

# No child gets ahead

Business



Since No Child Left Behind was ratified, the United States has plummeted in the P. I. S. A.

(Program for International Student Assessment) standings in math and science from 18th to 31st. This regulation was passed in January of 2002 by former President George Bush. It is a policy that enforces annual testing to measure student progress. These tests also function as an evaluation system for teachers. Basically, these tests put both students and teachers in “ make-or-break” situations. Standardized tests are tests that are administered and graded in the same way for everyone who takes them.

They contain multiple choice questions with the answers already determined by a group of test makers. Examples of some of these high stakes tests are the S. A. T. (Scholastic Aptitude Test), state regents exams, E. L.

A. (English Language Arts) and math state tests, and A. C. T. (American College Testing). Students from grades 3-8 are required to endure a math and language arts test each year in New York State.

Because of No Child Left Behind’s intense focus on reading, kids are receiving an unbalanced education. In 2007, The Center on Education Policy said that since 2001, 45% of school districts spend less time on science, social studies, and the arts than they do on reading. Since students are so caught up in this fast pace of teaching, in order to prepare for these tests, they don’t even have a chance to genuinely absorb any knowledge. Teachers are forced to narrow their curriculum and spend less time on skills, like problem solving and critical thinking; the abilities that students will need in

the future. These assessments are motivation for students and they allow them to set goals for themselves.

However, for students, an increase in testing creates anxiety. Also, stressing over school can lead to loss of sleep. According to the national Sleep Foundation, Growing teens need at least 8 ? hours of sleep and only about 8% of American teenagers manage to acquire that. On top of that, students that do not go to bed until after 12 PM have 25% increased chance of suffering from depression. Officials say that “ teaching to the test can be a good thing: it simply means focusing on essential content and skills”. Sadly, what this concept truly means is providing a student with a review sheet the day before a test, the student memorizing that review sheet, being able to recite it verbatim but, then having no idea what it actually means.

Then, the student takes the test and forgets everything he/she just “ learned” before he/she even gets the test back. An increase in testing worsens a vicious cycle. A student at Babylon Junior/Senior High School said, “[We] take so many tests and everything moves so fast [we] hardly have time to even learn anymore.” In a fast paced class that rushes to finish topics, kids can become confused very easily. After this mix-up, most give up and resort to cramming the night before an exam.

Instead of intensifying the amount of tests, there should be an increase in the amount of projects and group work because the way to really understand something is to practice it and to learn from others. When you understand something, you begin to like it. When you like something that is when you become an expert in it. If more time is spent making sure the material is

comprehended, test scores will go up. One of the purposes of attending school is to study things and be able to apply them.

State tests create a universal curriculum and ensure all students are getting an equal education. Though this can be good sometimes, it can also be so formulaic and specific, in that it leaves no room for creativity. Tests are mainly composed of multiple choice questions. One is graded on his/her ability to find an answer deemed correct by a group of adult test makers. Creativity is about forming your own original thoughts and thinking outside the box, not shading in boxes.

Another program that inhibits creativity is the Common Core Learning Standards. The mission of this initiative is to “ provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn... reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.” These standards prevent innovation and kill the joy of teaching because teachers are trapped within these requirements. No one is allowed to use his/her imagination in schools anymore because the government has expectations that must be met. In schools, students are no longer inspired, which leads to them to eventually enter the workforce with no motivation and leave no impact on the world. Ultimately, it’s a race to nowhere.

Many students do not even care about these assessments. During a New Mexico state test in 2004, teachers reported that students appeared to be “ having fun” throughout their exams. The kids created designs with the scantron bubbles. Teachers said “ Christmas trees were popular, so were battleships and hearts.” On a New York State 8th grade E. L.

A. test last year, students had to read a version of the turtle and the hare. In the story, a pineapple challenges a hare to a race. When the race starts, the pineapple doesn't move, because he can't move. All of the forest animals think he has a trick up his sleeve, but one of them says, " Pineapples don't have sleeves." At the end, the hare wins the race and then all of the animals eat the pineapple, making the moral of the story " Pineapples don't have sleeves.

" Not only is this story ridiculous and irrelevant, but it shows the lack of effort test creators put forth in making these exams. After No Child Left Behind was passed, state spending on standardized tests went from \$424 million to approximately \$1. 1 billion according to the Pew Center on the States. Since these tests are not helping and they do not seem to matter to anyone anymore, getting rid of them is logical and would save a good deal of money. ` The education systems that we have today are not effectively preparing the next generation for the future.

Standardized and state tests assess all of the wrong skills and the significance placed on testing leaves a negative impact on both students and teachers. We want to leave no child behind, but in doing this no child gets ahead either. Unfortunately, as Albert Einstein once said " not everything that [is] counted counts and not everything that counts [is] counted."