

WARNING!

Testing can have negative side effects; continue use if in support of No Child Left Behind Act

It's that time of year again. The labs on the second and first floor are booked. ACT prep classes are in full swing. Practice tests are some students' Friday night plans. Juniors, it is your time to shine. But what if you could care less if you shine or not? Teachers and students should not experience the immense pressure due to one test.

For many Lakes students, scoring well on the ACT does not matter to them. College is not in their future plans. State officials, however, do care about the test scores of these students because it will determine if Lakes makes adequate yearly progress, and, therefore, if it receives money from the government. This process was created by the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002. This law requires all public K-12 students to score at a 100 percent proficiency level in reading and math by 2014. In order to meet this goal, states must instill their own standards on public schools. In Illinois, a high school is judged by its students' ACT scores each year. Failing to meet each year's benchmark risks a school landing on the "failing" list.

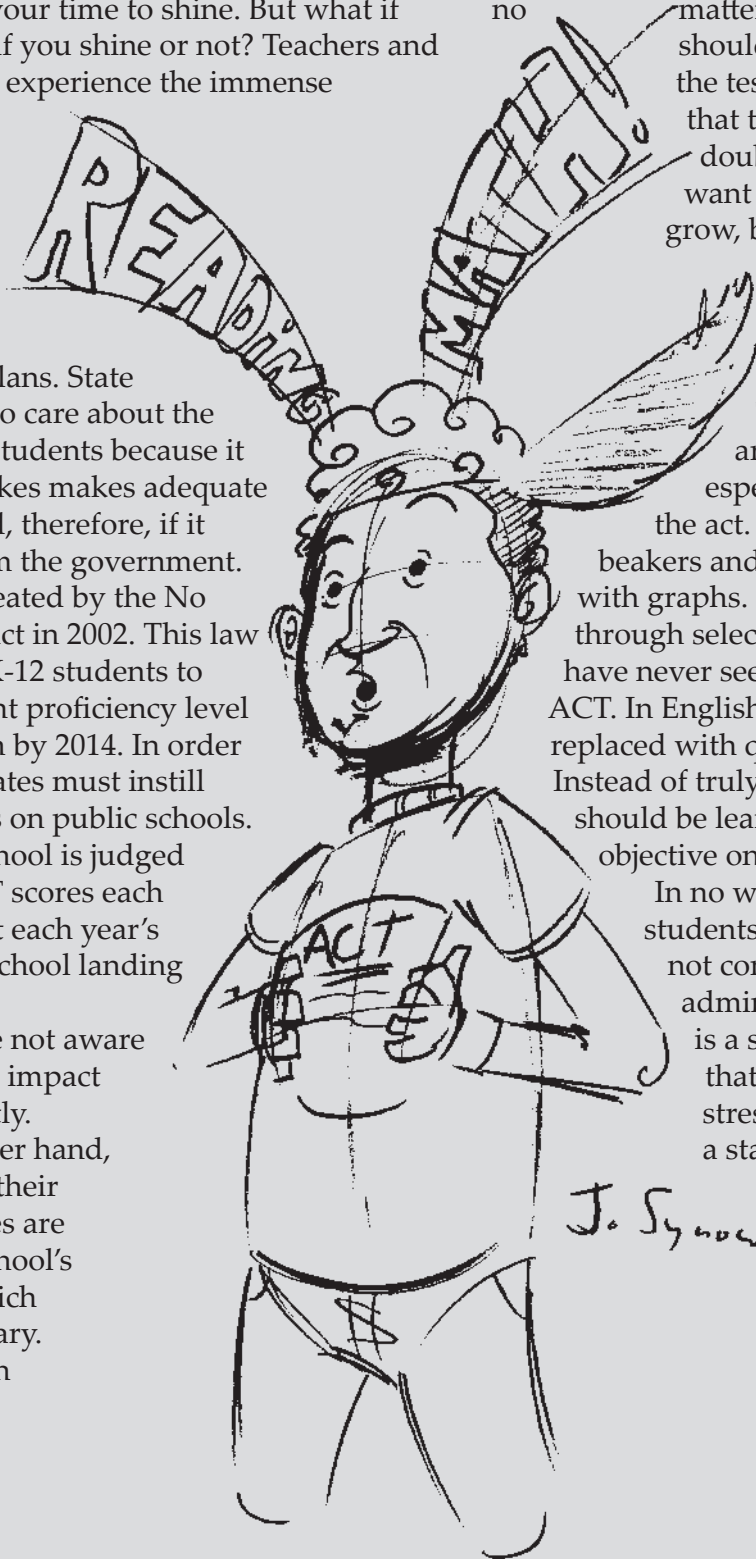
Most students are not aware that their test scores impact their school so greatly. Teachers, on the other hand, are well aware that their pupils' performances are factored in to the school's progress report, which also affects their salary. That is why they can be viewed by some as drill sergeants during March and

April when they replace a lively discussion day with a monotonous reading passage activity.

Though administrators implore that all students, no matter what their future plans are, should take the ACT seriously and view the test as beneficial, they cannot deny that their encouragement is somewhat double-sided. All teachers and staff want to see their students succeed and grow, but they also want their jobs. This mentality, whether the staff is conscious of it or not, is one of the many devastating products of the No Child Left Behind Act. The months of March and April are periods of time when one can especially see the consequences of the act. Science students put away their beakers and instead hunch over passages with graphs. Students in math classrooms leaf through selections filled with formulas they have never seen before, but will show up on the ACT. In English rooms, novels are set down and replaced with questions about comma usage. Instead of truly engaging material that students should be learning, ACT practice is the new objective on the whiteboard.

In no way does this editorial support students blowing off the ACT, and it does not condemn the practices of Lakes administrators or teachers. Rather, it is a statement to government officials that testing should not be so heavily stressed in schools. In some cases, it is a stable measurement of progress.

But in the way that the government is using the ACT, testing is completely impractical.



Q&A

What should parents, teachers, and administrators do to motivate students to do well on the ACT?



"It will get us into a good college if we do well."

— Ashlie Stritter, junior



"I feel most students are already motivated to perform well on the ACT, perhaps some sort of recognition certificate or prize would motivate them further."

— Joe Ruskin, junior



"Give them incentives like they do for attendance, stress the importance and competitiveness in colleges."

— Paul Stryzinski, teacher



"Get free parking passes for high enough test scores if you improve from your plan scores by 5, or get free ice cream."

— Michele Moes, senior

Talon Times

Submitting Letters to the Editor

Talon Times editorial board welcomes letters to the editor and guest articles. The newspaper does not necessarily agree with or endorse the opinions presented in the letters. Letters will be published (no more than five letters from one writer should be submitted per semester), provided they are limited to 200 words and contain the author's name and signature. Guest articles should be limited to 300 words. Names will sometimes be withheld from publication for good cause.

The staff reserves the right to withhold a submission or return it for more complete information, especially if it contains libel, obscenity, material disruption of the school or invasion of privacy. Letters will be edited for spelling and grammar and checked for verification. The deadline for submission will be two weeks before each publication date. Please hand deliver or submit to: Talon Times, Lakes Community High School, 1600 Eagle Way, Lake Villa, IL 60046.

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