

Midterm paper

[Education](#), [School](#)



There is an old saying that goes, “ Even the best laid plans can go astray”. This statement basically means that even when something is done with the best of intentions and preparation; it can still produce completely different results than what was originally intended. In America’s school systems, there are many examples of things being done with the best of intentions, but yielding less-than-desirable results. One of the largest and most prevalent examples of this can be seen when looking at the “ Tracking System” that is often implemented in the majority of American schools. Although this system was brought about with the best of intentions and with no goal of hurting anyone, it is now an outdated practice that causes major problems in schools. When reading the article “ How Tracking Creates a Poverty of Learning” by Mary Hatwood Futrell and Joel Gomez which examines the tracking system as it is currently, one can see that it causes and reinforces several negative attitudes towards students including the self-fulfilling prophecy, the lack of equality in the classroom, an unfair dominate culture influence, and the idea that one must assimilate in order to be accepted and do well. If one were to take a public poll about tracking systems in schools, it would be a safe bet that most people wouldn’t even know what a tracking system is, even though the majority of Americans have been a part of one at some point in their educational career. A simple explanation of the tracking system is the division of students into different “ lanes” of education based on their academic. These different lanes often include an accelerated/AP lane, a regular lane, and then the slower-paced lane. At first this sounds like a good idea, and much like communism, it is on paper; it seems only natural to separate students based on their individual abilities so you can better fit

each student's learning ability. However, when this system is put into practice, several unforeseen side-effects arise and it can be seen that something needs to be done about this problem. According to the Article by Futrell and Gomez, the problem comes not in the idea of separating students based on their abilities, in fact the article argues that is a positive thing as it allows each student's education to be more customized and focused to them. So what is the problem then? The article goes on to say that the real problem with the Tracking System as it is today is that it allows for much discrimination against minorities being placed into the more advanced track. Currently, students are placed into tracks based almost entirely off of their test scores and almost nothing else. The article explains that this is incredibly unfair as most of the people who place into these advanced classes come from wealthy, traditional white families. Since the testing is done so early, usually in the 6th grade, it allows students to be placed into their track before they are old enough to even have much of an influence over their education. It seems common to see that if a student comes from a family that is not as well off and does not emphasize education, they are just placed into the lower track and essentially forgotten about. In *Brown vs. The Board*, it was ruled that separate but equal education is inherently unequal and therefore was made illegal. This decision single handedly ended the racial segregation of schools, but this tracking system still keeps it alive. When these students are separated into their lanes of education, the curriculum they will face is different in each level. The article tells that students in the advanced classes face a challenging, college-oriented curriculum where they are encouraged and pushed to do their best.

However, the students that got placed into the lower level classes face a much more watered down curriculum that focuses more on preparing the students for a career after high school, essentially telling the students they have no reason to even try to strive for a college education. By not encouraging these students to attend college, or even really preparing them, schools are enforcing the self-fulfilling prophecy to these students. Studies show that most of the students in these lower level classes come from less-wealthy family where usually neither of the parents went to college. By putting these students in classes that do not challenge them, schools are ultimately doing a huge disservice to these students. They are not showing them that not only is college necessary and a very real possibility; it is something that every student should try to achieve. Although there will always be people who are naturally smarter than others, it is important to remember that just because a student doesn't score high on a test or look like the typical honors student, they still can be and still deserve all the same opportunities that every other student receives. This separation of students also creates a huge lack of equity in the classroom. In the article, it spoke of honors classes usually being filled with white middle class students whereas the lower classes tended to be filled with more minorities and poorer students. I can personally attest to this from my own high school tracking experiences. I was placed in the honors lane in about the 7th grade and stayed in it all the way through graduation. In my classes, there was almost no diversity at all. Everyone was white; everyone lived in nice houses and came from nice families. I saw the other students around school, in the hallways or cafeteria, but I never faced class with them because they were

seen as unable to completely the requirements to be in my classes. Not only is that a disadvantage to them but to me as well because I was not taught how to deal with diversity in the classroom which is a very important thing for schools to teach in my opinion. This tracking system essentially created an unfair dominant culture within my classroom. Just because I was from a good family that placed an emphasis on my education when I was younger, I ended up in the advanced lane. Had I been from a family where education was not a focus, I may not have scored so high on my test in middle school. I could have essentially been one family away from being in the slower lanes. The biggest problem with the tracking system in my opinion isn't the system; it's how students get into it. This is also another issue brought up by the article. One major point that the article points out is that the reason many students can't get into the classes they need is because there is not enough individual attention given to students by counselors when determining which lane they should be placed into. This is of course caused by the lack of funding for counselors and supportive staff within schools. When I was in high school, I was in the good classes and I still hardly ever talked to my counselor about classes. They never talked to me about college, class, how things were going; I couldn't imagine if I had been placed in the lower level classes where even less attention is focused on the students. So what should be done about this problem? Should there be a flat curriculum for all students? Should the current system be kept in place? Well, as the article tells and I agree with, there needs to be a different focus towards the students. It shouldn't be about sectioning off the privileged and giving them a better education than the rest. Rather, all students should be given an

enriched, challenging, and future based curriculum so every student feels like they can succeed and they are important. Of course, this won't be easy as the class system has been around since the beginning of the 20th century. Old traditions are hard to break, but if America wants to truly have equal education for all, it is necessary to change something. Several school districts around the country have already begun to implement new systems of their own to help eliminate the discrimination within their classrooms including a school district in long island. In my opinion, the key is to first off, make every student feel as though they matter. Unfortunately, many children have to grow up in households where they are not made to feel smart and important. Positive reinforcement to make students believe they can achieve must come first. Then, students should be placed into classes based on what they want to do. There should be more individual attention placed on each student and we need to realize that a standardized test does not accurately gauge a student's level of achievement. Then, no matter what level of classes a student may be in they should be challenged. If a person is never challenged and forced to figure things out for themselves, they can never learn. No matter ones opinion on how to fix the discrimination caused by the tracking system, after reading the article " How Tracking Creates a Poverty of Learning" by Mary Hatwood Futrell and Joel Gomez it is clear to see that tracking systems within American schools are indeed creating discrimination between students. Although it was intended as a way to enhance student's educations, it has become outdated and; therefore, needs to be reevaluated and a new system needs to be put into place. Things are changing not only in America, but all around the world, and it looks that the

traditional tracking system currently in place is just one of the next things to go.