



Beyond the Deliberation: **Resources for Continued Engagement on** ***Grades & Standardized Tests***

One of the key deliberative dispositions that the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI) has identified is an “action orientation.” While dialogue and deliberation are themselves important contributors to a healthy democracy, they become even more valuable when they lead to shared agreement on key issues and an intentional commitment to take either individual or collective action on them.

Such action can come in a range of forms and should be broadly understood. It might involve issuing a set of recommendations or deciding to support a particular policy. It might also manifest as developing a better understanding of a topic, connecting with relevant local or national organizations, participating in continued discussions, or generating new approaches to engaging with the issue.

To support such an orientation, the DCI shares a series of “action pathways” for participants to consider after each event or activity it sponsors. Please see the pathways below related to the topic of ***Grades & Standardized Tests: How should student learning and excellence be assessed and measured, if at all?*** Engaging in these activities is voluntary -- participants are free to choose any of the pathways, or none. But we encourage you to at least consider them as options that can build on the conversation you just had with your fellow deliberative citizens.

Get Informed

- Learn about the pros and cons of standardized tests from [Brittanica](#).
- Learn about the pros and cons of letter grades versus ungrading from [The Week](#).
- Discover a variety of nontraditional assessment methods for K-12 teachers from [ACSD](#).
- Discover why some think that traditional forms of assessment are actually good, and why “test optional” college admissions were a bad idea in [The Atlantic](#).
- Review a summary of what grades mean and what they are for from the [Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of South Carolina](#).
- Examine why the NAACP and others believe standardized tests help disadvantaged groups in the U.S. at the [Washington Post](#).

Get Connected

- Explore ideas in this blog post for educators about alternative assessment from [Grading for Growth](#).
- Check out this guide to standardized tests for parents from [Reading Rockets](#).
- Engage with parents on what they need to know about standardized tests using information from [EdNavigator](#).
- Engage as a teacher to prepare parents and families for standardized testing season from [Grand Canyon University](#).
- Connect with the [Economic Policy institute](#) and others concerned about the problems with using test scores to evaluate teacher performance.

Get Involved

- Get involved with efforts by the [NEA](#) to move toward performance-based assessment and away from standardized testing from.
- Work with [Achieve](#), an organization focused on getting students ready for post-secondary education.
- Advocate for equity in grading with [Crescendo Working Group](#).
- Support the [NAACP](#) and its efforts to expand standardized testing and other accountability measures for public education in the U.S.
- Support [FairTest](#) and its efforts to end the misuse of standardized tests and work for fair, open, valid, and educationally beneficial assessment methods.

About This Guide

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The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative

The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI) is dedicated to the creation of opportunities for Davidson students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the wider community to productively engage with one another on difficult and contentious issues facing our community and society. The DCI regularly hosts facilitated deliberations on a wide range of topics and organizes training workshops for deliberation facilitators. To learn more about these opportunities, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org.

DCI Deliberation Guides

The DCI has launched this series of Deliberation Guides as a foundation for such conversations. They provide both important background information on the topics in question and a specific framework for engaging with these topics. The Guides are designed to be informative without being overwhelming and structured without being inflexible. They cover a range of topics and come in a variety of formats but share several common elements, including opportunities to commit to a shared set of Conversation Agreements, learn about diverse perspectives, and reflect together on the conversation and its yield. The DCI encourages conversations based on these guides to be moderated by a trained facilitator. After each conversation, the DCI also suggests that its associated Pathways Guide be distributed to the conversation's participants.

DCI Pathways Guides

For every Deliberation Guide, the DCI has also developed an associated Pathways Guide, which outlines opportunities for action that participants can consider that are related to the covered topic. These Pathways Guides reinforce the DCI's commitment to an action orientation, a key deliberative disposition. While dialogue and deliberation are themselves important contributors to a healthy democracy, they become even more valuable when they lead to individual or collective action on the key issues facing society. Such action can come in a range of forms and should be broadly understood. It might involve developing a better understanding of a topic, connecting with relevant local or national organizations, generating new approaches to an issue, or deciding to support a particular policy.

If you make use of this guide in a deliberation, please provide attribution to the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative and email dc@deliberativecitizenship.org to tell us about your event. To access more of our growing library of Deliberation Guides, Pathways Guides and other resources, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org/readings-and-resources.