parents) placed all of their faith of the child's success in the school system, they would not necessarily voice their concerns when testing unfairly keeps their children held back (Heilig, 2011).

Unfortunately, even with the trust in schools, Latinos were not spared from the negative impact of standardized testing on their population. With this population more likely to be residing in a state that incorporates mandatory testing, there was little to no escape for students of this population from the impact of these exams (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). When examining the impacts of these exams on this sector of students, a few data points came up, including GPAs and the number of tries at the test were negatively correlated (but it's worth noting that GPA was not the most powerful concept to project student success on the test) and that the grades students got on these exams and the repetitive attempt of the students with these

exams was negatively correlated (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). As a result, this study suggested that this population was a prime example of the idea of the Theory of Stereotype Threat, which suggested that their individuality will be judged by society based on the overall group's success in academics (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). Thus, standardized testing reaffirms this theory, as the individual student was negatively affected in their emotional standpoint by the failure on these tests, as they saw that the grade on the test was a stigma on their whole character (which could explain why test scores were dropping as the students kept repeating the exams) (Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016).

Students with Disabilities

To begin this subgroup of the student population, it is important to review the important laws and terms in special education that are supposed to guarantee that all students receive some sort of education. In general, the purpose of education from a law perspective was to guarantee that every student receives a free and appropriate education (FAPE) being designed by the state government to ensure that all students obtain an education that meets some standards in the K-12 level free of charge (West, 2002). For students that participate in special education services, the child receives a document known as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) which provides a trajectory of knowledge that the student should obtain in the school year that the document has been created (West, 2002). These IEPs are crucial in a child's education, as they help determine the services that one would utilize in school to ensure that the student will benefit from the education that they receive (West, 2002). These services can range from more substantial services such as a separate special education classroom and physical or occupational therapy services or provide more simplistic accommodations such as extended time on exams or preferred seating. Nonetheless, these services are presented to students based on the opinions of school officials as well as parents (or in some circumstances, even the child).

When the need for inclusion of students with disabilities (SWDs) was expanded through the NCLB, states and educators did not know how to exactly accommodate the needs of these students; as, after all, how can these students be accurately judged in this new type of environment when it comes to state accountability; how fair can it be that students can use their accommodations compared to other students in high-stakes testing scenarios (West, 2002)? Well, looking at the perspective of the law, not giving these students their accommodations can

arguably lead to legal problems for the schools based on the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses, since it can be debated that if the students use their accommodations for the duration of being educated on the material, then it would not be an accurate assessment of the absorption of the material if these same accommodations are not presented to these students on high-stakes tests (West, 2002). In other words, "…exposure [to general education curriculum] alone does not guarantee access and meaningful interaction with the general curriculum for disabled students" (West, 2002, p. 357). In addition to this, in a society in which that is getting increasingly necessary to obtain a high school diploma to even progress in life, then it can be said that getting this same diploma is a required human right based on the Constitution (West, 2002). As a result, appropriately testing these students was a crucial objective for the states, as allowing these students to have the disadvantage of not using the accommodations that they have throughout the year would be a worthless challenge (West, 2002).

With the law breathing down the necks of administrators, one would think that these accommodations would be granted to these students without a second thought; however, let's place this situation in a studied scenario. Tefera's (2019) paper focused on SWDs testing on California's standardized test known as the CAHSEE. Tefera (2019) pointed out that these special education students were placed in a position for a year or two in their high school journeys where they were not receiving their listed accommodations on these high-stakes tests since teachers were unaware of the option even being presented to them. In addition to this, it wasn't until these students pointed out the error in communication to the teachers that the whole situation got sorted out; but unfortunately, it took a lot longer for the students to speak up as they were afraid of the backlash from other students that came with receiving these same accommodations (Tefera, 2019). As a result of miscommunication from teachers and the fear of social backlash by the students, SWDs have had to face an unfair uphill battle in receiving their appropriate accommodations (Tefera, 2019).

As stated before, the NCLB was one of the major laws that utilized standardized testing to incorporate students with disabilities in the process of immersing them in the general curriculum (Katsiyannis et al., 2007). However, due to the intensity of the general education curriculum, it was not surprising that studies have reported that SWDs that fail these high-stakes tests have been dropping out of school in greater instances than general education students who

fail these very same exams (West, 2002). These same students can't escape the process either, as these states were required to keep a record of the number of students in this population that took the tests (with and without accommodations) or received a different measurement of learning (Katsiyannis et al., 2007). These high-stakes tests can be described as minimum competency exams (MCEs; tests that can have students advance or repeat grades) or mandatory exit exams (MEEs; subject-based tests that judge student absorption of material to obtain a diploma); but either way, these tests have substantially impacted the special education population in the unfortunate direction (Katsiyannis et al., 2007). Additionally, these students were also placed in positions where school officials need to decide if they were labeled as special education students or general education students, thus constricting their chances of being educated in the most effective way possible for them (Tefera, 2019).

However, a separate method of judging student comprehension of material was known as alternative assessments, which provide more of a performative approach to the style of reviewing student material (Katsiyannis et al., 2007). This option was presented to assure that these students would receive an appropriate method of judgment in education if the standardized tests were too demanding for their capabilities (Katsiyannis et al., 2007). Unfortunately, while there were some supporters, there were people that opposed this method, as they weren't sure if these standards that they would judge the students on in these assessments would truly determine the competency of the state standards that the general education students would be tested on (Katsiyannis et al., 2007).

English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELLs) were another valuable sector of the special education population that has its own set of data. While Heilig's (2011) information was discussed earlier with the Latino subgroup, these same students were also placed in the category of English Language Learners. To describe this study in more detail, it was conducted in Texas schools, where the state switched from the TAAS exit tests to the TAKS in 2003 with the dawn of the NCLB's state accountability guidelines (Heilig, 2011). Overall, with the analysis presented in the paper, it demonstrated that the gap in testing success between English speakers and ELLs has increased with the implementation of these accountability guidelines, but also depicts the issue that the progression of ELLs in schools has possibly made an unfortunate turn since these

accountability measures have begun to the point that when the study went to 2007, it was determined that 60% of ELLs have not been able to receive their diploma (Heilig, 2011). However, it was important to note in this study that the test scores placed a façade to the issue, as even though this was happening, test scores were reported to be rising in all student populations (Heilig, 2011).

However, it is also crucial to place the lens into the perspective of these students: like SWDs, these students are also facing an uphill battle in the education system: they must learn a second language with the content required on the tests (Giambo, 2017). As a result, it was not surprising for the rising assumption that the goalpost was shifted for this subgroup of students on the exam: make sure they have a basic grasp of the language; the content can be pushed to the back burner (Giambo, 2017). This then posed some concerns about the original point of using the exams as an inclusionary practice: if educators were just making sure that these students get a grasp of the language and not the content, how can it be assumed that these assessments are an appropriate tool to judge them on the same level as general education students (Giambo, 2017)? The simple answer would be to give them their accommodations, but as stated before, the track record has not been successful; even with other populations of students (Heilig, 2011; Tefera, 2019).

In Giambo's (2017) study, she examined the impact of Florida's standardized test (the FCAT) on minority students and ELLs in all grades. Through focus group interviews, the study examined how these students feel about these exams, with students saying that their future can be up in the air with these tests and that older students felt more resistance towards these tests than younger students, and that some students believed that the FCAT does not connect to what they learned in school; but also examined the testing preparations of students, saying that these students use more passive preparation strategies in reviewing material (Giambo, 2017). Some of these answers are not surprising, as these answers could be assumed towards general education students, but it does place the perspective that even though these students are facing an uphill battle, these are still students that want to learn and do well (Giambo, 2017).

Other Trends

Besides the major three trends that were just described, other trends were well-documented in the literature that standardized testing had its part in developing. First, to connect this to a more universal approach to standardized testing in the United States, Sonnert et al. (2020) analyzed the usefulness of the AP Calculus exam on students and its ability for students to maintain their knowledge and understanding of the content in the short and long-terms of time. Some outside aspects did come to take effect in this study that could implicate the data showing in a larger and more diverse population of students, such as females scored worse on the exam than men, students that had parents that completed higher levels of education have done better on the exam than those students who did not have parents with higher levels of education, and that students that wanted to pursue a subject that involves the use of calculus (such as a STEM major) were more likely to be successful on the exam than those that did not (Sonnert et al., 2020). When examining the effects of teaching a standardized version of the class on students, there were some interesting results, which included the fact that the knowledge acquired from a standardized-focused version of a course did not necessarily predict that the knowledge would mold well with the same course taught at the collegiate level; and that for students that may have a weaker foundation to the subject, a standardized-focus of material would not stick with them as they take the course at a collegiate level, but in fact, would lower their chances of success in the collegiate version of the course (in addition, there was not a stand-alone result for students with strong mathematical foundations) (Sonnert et al., 2020). In other words, instructors that mainly utilize preparatory materials for the standardized test in classrooms ultimately had little effect (or even a downturn effect) on students in the long term when taking this subject (Sonnert et al., 2020).

To take a more unusual trend to the effects of standardized testing, McCluskey (2017) took an approach to test between overall happiness and testing. When testing his theory, the connection between testing and happiness was made through one thing: wealth; such that the higher the wealth, the higher the test score and the higher happiness (this also worked vice versa) (McCluskey, 2017). McCluskey (2017) takes this using a societal approach, which takes an analysis of the purpose of education discussed in the very first section of this review: education is used to kick-start and maintain a functional economy (Wearne, 2018). Thus, it can be expected that McCluskey (2017) pointed to the fact that wealthier countries signify higher test scores and happiness. However, this study also alluded to the idea of younger kids being less happy about

testing than older kids; what does McCluskey (2017) say about this? Well, McCluskey (2017) motioned the aspect of complexity in test items, in which older students faced more complicated questions that required more brain power to answer (since their brains were more developed). Similarly, to society, McCluskey (2017) connected this to wealthier countries producing more individuals that were able to utilize strategies that involved higher levels of thinking; thus, expanding their wealth capacity.

Emotional Impacts

Therefore, what does happen when students don't do as wonderfully as they expected to do on these tests? Kearns (2011) answers this question in their interview-type study on the youth of Canada after learning about them not passing their standardized test: the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. Since these students failed this exam, these students were labeled by the education system as "at risk," meaning that these students are stigmatized by the system that they could be failing a class or, when they get there, dropping out of high school (Kearns, 2011). In this system, the students who were in minority populations or students who come to Canada from another country were immediately placed in this faction of the populations (Kearns, 2011). So, after failing the exam, what did the students think? Many expressed their disappointment as they thought they did better than what the outcome claimed to be, some also expressed that the outcome dealt a blow to their self-esteem and now questioned their ability to have a successful future, and some questioned the need for these tests in society; but others examined the role of the unintentional racial bias that these tests have presented (Kearns, 2011). In general, as much as some people believe that these students do not care about their education, they do; and these kids were smarter than adults seem to think of the possible societal implications of tests such as these (Kearns, 2011).

Now, there isn't just one study that went into the emotional impacts of testing on students, there were many others that incorporated this fact on many different occasions. For instance, Heilig (2011) examined this standard through the TAKS exams on Texan ELLs, where it was mentioned that teachers can notice the stress in their students with the looming exam, as these tests can be that one hurdle to their diploma that they just can't overcome, even if they retain passing marks in their classes. Overall, it is incredibly important to think about the impact of testing on these students' futures. As discussed earlier, the marks that these students get on

these exams are not just numbers; to some of these students, these tests can dictate the course of their future and their sense of self (Katsiyannis et al., 2007; Kearns, 2011; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Tefera, 2019; Yeh, 2016). Now that there has been an extensive review of the literature regarding standardized testing and its effects on the education system, it is now possible to apply this to the real world and test some of these assumptions.

Methods

Participants

The main criterion that was required of participants was that they needed to be secondary educators that teach a course in school that ends with a standardized assessment in the year that the survey was conducted (which was the 2022-2023 school year). The standardized assessment that concludes their course could have been a statewide assessment (such as a New York State Regents Exam) or a countrywide assessment (such as an Advanced Placement exam).

Procedures

The survey was presented to participants through a Google Forms link in which the survey was passed around through a variety of means. The primary method of delivering this survey was through a grassroots means, in which the researcher asked their colleagues to pass along the link to the survey through whatever means necessary (either sharing with others personally or putting it on social media). For the social media aspect of delivering this survey, Facebook and Twitter were two platforms used for presenting the survey to a community of educators. Overall, the survey was open to the public for approximately ten days.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher used Google Forms to hand out the study.

Results

Respondents (n=13) that completed the survey were presented with a Google Form with thirty-seven items split into four major parts. Overall, the respondent pool contracted a vast perspective of the secondary education population, with the pool covering all secondary education grades (9-12), most of the subjects asked in the survey (except for foreign language

and art), most of the types of classrooms asked, a large ethnicity range of students, numerous state representation (New York, Connecticut, and New Hampshire) and a large range of teaching experience (with respondents ranging from one year to thirty-five years). This survey was organized to ask about the respondents' beliefs about standardized testing and whether they have seen the impacts of it firsthand in their classroom. While these beliefs might have been engrained through their own education and experiences, the respondents were challenged to answer these items through their own perspectives. The survey presented was divided into four major parts: teacher background, their own thoughts on the overview of standardized testing, the personal impacts of standardized testing in their own classroom, and their perception of the effects of standardized testing on their students. Tables 1, 2, and 3 cover parts two, three, and four of the survey, respectively. For the selective-answer questions in each part, respondents were asked to rate their agreement to a given statement on a Likert scale from one to five, with one being "strongly disagree" and five being "strongly agree.".

Table 1: Part Two of Survey (Thoughts on the Overview of Standardized Testing)

Item Description	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neutral)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
ST useful in system.	0 (0%)	4 (30.8%)	5 (38.5%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0%)
ST accurately compares students.	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)	2 (15.4%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0%)
CCSS details what should be taught in subject area.	1 (7.7%)	2 (15.4%)	6 (46.2%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0%)
CCSS is reflected in the test presented to students.	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	8 (61.5%)	3 (23.1%)	1 (7.7%)

ST is a fair indicator of student success post-high school.	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)	6 (46.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
ST determines student preparedness for college.	2 (15.4%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0%)
ST is more towards "college equivalence" than "college readiness."	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.7%)	9 (69.2%)	2 (15.4%)	0 (0%)
ST creates disadvantages for minorities.	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (15.4%)	8 (61.5%)	2 (15.4%)
ST is an inappropriate method for inclusion.	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (38.5%)	0 (0%)

Table 1 depicted respondent answers to questions located in part two of the survey: "Thoughts on the Overview of Standardized Testing." This part consisted of nine required selected-response items along with an optional long answer item for extra comments for the section. Items in this part focused on standardized testing on the macro scale, with questions geared towards the idea of standardized testing as a whole and less towards their individualized impacts on the ordeal. Popular statements that fifty percent or greater respondents overall disagree with include the idea of standardized testing accurately comparing students (53.9%) and standardized testing being a fair indicator of post-high school success (53.9%) (Table 1). One

popular statement that a vast majority of respondents agreed with was the idea that the process of standardized testing places a disadvantage on minority populations (76.9%) (Table 1). Through analysis of the comments, three respondents provided extra notes on this section, in which they described the aspect that they no longer follow the CCSS, as the science educators now follow a new standard known as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), so they were unable to answer the question with accurate thought (in which they answered a 3 to the questions signifying the CCSS as their default answer).

Table 2: Part Three of Survey (Thoughts on Standardized Testing and Your Classroom)

Item Description	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neutral)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
ST measures what is taught in my class.	2 (15.4%)	4 (30.8%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (15.4%)	0 (0%)
ST reflects what I feel should be taught.	1 (7.7%)	5 (38.5%)	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	0 (0%)
ST restricts how I want to teach my class.	0 (0%)	4 (30.8%)	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	1 (7.7%)
ST prevents me from making classes student-centered.	0 (0%)	5 (38.5%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)	1 (7.7%)
ST prevents me from	0 (0%)	4 (30.8%)	2 (15.4%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (15.4%)

creating hands-on assessments and projects.				
ST is written in a way to engage students.	2 (15.4%)	8 (61.5%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)
ST allows students to connect with material on a personal level.	4 (30.8%)	5 (38.5%)	3 (23.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)
Some students in my class are forced to take the ST they are not fully able to take due the need to get a high school diploma.	2 (15.4%)	3 (23.1%)	3 (23.1%)	3 (23.1%)	2 (15.4%)
Students must pass the ST for a diploma.	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	1 (7.7%)	4 (30.8%)	1 (7.7%)

Table 2 depicted respondent answers to questions located in part three of the survey: "Thoughts on Standardized Testing and Your Classroom." This part consisted of nine required selected-response items along with an optional long answer item for extra comments for the section. Items in this part began to have the respondents discuss their individual perspectives on teaching, having them think critically about the impact standardized testing had on how they teach their classroom and what is required to be taught in their classroom. Popular statements that fifty percent or more respondents overall disagree with include the ideas that standardized tests are written to engage students (76.9%), standardized testing allows students to connect with the material presented on a personal level (69.3%) and that students need to pass their specific standardized test to receive a diploma (53.9%) (Table 2). Statements that received an overall agreement from respondents include the ideas that standardized testing restricts the way that they would want to teach their class (61.5%) and that standardized testing prevents teachers from creating hands-on assessments and projects (53.9%) (Table 2). When analyzing the extra comments for this section, one comment stuck out, with the respondent saying that "With some creativity you can still teach your class how you want within the confines of a standardized curriculum."

Table 3: Part Four of Survey (Thoughts on the Teacher's Impression on the Students and Standardized Testing)

Item Description	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neutral)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
My students take ST seriously.	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	6 (46.2%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (15.4%)
ST creates unnecessary stress on my students.	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (38.5%)
ST pushes my students to	4 (30.8%)	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	2 (15.4%)	0 (0%)

come for extra help.				
When it comes to ST, my students will pass the exam on the first try.	1 (7.7%)	2 (15.4%)	6 (46.2%)	4 (30.8%)	0 (0%)
Grades my students receive on ST are like the ones from my class.	4 (30.8%)	1 (7.7%)	6 (46.2%)	2 (15.4%)	0 (0%)
I noticed a rising rate of retention since the implementation of STs.	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	5 (38.5%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)

Table 3 depicted respondent answers to questions located in part four of the survey: "Thoughts on the Teacher's Impressions on the Students and Standardized Testing." This part consisted of six required selected-response items, two required long response items, and an optional long answer item for extra comments for the section. Items in this part focused on the respondents taking on the viewpoint of their students when faced with standardized tests, discussing topics involving the emotional well-being of their students. Popular statements that fifty percent or greater respondents overall disagree with include the idea that standardized testing pushed students to come to them for extra help (with one of the optional comments saying that "Since the grade on the standardized test is not linked to a grade in a class, few of my students really try on the standardized test.") (61.6%) and that there was a rising retention rate since the implementation of standardized testing (53.9%) (Table 4). One popular statement that a

vast majority of respondents agreed with was that standardized testing created unnecessary stress on their students (92.3%) (Table 4).

The required long answer questions for this part asked respondents about possible trends in the classroom that were expanded upon in the literature regarding standardized testing and ethnic and socioeconomic means. Regarding the ethnic means, seven respondents did not see a negative trend with their students while four respondents did see (in some sense) this trend. On the "agree" side, one respondent elaborated on their stance, saying that it, "Depends on the population; ex: Asian pop has higher percentage of success than the black pop." One respondent took a different route with the prompt, answering that "It's more that I see racial disparities in course enrollment which I predictive of exam performance. Or minorities and Special Education Students are MUCH more likely to be enrolled in remedial or non-colllege [sic.] prep science courses which correlates with poor exam performance." One respondent could not answer the prompt effectively as they never tested it themselves.

When coming down to the socioeconomic standpoint of the issue, the ratio was a little different, with six respondents agreeing (somewhat) with the negative connotation of the trend (one outright saying that wealthy students score higher than poorer students) and five respondents disagreeing with the trend, with one respondent not able to answer since they never tested the theory. One of the statements that agreed with the trend added to their thought, saying, "The students who do not worry about their personal needs and parents are involved in some way in their education, the students reflect higher scores than those who are hungry and unsure about their personal care." One respondent also had a tricky time answering the question, as they said, "I see trends, but working in special education it is hard to tell if it is their ability or effort put forth."

Discussion

Based on the material collected, there have been some crucial pieces of information that have been made known. First, an important piece of data from Table 1 indicated that many teachers (76.9%) agree that standardized testing creates disadvantages for the minority populations of their students. Like much information presented in the literature, the results of the survey collaborate with the theory of how certain populations of students have been placed in an

uphill battle due to testing (Carnoy, 2005; Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Giambo, 2017; Katsiyannis et al., 2007; Kearns, 2011; Koca, 2017; Heilig, 2011; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Sonnert et al., 2020; Tefera, 2019). To add to this issue, students also face a downfall regarding student engagement, which Table 2 collaborates with the literature, with 76.9% of teachers disagreeing with the idea of these tests being engaging for students and 69.3% of teachers disagreeing that these tests provide an opportunity for students to connect to the test on a personal level (Dupuis & Abrams, 2017; Giambo, 2017; Journell, 2010; Polleck & Jeffery, 2017).

Generally, there tended to be so many systemic issues regarding the testing process's effects on the student population. Kearns (2011) described this issue using the term "Cultural Capital," in which passing the test incorporates material that is deemed socially acceptable; thus, whether intentionally or not, this process tends to disregard minority cultures. Polleck and Jeffery (2017) also connect to this idea, as they referred to some issues regarding the transition of the New York State Regents Exam to the CCSS with the fact that many of the reading passages placed on the new exam were by authors that are white and male and that questions that connect material taught in the classroom to the exam were axed. Thus, a possible solution presented by Dupuis and Abrams (2017) in their study was the concept of "culturally responsive teaching," in which the inclusion of values from sectors of society that are not the majority. In the study, when test items featured concepts from the Indigenous populations, the Indigenous individuals were able to accurately determine the correct answers and improve their scores on the standardized exam (Dupuis & Abrams, 2017). In addition to this, Dupuis and Abrams (2017) elaborated on a new type of judgment of material: the performance-based assessment; testing that allows students to defend their theories to problems posed to them rather than focus on guessing on an option. In science classrooms, instructors in this subject fight for exams that examine students on materials through an interactive means, using hands-on, physical representations of the standards (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Longo, 2010). From an emotional perspective, McCluskey (2017) posed a theory that advances the mindset that using advanced styles of thinking ("critical thinking") tended to be found in richer areas of the world; thus, it can be correlated that these more complex items on exams foster happiness.

With the idea in the air regarding creating a more inclusive environment with standardized testing, what could be the progress of involving these questions for minority

students? What could happen to students of this population when they can pass these standardized exams? Yeh (2016) hypothesized some possible theories with a simulation discussing a population of minority students where it would examine the possibilities that would be open to them if their scores were pushed up by one standard deviation of the mean. In more detail, the possibility of dropping out for black males would be diminished from 21.5% to 10.4% and for Hispanic males from 20.1% to 7.7%; going to college would be more likely for both populations, as the population of students obtaining a bachelor's degree would be 88.6% for black males and 125.7% for Hispanic males (Yeh, 2016). These populations of students would be more coerced to take advanced classes as well, with the number of students that would take (and finish) calculus during their secondary years would rise 418.2% for black males and 772.7% for Hispanic males (Yeh, 2016). More importantly, the loss of the bias that standardized tests place upon these students would allow for a greater reason for students of minority populations to apply and succeed in the collegiate environment (Yeh, 2016).

To switch gears towards the mental impact on students, Table 3 suggested that 92.3% of teachers believe that these exams place unnecessary stress on students, but it also explained that 61.6% of teachers do not believe that these exams push their students to come to them for extra help. While many of the solutions that have been discussed thus far needed to be placed through the administrative or governmental level, the solutions that can be placed to these issues can be placed more within the schools. In more detail, Yeh (2016) added additional information to address the later result of the survey in Table 3 for teachers regarding feedback mechanisms, where it was important for teachers to give feedback on an often basis that comes from a neutral perspective and that these comments are placed upon students as soon as the assessment is completed.

To return to the first result in Table 3, teachers and parents must explain to their students that the mark of the test result is just a number; it does not reflect who they are. Failure to do so causes students who do not pass these exams to lower their self-esteem and bring unnecessary disappointment and pressure on themselves (Kearns, 2011). Also, as stated earlier in the literature, students are not numb to the processes of the environment around them due to systemic purposes, which return to the call to revamp the system (Kearns, 2011).

For special education students that cannot complete these tests, it makes sense that using these assessments for inclusionary purposes is unacceptable (West, 2002). This is especially true when students are placed in situations where they are given unfair pitfalls due to not being given their accommodations during testing, which is illegal in its sense especially when this information is defined in the IEP of the student in question (West, 2002). Likewise, it is important to understand that the results of standardized testing can be tricky to interpret by outsiders since schools have the goal to look as presentable to the public as possible; thus, taking these more vulnerable students out of the general testing population to inflate the overall scores seems like a reasonable circumstance in the eyes of administrators (Greer, 2018; Heilig, 2011; Katsiyannis et al., 2007). As a result, one should understand that even if a student obtains a strong mark on a test, it cannot be assumed that they received a proper education (McCluskey, 2017).

Limitations

While the research has been conducted in the most unbiased process possible, there are some limitations of this survey that should be addressed. First off, the surveyor conducted this survey through various social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter). Even though the idea of confidentiality has been valued in the process of data collection, it is plausible to assume that the surveyor does not know who really completed the survey. Secondly, while the sample size covered an appropriate number of subjects, grade range, and states, the sample size can be something to be explored in a more in-depth experimental process. It could have been possible that this sample size could be increased with a financial incentive presented to respondents. Third, the process of presenting the survey could produce some flaws; since this was completed for a semester-long research course, ten days was a decent amount of time to collect data for this assignment. It can be possible that the trends could have shifted when given more tie to collect the data.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

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This survey (or one like it) should be allowed to expand its data toward a larger pool of educators. The reason that secondary educators were the target audience for this survey was that there was less research geared toward this population than primary educators. Since secondary

education is the last hurdle for students to cross before they interact with vocational or collegiate education, the value of accurately determining if students are ready to explore the world after high school is crucial; thus, it is important to hear the viewpoints of educators of this caliber on the topic. In addition, the survey should be more inclusive of other forms of standardization, such as the NGSS that teachers use rather than the CCSS. Lastly, it would be interesting to explore this topic but flip it toward students instead of the teachers. This process affects them just as much as educators, and they deserve a voice in their education.

Standardized testing is a very controversial concept. Many educators have strong opinions on the topic, and the usefulness of testing in the current system is hanging in the balance. Some assume that standardized testing should be abolished completely, while others encourage the importance of using this as a gear to compare students and schools (Wearne, 2018). However, one thing is universally for certain: everyone in the system and the process cares about what is best for the students. Parents want to place them in an effective school while teachers want to have the resources to adequately teach students. However, this question should be answered to identify if a process is successful in the education system: does it prevent students from obtaining a high-quality education? The research must continue to help answer this question.

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Using ChatGPT to Support Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Writing

Lisa Thompson Sousa, PhD ATP

Abstract

ChatGPT-3 can be an extension of technological support in the writing process for students with specific learning disabilities that affect writing planning and organization. Use of a graphic organizer, specifically the outline, is an option for students experiencing cognitive processing deficits that affect writing. Generating outlines using ChatGPT-3 has the potential to deliver speed and individualization, which automates the efforts of teachers. Limitations of ChatGBT-3 in the creation of outlines could open the door to explicit teaching of pre-writing skills.

Keywords: graphic organizer, specific learning disability, writing, ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, AI, chatbot

Using ChatGPT to Support Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Writing

Writing is a recursive and complicated process (Flower & Hayes, 1981). It includes planning, generating ideas, structuring information, drafting, revising, and editing. Planning involves identifying the purpose and audience of the writing, as well as generating and organizing ideas. Ideas are translated into written language. Writers then draw on their knowledge of language, writing conventions, culture and values to shape their writing. Effective writing often requires multiple iterations of the writing process which involve revision and editing but planning is the first step to get to the writers' goals.

Planning is a critical component of the writing process. It requires a combination of cognitive abilities, including working memory, attention, and fluid reasoning and retrieval of information. Working memory allows individuals to hold information in mind while manipulating it, which is essential for organizing and developing ideas (Cormier et al., 2016). A subset of working memory involves attention. Attention is necessary to focus on relevant

information and inhibiting irrelevant information. Attention is essential not only for generating and selecting ideas but in organization. Concurrently, writers use fluid reasoning and retrieval skills. Fluid reasoning involves the collection of facts and inferences to support a hypothesis statement or breaking a larger idea into smaller components. It involves reasoning and problem solving which considers and develops new perspectives. Retrieval is additionally an important contributor to the planning process. It involves making connections and draws from prior knowledge. Planning can be difficult to do when a student experiences deficits in these areas.

For a student with a specific learning disability that affects writing, planning and organization can be daunting. When deficits of working memory, fluid reasoning and long-term retrieval exist, the writing process can be stalled at the beginning stage. Reliance of each of the cognitive processes is important. If there are deficits in any one of these areas or multiple areas, it can result in writing that is disjointed, unsupported or worse, irrelevant.

Deficits in working memory and the writing planning process

Deficits in working memory can inhibit planning and organization in the writing process (Olive, 2012; Kellogg et al., 2013). The processing demands associated with planning, attention, and memory, impact writing performance and can be difficult for individuals with specific learning disabilities (Swanson & Siegel, 2011). Pre-writing tasks are affected when a person is unable to hold and manipulate information, a component of working memory. In addition, deficits in attention or monitoring can also affect planning by making it difficult to focus and filter information (Meltzer & Krishnan, 2007; Alloway et al., 2009). This can result in off topic writing.

Deficits in fluid reasoning and the writing planning process

Fluid reasoning deficits have also been associated with difficulties in planning and organization in writing (Floyd et al., 2008). A deficit in this area can make it difficult to generate new ideas and develop new perspectives. Individuals with fluid reasoning deficits may struggle to think creatively and come up with novel ideas, resulting in disorganized and unclear writing. Poor writing, as a result of difficulties in fluid reasoning, may appear as unsupported assertions. Supporting details are an important component to the planning process.

Deficits in long-term retrieval and the writing planning process

Deficits in long-term retrieval can affect writing planning by limiting a student's ability to draw on prior knowledge, recall relevant information, and organize their thoughts effectively (Graham, & Harris, 2000; Ericsson & Kintsch, 1995). This can lead to gaps in knowledge and a lack of coherence in their writing. Students with a specific learning disability in long-term retrieval may struggle to organize their thoughts effectively, making it challenging to plan. They may have difficulty generating main ideas and supporting details, which can result in a confusing piece of writing. Students with deficits in long-term retrieval may struggle to recall specific details or examples. This can lead to a lack of evidence to support their arguments, which can weaken their writing.

Cognitive processing deficits can significantly influence planning, which is a critical component of the writing process. Deficits in working memory, attention, fluid reasoning, and long-term retrieval can all affect the ability to develop a plan and structure writing. Therefore, it is important to address cognitive processing deficits to improve overall writing ability. Graphic organizers can help individuals with cognitive processing deficits overcome these challenges and develop effective writing skills.

Graphic organizers for students with specific learning disabilities

Graphic organizers are visual tools that can help students organize and structure their ideas during the writing process (Ewoldt & Morgan, 2017). As a whole, they are useful for students with specific learning disabilities who may struggle with organizing their thoughts and ideas. Graphic organizers support organization, planning, and structure necessary for students with specific learning disabilities. Its use can be considered an evidence based practice (EBP) for students with specific learning disabilities (Ciullo & Reutebuch, 2013). Hughes and colleagues (2019) found that graphic organizers were effective in improving writing skills, particularly in the areas of organization and planning. Graphic organizers can help students organize and remember important information and make connections between ideas. Use of them can have a positive effect on the writing outcomes of students with specific learning disabilities.

Additionally, graphic organizers for writing, support working memory. Working memory is the largest component of writing planning. Students with a specific learning disability in this area may find it difficult to hold multiple ideas creating need for an outline or structure for

their writing. Graphic organizers can help address this deficit by providing a visual representation of the relationships between ideas, allowing students to better organize their thoughts.

Fluid reasoning and long-term retrieval deficits can also benefit from graphic organizers, by visually representing prior learned concepts for easier retrieval. Graphic organizers can bridge gaps in knowledge in visual representation as well, creating opportunities to consider concepts as a whole or in parts. Using graphic organizers can help students with specific learning disabilities improve their writing planning and overall writing ability. They provide a visual scaffold that help students organize their ideas and develop a clear and coherent structure for their writing. The outline is an example of an effective tool to support the writing pre-planning process to support fluid reasoning, long-term retrieval and working memory.

The Outline as an Evidence Based Practice for Specific Learning Disabilities

There are plenty of examples of different types of graphic organizers for integrating into the writing process for students with specific learning disabilities (Hall, & Strangman, 2002). One that is most helpful in the pre-planning process is the outline. Outlines address the organizational and planning difficulties expressed by students with specific learning disabilities. Use of outlines can individualize instruction and scaffold support to students with specific learning disabilities in the planning process. Troia (2014) examined the effectiveness of various writing instruction methods for students with learning disabilities and outlines were considered part of that writing support. Outlines used as a planning tool for students with specific learning disabilities may improve writing quality and contribute to motivation in the writing process.

Traditional ways of creating graphic organizers

Traditionally, teachers create their own graphic organizers based on the needs of their students and the requirements of the writing assignment. Construction or facilitation has been with the direct involvement of the teacher for guiding its application. It is a time-involved process because outlines need to be individualized for students with specific learning disabilities. A learning disability is specific in nature to the individual, a specific deficit in cognitive processing. Therefore, a generic outline may not be helpful because the student may not be able to generalize use of the outline across various contexts. This causes a need for individualization

which results in additional preparation.   To do this, Anders (2023) suggests use of artificial intelligence (AI) applications as a way to automatize the process for the teacher.

AI as a means of automatizing graphic organizers

AI has the potential to save time and improve efficiency for teachers. Literature is emerging on ways AI can automate tasks such as grading, feedback, and lesson planning (Karandish, n.d.). By automating these tasks, more time can be spent on direct instruction. While there has not been much study in this area, AI can improve the efficiency of teachers in generating graphic organizers while tailoring to student need and learning objectives. Not all AI tools are appropriate to match with evidence based practices and interventions. Chatbots for example are an AI application that at the most fundamental level, mimic human conversation in response to a question that is typed. Typically, these are heavily scripted and limited in application.

Preliminary research is encouraging for technology-supported outlines (Ciullo & Reutebuch, 2013) which is different than proposing AI chatbot generated outlines. However, technology supported outlines have paved the way for consideration toward similar applications of AI chatbot use. There are potential benefits for the use of chatbots to generate personal learning experience to improve learning outcomes. There is variation among chatbot performance and quality but there is potential that sophisticated AI chatbots such as Chat GPT-3 can create essay outlines based upon specific prompts. Consideration of the applications of AI chatbots such as ChatGPT-3 with low-tech evidence-based practices such as use of outlines looks promising.

ChatGPT-3 defined

ChatGPT-3 is an artificial intelligence-powered chatbot, using a large language model (LLM) developed by Open AI. It is not a search engine. It uses machine-learning algorithms to understand natural language and generate responses (Radford et al., 2019). Generative Pretrained Transformer (GPT) is a type of neural networking that uses large amounts of unstructured text data and links the data using a predictive analytic. ChatGPT-3 is in its third revision. It generates text in response to a request.

Addressing ChatGPT-3 concerns

Unlike a search engine that delivers a series of resources if queried about a topic, ChatGPT-3 can generate a research paper about the topic. This research paper is novel and can be passed off by a student as their own work. With that, it may seem difficult for teachers to recognize if there is any benefit to its use. It is too tempting for students to request ChatGPT-3 to write the entire paper (Reich, 2022). Additional concerns have been noted about ChatGPT-3 being nothing more than a "stochastic parrot" (Bender, et al., 2021) meaning the scale of LLMs raise ethical concerns about generating fake or biased content, a reflection of a larger bias among the body of data it draws from. However, if not relying on Chat GPT-3 solely for generating content, ChatGPT-3 may be a solution for teachers to generate graphic organizers provided there are parameters.

General Considerations and Parameters for Chat GPT to Generate Outlines

ChatGPT-3 is designed for generating text, answering questions and is linear in its responses. Given the outline's linear nature, using ChatGPT-3 seems to be an appropriate match. Use of ChatGPT-3 has the potential to structure outlines in a clear and organized manner, making it easier for writers to follow and use as a foundation for their writing. Additionally, it creates teacher efficiency by generating outlines quickly without the need for lengthy research or brainstorming sessions. LLMs, such as ChatGPT-3 offer adaptability. ChatGPT-3 is reported to adapt to a wide range of writing styles, topics, formats and genres. This adaptability allows for customization, creating a personalized and tailored outline.

Success in use of ChatGPT-3 for students with specific learning disabilities, may be in the level of involvement by the students' themselves. Students with specific learning disability have a great deal of direct instruction from their teachers. While research has concerns with adult learners in higher education directly interfacing with ChatGPT-3 and cites issues with plagiarism, elementary and secondary students' involvement would be indirect since ChatGPT-3 use would be for automatizing the creation of graphic organizers by teachers. Additionally, teachers would have more control of the parameters of use and could moderate a student's exposure or use which would be facilitated or exclude the student entirely.

Use of ChatGPT-3

Accessing ChatGPT-3 is free initially and requires the creation of an account through OpenAI.com. Once an account is made, there is free trial but then it transitions to pay per use. To use, simply type in a request in the "search engine bar" and a response is generated. It may create angst and worry with teachers to try something new, but ChatGPT-3 is very user friendly because it uses natural language. This is different from a search engine, which requires a search that is distilled to a few key words. ChatGPT accepts the use of natural language and will generate responses accordingly, in other words, write conversationally. While teachers are encouraged to be specific in their request, it may take a few revisions in wording to generate the intended result. With that said, teachers should set parameters around their response.

The request of ChatGPT-3 begins with a prompt that is created by the user.   Creating a request in the right way will improve ChatGPT's effectiveness (Hardman, 2023). Language matters but only with the specificity of the request.   The more specific that a request can be, the better the outcome. Additionally, it is best to set parameters to generate consistent results by using a prompt.   The prompt is a "starting phrase" that is specific enough to generate the desired outcome when the user adds additional, individualized information. In the case of generating an outline for writing, it is recommended that teachers use the prompt, "Create an outline for writing" on a particular topic. It sounds self-explanatory and simple but deviation from the prompt can yield a different result.

Practitioners of ChatGPT-3 frequently share successful prompts with others in their use of AI applications such as ChatGPT-3 because small changes can result in unexpected responses. The prompt provides a starting point to tailor requests. For teachers, prompts can be an effective way of creating automaticity in their practice and provide individualization for students. An example of this would be a teacher needing to create an outline as a graphic organizer for writing about Johnny Appleseed. The teacher would begin the request to ChatGPT-3 using the prompt, "Create an outline for writing". In this case the request with the prompt would be, "Create an outline for writing about Johnny Appleseed."   After submitting the request, ChatGPT-3 would generate an outline that the student could use as an advanced organizer for writing and essay. In this example however, changing the initial prompt could change the request. Had the teacher changed the starting prompt and omitted the two words, "for writing," the request would generate a summary of Johnny Appleseed's life and contributions in outline form and it would

not serve as a graphic organizer for writing. This is what makes the prompt important. Use of the entire prompt and topic, "Create an outline for writing about Johnny Appleseed," will generate a graphic organizer for writing in outline form about Johnny Appleseed. Chat GPT-3 in this instance yields an outline much like a tutor would provide a student. It provides relevant to content and structure without completing the assignment for the student. The outline is specific enough to give guidance and offers more context than using a general outline graphic organizer. However, it is important to note that the generation of the outline is just a starting point, and there may need to be revisions or adjustments.

Steps for creating outlines using ChatGPT

1. Consider the topic and ability level of the student: Before using ChatGPT to generate an outline, have a clear idea of topic, audience and ability level of the student.

2. Input a request into ChatGPT using the prompt, "Create an outline for writing about" and the additional topic request: For example, "Create an outline for writing about Newton's Law"

3. Chat GPTwill generate an outline as a response

4. Review and revise the outline: Once ChatGPT-3 has generated an outline, review it carefully. It may need to be revised by either changing the original prompt or by the teacher outside of ChatGPT-3 to fit the specific needs and goals.

Demonstrating the steps for using ChatGPT to create outlines to support learners with specific learning disabilities seems straightforward and it is. The purpose of writing a longer narrative is to justify its use for students with specific learning disabilities. By illustrating the outline's purpose as an evidence based practice for individuals with specific learning disabilities, we reduce the odds of misuse of ChatGPT-3 for writing which is a prevalent problem.

Limitations of use

With great possibilities of ChatGPT applications there may be limitations in its effectiveness to generate an outline. For queries, ChatGPT will typically limit to about five points when asked to outline a topic. Generated outlines typically will support a six-paragraph essay with introduction, key points, supporting points and conclusion. This may limit older

writers.   However, for students with specific learning disabilities that affect the pre-writing process, this may be an appropriate starting point. Additionally, teachers could easily work around this issue to create more sophisticated and involved outline with revised prompting or teacher revision.

A more concerning issue with ChatGPT-3 is accuracy of response. It is up to the teacher to cross-check information content as factual. ChatGPT-3 can automatize tasks but the veracity of what is generated is another matter. ChatGPT-3 is much like a calculator, there is an input and an output, meaning that it will combine and create based upon a predictive algorithm for natural language whether or not the topic makes sense.

Implications for practice

Ironically, the limitations of ChatGPT-3 may have created some unintended benefits with respect to implications for practice. The limiting aspect of ChatGPT-3's ability to create outlines could make it a tool for explicit instruction for students in their creation of more sophisticated outlines. Students could start with a general topic and build incrementally to add more sophisticated detail in their outlines. To do so would require facilitation and monitoring by the teacher. Specific prompts would need to be developed to provide autonomy for student creation while providing parameters to protect against plagiarism.

At a minimum ChatGPT-3 holds promise to automatize certain evidence-based practices by teachers in the creation of outlines. AI chatbots, like the ChatGPT-3 have the ability to create simple outlines depending upon the application used. Using LLMs such as ChatGPT-3 have the ability to create large and tailored outlines in comparison to other AI chatbot applications. Understanding the parameters and limitations are the first step for teachers to employ ChatGBT-3 as part of generating outlines for students with specific learning disabilities.

Suggestions for further research

Research of the use of ChatGPT-3 as a tool for explicit instruction of the planning process for writing skills for students with specific learning disabilities has merit. The limited ability of ChatGPT-3 to generate large outlines means it could be a sequential tool for teaching. This could be done by developing a framework and standardized procedure for the generation of

outlines for expository text. Given the large language model, Chat GPT-3 seems like a natural fit as long as parameters are met.

Conclusion

Technology has always had a ubiquitous place with writing support as a whole. We have word prediction, spelling, grammar and plagiarism check applications. ChatGPT-3 can be an additional extension of technological support in the writing process for students with specific learning disabilities that affect writing planning and organization. Working memory, fluid reasoning and long-term storage and retrieval are cognitive process that are necessary in the planning stages for writing. Deficits in these areas for students with specific learning disabilities can create difficulties with starting the writing process or generating work that lacks organization and fluency. Use of graphic organizers, specifically the outline, are an evidence-based option for specific learning disabilities that affect writing. Generating outlines using ChatGPT-3 has potential for quality, speed and individualization, which automates the efforts of teachers. However, teachers will need to review and may need to revise generated responses. Limitations of ChatGBT-3 in the creation of outlines could open the door to explicit teaching of pre-writing skills. More research is recommended for such an exciting use of AI that originally was condemned due to concerns about promoting plagiarism.

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