

## **Kaitlin Ugolik**

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In 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush stated in the foreword to his No Child Left Behind Act that it would make our country's schools less segregated by "low expectations, illiteracy and self doubt". Four years later, critics believe that just the opposite has occurred.

Basing assessment heavily on standardized tests, the law puts pressure on schools to raise their scores in order to receive more funding. The standards for these tests focus on ethnic and age groups. If certain groups do not show yearly improvement, parents of children at these schools are given vouchers to send their children to "better" private schools.

"If the government is going to mandate levels and punish schools for failing, they should send that money to the school system," said Robert Duncan, Assistant Professor of Political Science.

Assistant Professor of Education Studies David Hildreth believes that the bill was passed with good intentions.

"It was passed to try to make schools more accountable for what they do, and they should be," he said. "It has made teachers more sensitive to teaching content to kids."

However, he doesn't condone the way the law has been put into action. "It's been carried out very poorly and we don't seem to have enough resources to support it in a way that is beneficial to students and teachers," Hildreth said. "It's caused entirely too much stress on teachers due to this lack of support."

The reason for this increase in stress may be the emphasis on standardized tests as a means of measuring achievement in schools.

An article from the American Educational Research Journal discusses the use of "educational triage" in a Texas school system where there are three chunks of children: those who will pass the standardized state tests, those who will pass with more help, and those who are hopeless. In this sort of system, the administration focuses on getting higher test scores, and, in effect, they neglect those who need the most help.

"The idea of making everyone at the appropriate grade level is a noble goal," Hildreth said. "That's why they have these tests. The noble goal starts becoming tainted because of a lack of resources and communication."

Hildreth said that he hasn't witnessed any cases like the one described above, and he shared his strategy for teaching about these standardized tests.

"We try to bring in what actually goes on in the classroom, and part of the educational environment is standardized testing," Hildreth said. "We try to get our students to think about how they can best

assess their students, and sometimes standardized tests are not the best assessment."