



# Empirically Based Reasons Not to Administer Time- Limited Tests

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## Four Empirically Based Reasons Not to Administer Time-Limited Tests

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## 4 Evidence-based based reasons to consider:

1. Time-limited tests are less valid.
2. Time-limited tests are less reliable.
3. Time-limited tests are less inclusive.
4. Time-limited tests are less equitable.



# Time-limited tests are less valid

- + For nearly a century, we've known that students' test-taking pace does not validly reflect their knowledge and mastery.
- + Some students work slowly and perform well; others work quickly and perform poorly, and all variations exist in between.
- + The extensive empirical evidence against the belief that "the best students take tests the fastest" comes from thousands of students taking all types of tests (e.g., open vs closed book, multiple choice vs essay) and taking tests in a wide range of academic subjects (e.g., math, science, language and literature).



# Time-limited tests are less reliable

Statistical estimates of time-limited tests' reliability are artificially inflated. The inflation is due to artifactual consistency in students' rate of work rather than authentic consistency in students' level of knowledge.

Many instructors place time limits on their tests purely for administrative purposes.

However, time limits introduce a "spurious ... contribution" (Wilhelm & Schulze, 2002) that can "skew measures" (Henderson, 2005) to produce "severe problems" (Peterson, 1993) and alter the "construct the test intends to measure" (Lu & Sireci, 2007).



# Speed vs. Power

- + Decisions to use timed tests are administrative (time of a class period)
- + Timed tests can alter the construct the test is meant to measure
- + Power tests increase reliability
- + Alternate assignments



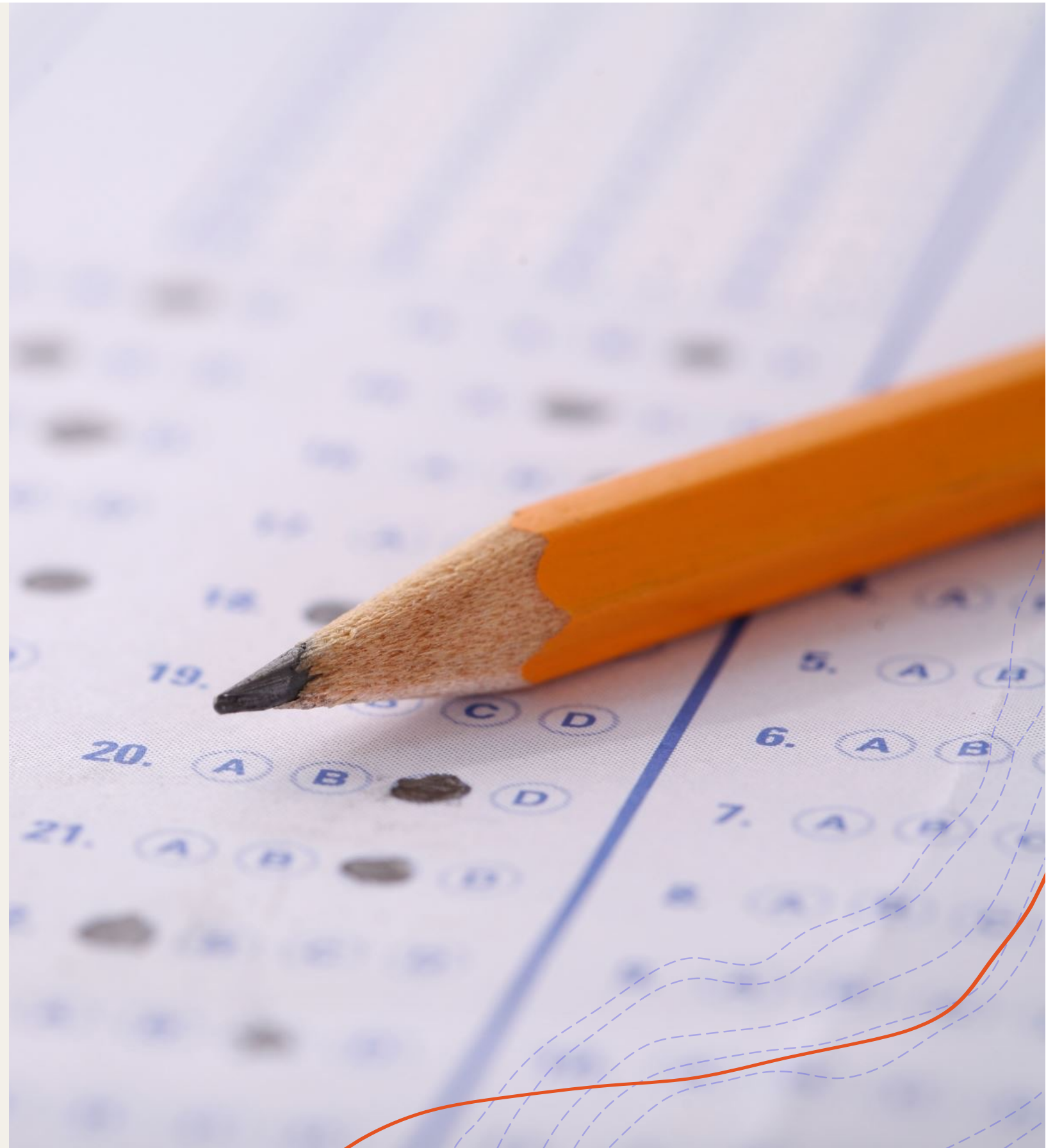
*"... "When students request extended time or time and a half, what they are really requesting is not to feel the pressure of time ticking off; not to experience anxiety about running out of time; not to have [an untimed] power test administered as a [time-limited] test."*

*~ Gernsbacher, 2015*



# Time-limited tests are less inclusive

- + Time-limited tests exclude students with documented disabilities who, because they are legally allowed additional test-taking time, may be excluded from test-taking classrooms.
- + Additional time is more likely to be a modification that should be provided to all students, rather than a disability-specific accommodation provided to only students with disabilities.





# Time-limited tests are less equitable

- + In addition to excluding students with documented disabilities, time-limited tests can also impede:
  - students who are learning English;
  - students from underrepresented backgrounds;
  - students who are older than average; and
  - students with disabilities who encounter barriers (e.g., stigma and financial expense) and therefore forego obtaining the documentation required to receive disability accommodations.



# Time-limited tests are less equitable

- + Research shows that power tests don't give more able students an edge though benefit students with diverse modes of learning
- + Barriers exist for obtaining and receiving accommodation



# Practice-Based Recommendations

1. Remove all time limits from all tests. This will increase validity, reliability, inclusivity and equitability and attenuate anxiety
2. Administer untimed asynchronous tests
  1. Examine test questions – are the questions truly assessing student knowledge/learning?
  2. “If the answer to a test question is just a click away, it might not be a very good test question.” (Gernsbacher, 2014)
3. Assess mastery through projects, reflections and other performative and demonstrative means



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