

## Topic: Should Standardised Testing Be Abolished?

Good afternoon, judges, teachers, and fellow students. I am here today to argue that standardised testing should be abolished, and I want to walk you through three reasons, in order of importance.

The first reason is that standardised tests measure a narrow slice of intelligence and treat it as if it were the whole. They measure how well a student can answer a multiple choice question under timed pressure. They do not measure curiosity, creativity, persistence, the ability to collaborate, or the ability to take a hard problem and live with it for a week before solving it. These are the qualities that matter in real work, and they are exactly the qualities the tests miss.

The second reason is that the tests are not fair. Test preparation is a multi billion dollar industry. The students with the highest scores are not the smartest students. They are the students whose parents can afford the best preparation. We have built a system that calls itself meritocratic and is actually a sorting machine for family income.

The third reason is that the tests damage what they measure. Once a school's funding depends on its test scores, the school teaches to the test. Teachers stop teaching the parts of their subject that the test does not cover. Students stop being curious about ideas that the test does not reward. Over time, the curriculum shrinks to fit the exam, and we have no curriculum left, just a long preparation for one Saturday morning.

I am not arguing that we should not measure students. I am arguing that the tool we use to measure them has, for the past forty years, made them smaller than they would otherwise have been. We can do better. We can build assessments based on portfolios, projects, and teacher judgment. Other countries do this. Their students are not worse for it. They are better.

Standardised testing should be abolished. Thank you.

