

Technically No Child is Left Behind If Every Child is Left Behind

By Alex Taft

We all know them, we all dread them: the midterms and end-of-year tests. Yes, we may all dread the thought of sitting down for an hour or two, and we may all be horrified by the idea that doing poorly on one test could influence how successful we'll be in eventually searching for a college; however, all of the stressing, studying, and testing is



necessary because these high-stakes tests are the most accurate way to measure a student's academic intelligence, right? Well, surprise! It's actually not even remotely effective at doing that, and all of our efforts are just preparation to jump over a hurdle put in place by America's absolutely horrendous school systems! The SAT, the ACT, all of the big tests we know and love measure our intelligence about as well as Travis Scott can manage a concert. For instance, standardized tests produce extremely inaccurate scores. Reports from Harvard graduate Bari Walsh have even found that test scores can be three to six times as large as real gains in achievement. This severe inflation of scores, as Walsh explains, is due to the fact that many students aren't successful on standardized tests because they actually retained the knowledge needed for them, but rather because they cram-studied in the days leading up to the tests. The whole point of having a standardized test is to measure the intellect of a student in a specific subject area, but how can one expect one of these tests to do so accurately when scores are so

inflated? How can one measure a student's overall intelligence, when the intelligence being measured is likely to be from short-term memory rather than retained knowledge throughout the school year? Backing the findings of Walsh, in a study conducted by professor of education and economics at the Harvard Graduate School of Education Thomas Kane and professor of economics at Dartmouth College Douglas Staiger, it was found that, "Between 50 percent and 80 percent of the improvement in a school's average test scores from one year to the next was temporary and was caused by fluctuations that had nothing to do with long-term changes in learning or productivity." Improvement in the test scores of schools is mainly caused by fluctuations, caused by cram-studying that gives students enough short-term memorization to do well on the tests. As this is the case, standardized tests don't actually measure the long-term knowledge retention of students like they were intended to do, but rather just see who did the best at cramming short-term information into their brains. There is absolutely no point in making teachers teach a curriculum based around succeeding on an end-of-year test when that test doesn't even do its job. On top of producing scores that are inaccurate, these tests are exceptionally prone to human error. Dan French, secretary of the Vermont Agency of Education, lays out multiple occasions where this has been the case, such as when the testing company "NCS Pearson" made a scoring error on the tests of 47,000 eighth through twelfth grade students in Minnesota, causing 8,000 students to incorrectly receive failing grades, and even cause 54 senior students to have their diplomas denied until the error was discovered. Or when the California Testing Bureau caused nearly 9,000 middle and high school students in New York City to have to attend a full summer school because the California Testing Bureau made

scoring errors on the tests of the students. Just imagine being forced to attend a summer school, not because you genuinely have to, but because some test scoring company scored you wrong. That was the reality for these 9,000 kids, and similar, if not worse realities face thousands of students across the nation every year who aren't lucky enough to have the organization grading their tests catch the errors. Standardized tests produce horribly inflated scores that don't actually measure student intelligence, and can even be subject to human errors that can prove devastating to the scores of the kids who take them. The current system of how student intelligence is measured to colleges must be changed, and the solution to changing them is simple: eliminate standardized tests like the ACT and SAT, and instead using GPA to display student intelligence to colleges. As GPA is based off of how a student performs in all classes throughout the school year, not just how they performed on one test, the problem of inflation is completely avoided, and students are encouraged to try harder in school throughout the year rather than to engage in stressful cram-studying right before testing. Furthermore, as GPA is measured on a smaller scale by grades imputed from individual teachers, the measurements are less subject to human error, ensuring that intelligence is represented even more accurately. Since the implementation of the "No Child Left Behind Act" in 2001 which mandated standardized testing, every child has been left behind through inaccurate representations of student intelligence. Two decades later, it's time for a change. It's time to leave No Child Left Behind behind.