# Academic Achievement

## Notes

This is a core file where I compiled support and indicts for different ways achievement is measured. These cards are highlighted a lot because they have a lot of warrants. I highly suggest reading the cards before you put them in, because knowing them well is key to beating another card from this file that someone might read against you. There have been so many reports on these subjects so if you need more stuff, the research if pretty easy. I highlight a lot because I like the warrants in these cards – underhighlight what you think isn’t important.

#### Important things:

“under Race to the Top, School Improvement Grants (SIG), TIF, and the ESEA flexibility

waivers, the U.S. Department of Education calls for measures of student growth, not

measures of student proficiency” – Haché and Castro evidence

<https://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/kuh_team_report.pdf>

https://www.bie.edu/cs/groups/xbie/documents/text/idc1-026484.pdf

#### How to run:

As a case turn – basically that the standards they use will continue to widen the achievement gap and destroys their solvency

Can be used against a K aff and a policy aff. Like the common core aff – if you can get them to describe how justice oriented teaching works then you can have a solvency takeout. Pretty cool

If you want to make this more of a big deal you could take the achievement gap = econ collapse scenario from the Milliken aff and throw it in, but know that it’s not exactly unique so you will have to win that the aff is significantly worse than the squo

## 1NC

#### <Indict of their metric>

#### Aff must prove their metrics are accurate measures of achievement – effective standards are key for solvency

Haycock, 01 (Kati Haycock currently serves as CEO of The Education Trust. Established in 1996, Ed Trust works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college. Previously, Haycock served as executive vice president of the Children’s Defense Fund, the nation’s largest child advocacy organization. Haycock founded and served as president of The Achievement Council, a statewide organization that provided assistance to teachers and principals in predominantly minority schools in improving student achievement. She also served as director of outreach and student affirmative action programs for the nine-campus University of California system, March 2001, "Educational Leadership:Helping All Students Achieve:Closing the Achievement Gap," Educational Leadership, http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar01/vol58/num06/Closing-the-Achievement-Gap.aspx)

To increase the achievement levels of minority and low-income students, we need to focus on what really matters: high standards, a challenging curriculum, and good teachers. There's been a lot of talk lately about the achievement gap that separates low-income and minority youngsters from other young Americans. For more than a generation, we focused on improving the education of poor and minority students. Not surprisingly, we made real gains. Between 1970 and 1988, the achievement gap between African American and white students was cut in half, and the gap separating Latinos and whites declined by one-third. That progress came to a halt around 1988, however, and since that time, the gaps have widened. Although everybody wanted to take credit for narrowing the gap, nobody wanted to take responsibility for widening it. So, for a while, there was mostly silence. But that is changing. Good. Because if we don't get the numbers out on the table and talk about them, we're never going to close the gap once and for all. I worry, though, about how many people head into discussions without accurate data. And I worry even more about how many education leaders have antiquated—and downright wrong—notions about the whys beneath the achievement gap. I want to respond to both these worries by putting some crucial data on the table and by sharing what both research and experience teach us about how schools can close the gaps between groups of students. Most of the data are from standard national sources, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), as well as from states and local school districts that have been unusually successful at educating poor and minority students.1 Understanding Achievement Patterns The performance of African American and Latino youngsters improved dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s, however, were another matter. In some subjects and at some grade levels, the gaps started growing; in others, they were stagnant (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Reading achievement among 17-year-old African Americans and Latinos climbed substantially through the 1970s and 1980s, but gaps separating them from other students widened somewhat during the 1990s. The patterns in mathematics achievement look similar for 13-year-olds, with the African American and white gap reaching its narrowest in 1990 and the Latino and white gap narrowing until 1992, and the gaps widening thereafter. In 1999, by the end of high school Only 1 in 50 Latinos and 1 in 100 African American 17-year-olds can read and gain information from specialized text—such as the science section in the newspaper (compared to about 1 in 12 whites), and Fewer than one-quarter of Latinos and one-fifth of African Americans can read the complicated but less specialized text that more than half of white students can read. The same patterns hold in math. About 1 in 30 Latinos and 1 in 100 African Americans can comfortably do multistep problem solving and elementary algebra, compared to about 1 in 10 white students. Only 3 in 10 African American and 4 in 10 Latino 17-year-olds have mastered the usage and computation of fractions, commonly used percents, and averages, compared to 7 in 10 white students. By the end of high school, in fact, African American and Latino students have skills in both reading and mathematics that are the same as those of white students in 8th grade. Significant differences also persist in the rates at which different groups of students complete high school and in their postsecondary education experiences. In the 18- to 24-year-old group, about 90 percent of whites and 94 percent of Asians have either completed high school or earned a GED. Among African Americans, the rate drops to 81 percent; among Latinos, 63 percent. Approximately 76 percent of white graduates and 86 percent of Asian graduates go directly to college, compared to 71 percent of African American and 71 percent of Latino graduates. Young African Americans are only about half as likely as white students to earn a bachelor's degree by age 29; young Latinos are only one-third as likely as whites to earn a college degree (see fig. 1). What's Going On? Over the past five years, staff members at the Education Trust have shared these and related data on the achievement gap with hundreds of audiences all over the United States. During that time, we've learned a lot about what people think is going on. When we speak with adults, no matter where we are in the country, they make the same comments. "They're too poor." "Their parents don't care." "They come to school without an adequate breakfast." "They don't have enough books in the home." "Indeed, there aren't enough parents in the home." Their reasons, in other words, are always about the children and their families. Young people, however, have different answers. They talk about teachers who often do not know the subjects that they are teaching. They talk about counselors who consistently underestimate their potential and place them in lower-level courses. They talk about principals who dismiss their concerns. And they talk about a curriculum and a set of expectations that feel so miserably low-level that they literally bore the students right out the school door. When we ask, "What about the things that the adults are always talking about—neighborhood violence, single-parent homes, and so on?"—the young people's responses are fascinating. "Sure, those things matter," they say. "But what hurts us more is that you teach us less." The truth is that the data bear out what the young people are saying. It's not that issues like poverty and parental education don't matter. Clearly they do. But we take the students who have less to begin with and then systematically give them less in school. In fact, we give these students less of everything that we believe makes a difference. We do this in hundreds of different ways. Let me be clear. It would help if changes were made outside of schools, too: if parents spent more time with their children, if poverty didn't crush so many spirits, and if the broader culture didn't bombard young people with so many destructive messages. But because both research and experience show that what schools do matters greatly, I'll concentrate on what works in education. Lesson 1: Standards Are Key Historically, we have not agreed on what U.S. students should learn at each grade level—or on what kind of work is good enough. These decisions have been left to individual schools and teachers. The result is a system that, by and large, doesn't ask much of most of its students. And we don't have to go far to find that out: Ask the nearest teenager. In survey after survey, young people tell us that they are not challenged in school. The situation is worse in high-poverty and high-minority schools. For the past six years, our staff at the Education Trust has worked with teachers who are trying to improve the achievement levels of their students. But while we've been observing these high-poverty classrooms, we've also looked carefully at what happens there—what kinds of assignments teachers give, for example—compared to what happens in other classrooms. We have come away stunned. Stunned, first, by how little is expected of students in high-poverty schools—how few assignments they get in a given school week or month. Stunned, second, by the low level of the few assignments that they do get. In high-poverty urban middle schools, for example, we see a lot of coloring assignments, rather than writing or mathematics assignments. Even at the high school level, we found coloring assignments. "Read To Kill a Mockingbird," says the 11th grade English teacher, "and when you're finished, color a poster about it." Indeed, national data make it clear that we expect so little of students in high-poverty schools that we give them As for work that would earn a C or D anywhere else. Clear and public standards for what students should learn at benchmark grade levels are a crucial part of solving the problem. They are a guide—for teachers, administrators, parents, and students themselves—to what knowledge and skills students must master. Kentucky was the first state to embrace standards-based reform. Ten years ago, the Kentucky legislature put out an ambitious set of learning goals and had the audacity to declare that all of its children—even the poorest—would meet those goals. Leaders in Kentucky are the first to acknowledge that they are not there yet. But their progress is clear and compelling. And poor children are, in fact, learning in all subjects. For example, in reading, 7 of the 20 top-performing elementary schools are high-poverty; in math, 8 of the top 20 are high-poverty; in writing, 13 of the top 20 are high-poverty.

## Random but cool

#### Academic measurements needed to identify underrepresented students

Dickinson and Adelson, 2016 (Emily R. Dickinson describes her research as pertaining to Psychometrics, Educational Psychology, and Qualitative Social Research, she has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, Measurement, and Evaluation. Jill Adelson has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and is certified in Quantitative Research Methods in Psychology, “Choosing Among Multiple Achievement Measures: Applying Multitrait–Multimethod Confirmatory Factor Analysis to State Assessment, ACT, and Student GPA Data”, February 2016, Journal of Advanced Academics. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1932202X15621905)

Examining the relationships among different achievement measures is particularly important when studying advanced academics and gifted education, as achievement data are often used both in identification and as outcomes. As noted by Plucker and Callahan (2014), conflicting evidence has suggested multiple measures for identification as more effective at identifying underrepresented students (Worrell, 2009) and also as not improving identification of talented students in all groups (McBee, Peters, & Waterman, 2014). Thus, examining whether various achievement measures provide similar or different information is a timely endeavor.

#### States have large variation in test standards – means they can’t solve

Dickinson and Adelson, 2016 (Emily R. Dickinson describes her research as pertaining to Psychometrics, Educational Psychology, and Qualitative Social Research, she has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, Measurement, and Evaluation. Jill Adelson has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and is certified in Quantitative Research Methods in Psychology, “Choosing Among Multiple Achievement Measures: Applying Multitrait–Multimethod Confirmatory Factor Analysis to State Assessment, ACT, and Student GPA Data”, February 2016, Journal of Advanced Academics. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1932202X15621905)

Currently, each state is required to outline a set of content standards on which the state accountability assessment will be based. Although there may be commonalities across the state standards, research has suggested a great deal of variability across states in terms of content that may be covered in a state assessment (Porter, Polikiff, & Smithson, 2009). The federal government does not outline specific requirements with regard to test construction and administration. The extent to which state tests vary on the inclusion and weighting of different item types could have implications for achievement scores derived from these assessments (see Arrasmith, Sheehan, & Applebaum, 1984; Rauch & Hartig, 2010, for comparisons of multiple-choice and open-ended items).Variations in student performance may also be attributable to dif- ferences in the method of test administration. For instance, performance on particular items is enhanced when administered via a computer-based test versus a paper-based test (Threlfall, Pool, Homer, & Swinnerton, 2007).

### Counterplans?

#### Not the federal government but redefine academic success

York et al, 15 (Travis York has a Ph. D in Higher Education from Penn State and was previously a professor of higher education at Valdosta State, is the Director of Student Success, Research, & Policy at the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, “Defining and Measuring Academic Success”, Volume 20, Number 5, March 2015, Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation, http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=20&n=5)

A revised definition and model. It is with this critique in mind that we present an amended definition and conceptual model of academic success (Figure 2). Based on our findings we define academic success as inclusive of academic achievement, attainment of learning objectives, acquisition of desired skills and competencies, satisfaction, persistence, and postcollege performance. We include academic achievement for its obvious depiction of students’ academic performance and for its intended representation of academic ability. We also include the attainment of learning objectives and the acquisition of desired skills and competencies within our model as separate arms of academic success because of the ways in which they are spoken about in the literature; however, in our effort to theoretically critique the term academic success we find a significant amount of overlap between these three “spokes” of our model. We argue academic achievement should be a direct result of attaining learning objectives and acquiring desired skills and competencies. However, we find a conceptual reason to separate academic achievement as it captures only a students’ performance ability and not necessarily their learning. In a very real sense, academic achievement is a threshold assessment—it captures a student’s ability to meet performance criteria. In this way, grades are intended to measure learning or knowledge; in other words, they are proxy measurements intended to capture attainment of learning objectives and acquisition of skills and competencies. We find it conceptually helpful to separate academic achievement from the attainment of learning objectives and acquisition of skills and competencies because its nature as a proxy and because it is almost always referenced in an aggregate form (grade in a course or GPA).

#### Counterplan – eliminate class ranking and GPA

**Kohn 16** (Alfie Kohn, Alfie Kohn is an American author and lecturer in the areas of education, parenting, and human behavior, 12-13-2016, "The Myth Of The Spoiled Child," Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/12/13/the-case-for-abolishing-class-rank/?utm_term=.c18d63a8f65b>) CH

\*edited for ableist language

When students are rated with letter or number grades, research shows they’re apt to think in a shallower fashion — and to lose interest in what they’re learning — as compared with students who aren’t graded at all. Alternative methods for reporting student progress are not only less destructive but also potentially more informative. Given the absence of pros to balance the cons, then, you have to wonder why grades persist. The only explanation that seems even halfway persuasive is the fear that kids won’t get into college if they aren’t tagged with a GPA. But of course that doesn’t explain why grades would be used in middle school (or, heaven help us, elementary school), where students’ performance is of no interest to colleges.[1] Moreover, some (public and private) high schools do not give any grades at all, and their graduates are regularly accepted by both large state universities and small, selective colleges. Logic and evidence argue for getting rid of grades, but that doesn’t have to happen overnight. School officials might start the process by setting up a student/teacher/administrator/parent committee to investigate the topic. That committee presumably would read the research on the damaging effects of grades and interview staff members at (or perhaps visit) a school that’s already grade-free. Moreover, there are intermediate steps that can be taken before abolishing grades completely. For example, a high school might start by eliminating them for freshmen, giving students one more year to be able to focus on the learning itself. Or, at a minimum, they can eliminate the particularly noxious practice of ranking students against one another, which turns academics into a competitive sport and designates the victor as “valedictorian.” That last suggestion is worth considering in its own right. The vicious rivalry and inevitable resentment on display as a handful of overachievers battle it out over tiny differences in GPA has led some schools to stop ranking, or at least to identify a batch of high-scoring kids as co-valedictorians — a tiny step in the right direction. Predictably, these moves often stir up furious objections, and not exclusively from parents of top-graded students. In part, such rage reflects a deep strand of social conservatism that resists logic or evidence. Elsewhere, I’ve suggested that it’s rooted in an ideological commitment to conditionality (the belief that anything desirable must be earned; no free lunch!), scarcity (viewing excellence as something that, by definition, can be attained only by a few), and deprivation (a conviction that children ought to have to struggle). In my experience, people who are outraged by the prospect of eliminating class rank tend to react similarly to the practice of handing out thanks-for-playing trophies after a children’s soccer game, since this threatens the principle that all but the conquering heroes must go home empty-handed. When pressed to defend the idea of class rank (and the practice of identifying a valedictorian), proponents rely principally on two arguments. First, they contend that recognizing a single student for exceptional achievement demonstrates our support for excellence and hard work. Second, such an arrangement is said to prepare youngsters for life, which is regarded as unavoidably competitive. These assertions are often accompanied by dismissive, sarcastic references to the hurt feelings of “the losers” — which, of course, includes every student but one. These six quick responses may be useful to anyone who encounters such claims: 1. The differences in grade-point averages among high-achieving students are usually statistically insignificant. It’s therefore both pointless and misleading to single out the one (or ten) at the top. Indeed, very qualified students at high-performing schools may end up looking less desirable to colleges just because they’re not in that select group. This possibility seems to have been more decisive in convincing some high schools to stop ranking their students than the deeper and more widespread harms of this practice. 2. Ranking provides little if any practical benefit. Class rank has much less significance to college admissions officers than a range of other factors, and the proportion of colleges that view it as an important consideration has been dropping steadily. Even a decade ago, according to the National Association for College Admission Counseling [NACAC], nearly 40 percent of high schools had either stopped ranking their students or refused to share those numbers with colleges — a shift that apparently has had no effect on students’ prospects for admission. More recently, “college admissions officers said they have seen a steep drop-off in the number of applicants who come from schools that rank students.” 3. What is rewarded by singling out those with the best grades isn’t always merit or effort but some combination of skill at playing the game of school (choosing courses with a keen eye to the effect on one’s GPA[2], figuring out how to impress teachers, etc.) and a willingness to sacrifice sleep, health, friends, reading for pleasure, and anything else that might interfere with one’s grades. “The most important reason that class rank is on the decline is because it really isn’t a direct measure of student achievement,” David Hawkins of NACAC told the Washington Post. Of course, one might argue that class rank should be on the decline primarily because of its destructive effect on kids — regardless of how well they play the game. One reporter described the process as follows: As early as ninth grade, top students figure out the selection procedures and find ways to improve their standing in comparison to classmates. They’ll take, for instance, an “easier” Advanced Placement course — AP Biology instead of AP Chemistry. Others don’t take certain required classes — namely courses that don’t carry bonus points — until the latter half of their senior year, after class rankings are tabulated and sent out in college applications. More worrisome is the practice of teenagers who won’t pursue an interest in, say, photography for fear of lowering their average. Those classes normally do not carry bonus points. “A client of mine told me that taking music or journalism was out of the question because she couldn’t justify what it would do to her GPA,” [education consultant David] Altshuler recalls. “I can tell you there was a lot less joy in her curriculum.”[2] 4. If the chance to be a valedictorian is supposed to be a motivator, then the effect of class rank is to demotivate the vast swath of students who realize early on that they don’t ~~stand~~ [have] a chance of acquiring this distinction. 5. What we’re talking about here is extrinsic motivation, which is not only different from, but corrosive of, intrinsic motivation (interest in the learning itself). This ultimately harms everyone, including the top students. As I noted earlier, the use of an extrinsic inducement such as grades promotes a more superficial approach to learning and diminishes students’ engagement with it. Research by educational psychologists also suggests that it leads students to prefer less-challenging tasks. The effect of class rank, honor rolls, and grade-based scholarships — all of which are essentially rewards for having been rewarded – is to make grades even more salient and thus to exacerbate all three of these disturbing effects. 6. Pitting students against one another for the status of having the best grades takes the strychnine of extrinsic motivation and adds to it the arsenic of competition. It not only shifts the focus from learning (what students are doing) to achievement (how well they’re doing it) but also teaches students to regard their peers not as friends or allies but as potential obstacles to their own success. Thus, ranking makes the high school experience unnecessarily stressful while simultaneously destroying the sense of community and any potential for peer support that can help students get through those years intact. \*\*\* Is there any disadvantage to getting rid of class rank? Well, doing so might eliminate bragging rights for a handful of sleep-deprived students with the highest GPAs. And it might pose a slight inconvenience to colleges that (a) would rather have applicants presorted for their convenience and (b) are desperate for their own higher ranking (since U.S. News & World Report looks at the number of students at each college who were in the top ten percent of their high school class). Judged by meaningful criteria, getting rid of class rank is an obvious first step — but only a first step — toward restoring ~~sanity~~ [peace], supporting a culture of learning, and promoting intellectual excellence (as opposed to an emphasis on academic rewards). Ideally it should be followed by moving away from grades altogether, which some schools have already proved is not only possible but enormously beneficial.

## Metrics Important

#### [can replace second card in 1NC] Standards are essential for all aspects of student achievement

Porter-Magee, 13 (Kathleen Porter-Magee is the Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer at the Partnership for Inner-City education and a Bernard Lee Schwartz Fellow at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, she served as the Senior Advisor for Policy and Instruction at the College Board, as the Director of Curriculum and Professional Development at Achievement First, and the Director of Teacher and Principal Professional Development and Recruitment for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., she has previously taught at the middle and high school levels, she has her M.A. in Education Policy and Leadership from the George Washington University , 11-14-2013, "Back to basics: Do standards matter?," Thomas B. Fordham Institute, https://edexcellence.net/commentary/education-gadfly-daily/common-core-watch/back-to-basics-do-standards-matter)

It turns out there are four facts that emerge from the research that suggest standards are important (but not a silver bullet). 1. School-level accountability drives student achievement Hanushek’s opposition to standards-driven reform is particularly curious when you consider his own research on the link between state accountability and student achievement. In a 2005 study—published jointly with Margaret Raymond for the National Bureau of Economic Research—he found that state achievement growth as measured by the National Assessment of Educational progress shows that accountability systems…had a clear positive impact on student achievement.” In other words, state accountability—which is impossible absent state K–12 academic standards by which to gauge student or school performance—clearly impacts achievement. 2. Standards influence instruction Adding confusion to Hanushek’s opposition to the Common Core is his assertion that standards don’t matter because “what really matters is what is actually taught in the classroom.” Of course that’s true. What isn’t taught is not likely to get learned. Classroom instruction matters enormously. And as Mike argued in another post yesterday, standards are meant to influence instruction (without being overly prescriptive as to the specifics of curriculum or pedagogy). But we also have empirical evidence demonstrating that standards do influence classroom instruction. A study published last year by Morgan Polikoff in the American Journal of Education found that, while teachers exaggerate the degree to which they’ve aligned their classroom instruction to state standards, classroom practice does shift in response to academic expectations. (The results were stronger in math than reading, but in both cases, “changes in alignment take place.”) What’s noteworthy about Polikoff’s findings is that despite the existence of standards that Fordham experts found to be vague to the point of near meaninglessness, and despite very uneven implementation of those standards both within and across states, there is evidence that teachers did align their practice to meet the K–12 expectations that were set by their states. Furthermore, in another study published in AERA’s Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis in May 2012, Polikoff found that the better aligned state assessments were to state standards, the more aligned classroom-level instruction was to the standards and assessments. Far from suggesting that standards don’t matter, these results suggest the potential for an even greater impact in an environment where academic expectations are clearer and implementation more focused and consistent. 3. Standards alone are not enough Opponents of standards- and accountability-driven reform typically rely not just on Hanushek’s and Loveless’s research but also on student-achievement results from California and Massachusetts to give real-world examples of the disconnect between the quality of a state’s standards and the achievement of its students. As Hanushek has explained, for example, In arguing for focusing on standards, proponents of national standards conventionally point to Massachusetts: strong standards and top results…But, California balances Massachusetts: strong standards and bottom results. What is most frustrating (and a tad disingenuous) about this argument—and about sweeping declarations that standards don’t matter—is that the research doesn’t seem to account for implementation of the standards. They simply look at the standards’ quality, then they look at student achievement, and then they declare standards DOA. Of course, like everything in the multifaceted world of school- and classroom-level reform, the equation is far more complicated. As we’ve long said—and as is entirely in line with some of Whitehurst’s and Hanushek’s arguments—standards alone do very little. For them to drive achievement, they obviously need to be implemented, which means they need to have statewide assessments aligned with them, they need to inform school accountability, and they need to drive curriculum and instruction. And the evidence suggests that if states set clear and rigorous standards and properly align statewide assessments to them, we will see classroom-level change. But let’s not forget that implementation is not only important to standards, but to all reforms. For instance, while Whitehurst is right that curriculum can meaningfully drive achievement, the impact of even a proven curriculum depends in large part on how faithfully that program is implemented. In other words, no matter what, classroom change is hard and implementation matters immensely. 4. Standards’ content and coherence matters Finally, to suggest that accountability (tied to state standards) matters but that the quality, content, and rigor of the state’s standards do not is illogical. For example, research conducted by William Schmidt and published in Educational Researcher found a link between the content and coherence of K–12 expectations and student achievement in math. Specifically, his analysis found that “states whose previous standards were most similar to the Common Core performed better on a national math test in 2009.” He found similar results when he compared standards of other high-performing nations to the Common Core. Those findings are unsurprising when you consider that the specifics of what students study is critical. This is especially true in subjects like math, where knowledge is cumulative and students cannot advance without mastery of essential prerequisite knowledge and skills. That is no doubt part of the reason Whitehurst found that faithfully implemented curriculum have a significant impact on student achievement: because curricula give clear, unambiguous guidance about what students should know and how a teacher might structure lessons, units, and instruction to ensure that all students master that essential content. That said, because a curriculum is only as effective as it is well implemented, local educators and leaders need to make curricular choices based not only on program effectiveness and alignment but also on the likelihood that a particular program will be faithfully implemented in the classroom. Those decisions will no doubt be influenced by teacher quality, training, access to resources, and on. In other words, as Hanushek himself acknowledged, “what matters most is what happens in the classroom.” And so, rather than ignoring standards, we should be focused on ensuring that those standards are clear, focused, and coherent so that they can help teachers organize their classes in ways we know make a difference. All of this is to say that, while Loveless’s, Hanushek’s, and Whitehurst’s research should not be ignored, we should be very careful not to look at their findings in isolation because we have a growing evidence base that supports a rather different policy prescription: the importance not just of setting K–12 academic standards but also of ensuring that those standards are well implemented, and that they are clear, rigorous, and coherent from grade to grade.

#### Good metrics are better for students

Kim, 17 (Jonathan Kim is a Professional Services Engineer in Higher Education Professional Services, 2-16-2017, "The 5 Most Commonly Found Metrics for Student Success," Evisions, https://evisions.com/5-commonly-found-metrics-student-success/)

Many 2-year institutions have been placing increasing importance on a student’s educational goal rather than common metrics such as retention rates. Unlike context-dependent metrics like retention rates, focusing on the student’s educational goal may be more indicative of student success. These institutions see students who enroll with the intention of transferring, or who take courses to earn certifications for specific careers and then leave prematurely without a degree. These students would not be counted in retention and graduation rates. However, if these were the intentions of the students when they enrolled in the institution, they should be viewed as successful. To track the progress of educational goals, institutions must plan and set policy. Students should be encouraged to meet with an adviser and set a goal from a list of predetermined goals (including earning a degree and specific job placement). A workflow should be put in place, one with data points and that tracks the student’s academic life. This process is more involved. It requires resources and coordination among technical staff, instructors and advisers to provide student engagement. However, it can also result in benefits such as enhanced student satisfaction and a reputation for meeting student goals.

#### Standards shape curriculum

Kelly, 17 (Denise Kelly is the director of Standards Alignment and Curriculum at Apex Learning, 1-16-2017, "3 Reasons Standards are Essential to Educational Success," https://www.apexlearning.com/blog/3-reasons-standards-are-essential-to-educational-success)

While the role of standards in education has shifted over time, the stakes surrounding standards remain high — and will continue to remain high in the future. Standards are an essential component of education because: Standards set clear and measurable goals. There’s a common misunderstanding surrounding standards. Individuals often perceive standards as the curriculum or course of study in a particular subject. Rather, standards inform educators about what the outcomes of a course of study should be. Common Core and other state college and career readiness standards define the skills and knowledge that students must obtain to be prepared for college, work and life; standards also guide the goals that educators must work toward. Standards inform instruction. Standards are what curriculum, assessments and professional development are designed to support and achieve. At Apex Learning, curriculum development starts with standards. Our standards-based curriculum is designed around Depth of Knowledge, which was developed by Dr. Norman Webb of the University of Wisconsin to ensure accountability, student achievement and that learning will lead to successful outcomes on high stakes exams.

## Metrics Useless

#### Standards don’t help any students

Hanushek, 12 (Eric A. Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. He has been a leader in the development of economic analysis of educational issues. His research spans such diverse areas as the impacts of teacher quality, high stakes accountability, and class size reduction on achievement and the role of cognitive skills in international growth and development. His pioneering analysis measuring teacher quality through student achievement forms the basis for current research into the value-added of teachers and schools. He has written 4 books about the current status of economics, statistics, and education along with numerous widely-cited articles in professional journals. He has taught at University of Rochester, Yale University, and the U.S. Air Force Academy and serves as the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences, Deputy Director of the Congressional Budget Office, and Senior Staff Economist at the Council of Economic Advisers. He is a member of the National Academy of Education and a fellow of the International Academy of Education, the Society of Labor Economists and the American Education Research Association. He completed his Ph.D. in economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 5-9-2012, "Is the Common Core Just a Distraction?," Education Next, <http://educationnext.org/is-the-common-core-just-a-distraction/>)

All of the intense pushing and shoving about the “common core” leaves one simple question, “should we care?” Policy makers and reform advocates alike have rallied around movement toward a national curriculum, suggesting that this will break the stagnation in achievement of U.S. students. But there is little evidence that confusion about what we should teach has been a real inhibition to student achievement. In fact, the existing evidence suggests just the opposite: There is no relationship between learning standards of the states and student performance. To be sure, it is a real problem when students in one state learn very different things than those in other states, and in particular when students from some states lack the skills needed for our modern economy. We really do have a national labor market, and significant numbers of our population end up living and working in a state different than that where they were born and went to school. The presumption behind having national standards (whether voluntary or coerced) is that having a clearer and more consistent statement of learning objectives across states would tend to lessen the problem of heterogeneous skills that students bring to the labor market. Again, however, the fundamental problem is lack of minimal skills and not the heterogeneity of skills per se. Experience provides little support for the argument that just more clearly declaring what we want children to learn will have much impact. In arguing for focusing on standards, proponents of national standards conventionally point to Massachusetts: strong standards and top results. But, it is useful to expand thinking from just Massachusetts to include California, a second state noted for its high learning standards. Indeed, some have argued that both states would have to lower their standards in order to fit into the structure of the common core. But, California balances Massachusetts: strong standards and bottom results. In order to see the issue more broadly, it is possible to compare state-by-state measures of learning standards to student outcomes. There are different independent ratings of the quality of the existing learning standards currently existing for each state, and these can be combined with assessments of student performance from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The most comprehensive rating of state standards is probably that of Education Week. Education Week developed a comprehensive grading across grade-specific standards, testing, and the accountability that goes with them in each state. This ranking provides aggregate grades for each state. (Another widely acknowledged rating of state standards by subject is produced by the Fordham Institute. These competing rankings are correlated with those of Education Week, though not perfectly, and it really makes no difference for the analysis which we use.) The figure below shows how the ranking of standards compares to NAEP scores – here the 8th grade math scores. (The specific NAEP assessment for grade and subject has no influence on the overall conclusions). As can be seen, the better the state standards the worse the students tend to do. But, of course, this does not imply that we should move toward weaker standards. The real conclusion is that state standards have little to do with student performance. In other words, what really matters is what is actually taught in the classroom. Simply setting a different goal – even if backed by intensive professional development, new textbooks, and the like – has not historically had much influence as we look across state outcomes. There are a number of refinements that one can think about for this analysis, but they do not change the answer. This conclusion holds even under more sophisticated analysis, as demonstrated quite conclusively by Tom Loveless of the Brookings Institution. Indeed his analysis helps to frame the entire debate. The continuing emphasis on common core standards, including the debates about the legality of them, is often interpreted as indicating that the common core is a really big deal in school reform. The data suggest otherwise.

#### Standards won’t help decrease deficiencies

Marshall and Burke, 10 (Jennifer A. Marshall worked on cultural policy issues at Empower America and was previously senior director of family studies at the Family Research Council and taught at an American school in Lyon, France. She has spoken at national and international forums, testified before Congress and appeared on numerous radio and television shows, including C-SPAN’s “Washington Journal” and PBS’ “To the Contrary.” Lindsey M. Burke devotes her time and research to two critical areas of education policy: reducing federal intervention in education at all levels, and empowering families with education choice, Burke’s commentary, research, and op-eds have appeared in a wide variety of major newspapers and magazines, including The Boston Herald, The Washington Times, The Atlantic, and Time, Burke holds a bachelor's degree in politics from Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, and a master of teaching degree in foreign language education from the University of Virginia, May 21, 2010, "Why National Standards Won’t Fix American Education: Misalignment of Power and Incentives," Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/education/report/why-national-standards-wont-fix-american-education-misalignment-power-and)

Abstract: American education needs to be fixed, but national standards and testing are not the way to do it. The problems that need fixing are too deeply ingrained in the power and incentive structure of the public education system, and the renewed focus on national standards threatens to distract from the fundamental issues. Besides, federal control over education has been growing since the 1960s as both standards and achievement have deteriorated. Heritage Foundation education policy experts Lindsey Burke and Jennifer Marshall explain why centralized standard-setting will likely result in the standardization of mediocrity, not excellence. National education standards and assessments are getting renewed attention from the Obama Administration as the missing ingredient in American education reform. Proponents of national standards argue that establishing “fewer, higher, and clearer” benchmarks and aligned assessments will empower parents with information about what their children should know and which skills they should possess and that they will hold schools accountable for producing those results. National standards and testing, they say, will ensure that all children are ready for college or the workforce and will advance the educational standing of the United States. On the one hand, such a critique of the status quo is well founded. Parental empowerment is essential and currently lacking. The monopoly that is the public education system must be more accountable to parents and taxpayers. Too many students leave high school without basic knowledge or skills. American education should be more competitive, particularly given the amount of money that taxpayers invest. On the other hand, national standards and testing are unlikely to overcome these deficiencies. These problems are too deeply ingrained in the power and incentive structure of the public education system. A national standards debate threatens to distract from these fundamental issues. Centralized standard-setting would force parents and other taxpayers to relinquish one of their most powerful tools for school improvement: control of the academic content, standards, and testing through their state and local policymakers. Moreover, it is unclear that national standards would establish a target of excellence rather than standardization, a uniform tendency toward mediocrity and information that is more useful to bureaucrats who distribute funding than it is to parents who are seeking to direct their children’s education. Common national standards and testing will not deliver on proponents’ promises. Rather than addressing the misalignment of power and incentives from which many public education problems arise, national standards and testing would further complicate these same problems. An effort by the Clinton Administration to produce national standards and tests during the 1990s was roundly rejected because of strong opposition among Members of Congress, state leaders, and others.[1] This renewed push for common national standards and assessments should be similarly resisted.

#### Standards won’t close the achievement gap

Coley and Baker, 13 (Richard J. Coley is Executive Director of the ETS Center for Research on Human Capital and Education, He has been involved in studies of federal, state and local education policy issues, including studies of school finance and governance, teacher education and certification, educational standards, education indicators and education reform. Bruce Baker is a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers He is a lead author of Financing Education Systems, a graduate level textbook on school finance policy. July 2013. Educational Testing Service is the world's largest private nonprofit educational testing and assessment organization. “Poverty and Education: Finding the Way Forward”, https://www.ets.org/s/research/pdf/poverty\_and\_education\_report.pdf)

Given this strong association between educational success and economic disadvantage, one might expect education policy to focus on ways to overcome the effects of poverty on children as a way to improve overall education outcomes. Yet, popular education policies focus on developing common curriculum standards, test-based accountability systems, using students’ scores on standardized tests in teacher evaluations, and promoting competition among schools. These efforts are not likely to contribute much to raise student achievement or close achievement gaps because they disregard the educational challenges that are faced in the daily lives of disadvantaged children (Ladd, 2012).

## Growth Good

#### Consensus that growth is good for schools, students, and teachers

Barnum, 17 (Matt Barnum has a bachelors in psychology from UChicago. has been a middle school English teacher, the director of policy at Educators 4 Excellence, a senior writer at the 74, and a national writer at Chalkbeat, January 18, 2017, "Barnum: The Growth vs. Proficiency Debate and Why Al Franken Raised a Boring but Critical Issue," The 74 is a non-profit, non-partisan news site covering education in America., [https://www.the74million.org/article/barnum-the-growth-vs-proficiency-debate-and-why-al-franken-raised-a-boring-but-critical-issue)](https://www.the74million.org/article/barnum-the-growth-vs-proficiency-debate-and-why-al-franken-raised-a-boring-but-critical-issue%29)

Franken’s position in favor of growth (how much students improve) over proficiency (how many students meet a certain score deemed proficient) appears to be on solid ground. A 2008 survey of education researchers found that more than two in three said that value-added metrics — which examine how much students grow from year to year — are a good way to measure school quality. Just 9 percent said that “raw test scores” — proficiency — made sense for evaluating schools. Why are researchers, at least in this survey, so in favor of growth measures? Perhaps the most basic reason is that there are many factors that affect what level a student achieves at and whether they hit the bar set at proficiency. Careful research finds that about 20 percent, and perhaps less, of the variation in student achievement is explained by differences in schools. That pales in comparison to out-of-school factors, like poverty, that have a significant effect on learning. Schools matter, but they aren’t the sole or even main driver of student outcomes. What that means for proficiency is that schools that take disadvantaged students — those in poverty, those who come in at low achievement levels — will look much worse. The school could be doing a great job helping kids improve, but if they start out at a very low level, that might not show up on proficiency measures. Put simply, proficiency rewards schools for the students they take in, but not necessarily for how they teach students once they’re there. Proficiency is also problematic not just because it is a score at one point in time — referred to as “status” by researchers — but because it sets an all-or-nothing bar for students to reach. That means it doesn’t matter if a student just missed proficiency or scores way below it. Franken argues, “With proficiency, teachers ignore the kids at the top who are not going to fall below proficiency, and they ignore the kid at the bottom who they know will never get to proficiency.” Indeed, there is research suggesting this phenomenon — sometimes called “educational triage” — is real, though other studies do not find evidence of it. The extent of such triage likely varies from place to place, but the incentives for it inevitably exist when proficiency is used.

#### Growth is good for teachers and closing the achievement gap

Lachlan-Haché and Castro, 15 (Lisa Lachlan-Haché, Ed.D - Ph.D. in Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations, principal researcher at AIR, conducting educational policy research at all governmental levels in teacher quality, teacher accountability, performance management, specifically the implementation of effectiveness systems, previously a researcher at the New Teacher Center. Marina Castro – degree in psychology at U.C. Santa Cruz, has over 7 publications with AIR and specializes in data management and research, April 2015, American Institutes For Research, Proficiency or Growth? An Exploration of Two Approaches for Writing Student Learning Targets http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Exploration-of-Two-Approaches-Student-Learning-Targets-April-2015.pdf)

Growth targets recognize that teachers’ impact on student learning may look different from student to student. Growth targets are typically informed by students’ baseline knowledge. Thus, teachers determine student targets at the beginning of a school year and then use them as a guide to evaluate their impact on students’ learning throughout the year. This approach can be beneficial because the growth target can encompass learning from all levels. Growth targets recognize teachers’ efforts with all students. Growth targets allow teachers to set realistic learning goals for all students. For students far below proficiency, it may take more than one year to reach grade level. Students come in at different starting points. Growth goals support teachers in identifying what learning looks like for students at all levels of performance. Growth targets can guide critical discussions around closing achievement gaps. Growth targets can encourage teachers to work with colleagues to close achievement gaps across time. Through our work at AIR, we have seen teachers working in vertically aligned grade-level teams, data teams, and professional learning communities using the goal-setting process to develop long-range goals to bring students who perform far below proficiency up to grade level during the course of multiple school years.

#### Growth metrics is better for evaluating how much schools help students

Petrilli and Churchill, 16 (Michael J. Petrilli is president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, executive editor of Education Next, and a Distinguished Senior Fellow for Education Commission of the States, Petrilli helped to create the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement, the Policy Innovators in Education Network, and Young Education Professionals. He serves on the advisory boards of the Association of American Educators, MDRC, and Texas Aspires. Aaron Churchill oversees a portfolio of research projects aimed at strengthening education policy in Ohio, Aaron’s research interests include standardized testing and accountability, school evaluation, school funding, and educational markets, 10-13-2016, "Why states should use student growth, and not proficiency rates, when gauging school effectiveness," The Thomas B Fordham institute - an American nonprofit education policy think tank, https://edexcellence.net/articles/why-states-should-use-student-growth-and-not-proficiency-rates-when-gauging-school)

In an era of high standards and tough tests, proficiency rates are correlated with student demographics and prior achievement. If schools are judged predominantly on these rates, almost every high-poverty school will be labeled a failure. That is not only inaccurate and unfair, but it will also demoralize educators and/or hurt the credibility of school accountability systems. In turn, states will be pressured to lower their proficiency standards. Growth measures—like “value added” or “student growth percentiles”—are a much fairer way to evaluate schools, since they can control for prior achievement and can ascertain progress over the course of the school year. They can also differentiate between high-poverty schools where kids are making steady progress and those where they are not.

## Growth Bad

#### Growth systems have too many flaws

Lachlan-Haché and Castro, 15 (Lisa Lachlan-Haché, Ed.D - Ph.D. in Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations, principal researcher at AIR, conducting educational policy research at all governmental levels in teacher quality, teacher accountability, performance management, specifically the implementation of effectiveness systems, previously a researcher at the New Teacher Center. Marina Castro – degree in psychology at U.C. Santa Cruz, has over 7 publications with AIR and specializes in data management and research, April 2015, American Institutes For Research, Proficiency or Growth? An Exploration of Two Approaches for Writing Student Learning Targets [http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Exploration-of-Two-Approaches-Student-Learning-Targets-April-2015.pdf)](http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Exploration-of-Two-Approaches-Student-Learning-Targets-April-2015.pdf%29)

\*edited

Setting rigorous yet realistic growth targets can be challenging. As mentioned above, setting growth goals is a challenging endeavor. First, growth may be a form of measurement that raises skepticism or concern. Second, although standards may be established, common expectations around “expected growth” (i.e., how much growth on average a student makes in a given course) may not be. Third, trend data, vendor-provided growth targets, and other baseline data may not be available to inform target setting, and when they are available, teachers and principals may struggle to make sense of them. Finally, new standards and assessments add to the complexity by changing learning expectations. Poor pretest and posttest designs can undermine the value of growth targets. Assessment quality matters regardless of the type of target that a teacher sets, but additional assessment considerations apply for setting growth targets. The assessments given at the beginning of a school year need to have stretch so that teachers can accurately identify students’ true starting points. There are major limitations and potential measurement error in pretest and posttest designs, particularly when the same assessment is used for both administrations. Caution is warranted when using pre- and post-tests (see Marion et al., http://www.nciea.org/publication\_PDFs/Measurement%20Considerations%20 for%20NTSG\_052212.pdf). Growth targets may present additional challenges for ensuring comparability across teachers. Because teachers often develop growth targets for their individual students, ensuring the comparability and rigor of student learning targets across all teachers can be challenging. States and districts can establish various processes to ensure comparability, such as requiring the same assessment and/or training evaluators on how to approve rigorous student learning targets, but if guidance is not provided, growth targets will vary considerably. If parameters are not set, teachers working in the same subjects and grades may use the same assessments but set targets that are not comparably rigorous. If growth targets are not rigorous and long-term planning does not occur, the lowest performing students may not achieve proficiency. The focus on growth in these kinds of targets is designed to have students show growth in learning every year to ultimately close achievement gaps. However, if the goals are not rigorous or if long-term planning across teachers of different grade levels does not occur, students may be required to grow across time but never achieve proficiency. For an example of how a student may meet a growth target even though ~~he or she~~ [they] did not achieve proficiency, see the example of Student B in the appendix. Growth target scoring is often more complex. Because growth scores are often taking into account multiple points of data (e.g., student baseline scores as well as summative scores), the scoring process can require more calculation, which generally does require more time and also leaves more room for error.

#### Using growth metrics won’t prepare kids for the real world

Finn and Aldis, 16 (Chester E. Finn, Jr. has served on numerous boards, currently including the Maryland State Board of Education, the National Council on Teacher Quality, and the Core Knowledge Foundation, he holds an undergraduate degree in U.S. history, a master's degree in social studies teaching, and a doctorate in education policy, all from Harvard University. Chad L. Aldis has served as the Executive Director of School Choice Ohio and the Ohio State Director for StudentsFirst, Chad worked at the Florida Department of Education where he oversaw the John M. McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Program and the Tax Credit Scholarship Program, 10-17-2016, "Disputing Mike and Aaron on ESSA school ratings," No Publication, https://edexcellence.net/articles/disputing-mike-and-aaron-on-essa-school-ratings)

Try this thought experiment. You’re evaluating swim coaches. One of them starts with kids most of whom already know how to swim and, after a few lessons, they’re all making it to the end of the pool. The other coach starts with aquatic newbies and, after a few lessons, some are getting across but most are foundering mid-pool and a few have drowned. Which is the better coach? What grade would you give the second one? Now try this one. You’re evaluating two business schools. One enrolls upper middle class students who emerge—with or without having learned much—and join successful firms or start successful new enterprises of their own. The other enrolls disadvantaged students, works very hard to educate them, but after graduating most of them fail to get decent jobs and many of their start-up ventures end in bankruptcy. Which is the better business school? What grade would you give the second one? The point, obviously, is that a school’s (or teacher’s or coach’s) results matter in the real world, more even than the gains its students made while enrolled there. A swim coach whose pupils drown is not a good coach. A business school whose graduates can’t get good jobs or start successful enterprises is not a business school that deserves much praise. Nor, if you were selecting a swim coach or business school for yourself or your loved one, would you—should you—opt for one whose former charges can’t make it in the real world. Public education exists in the real world, too, and EdTrust is right that we ought not to signal satisfaction with schools whose graduates aren’t ready to succeed in what follows when those schools have done what they can. Mike and Aaron are trying so hard to find a way to heap praise on schools that “add value” to their pupils that they risk leaving the real world in which those pupils will one day attempt to survive, even to thrive. Sure, schools whose students show “growth” while enrolled there deserve one kind of praise—and schools that cannot demonstrate growth don’t deserve that kind of praise. But we mustn’t signal to students, parents, educators, taxpayers or policymakers that we are in any way content with schools that show growth if their students aren’t also ready for what follows.

## Proficiency Good

#### Proficiency is valuable for schools and simpler than growth

Lachlan-Haché and Castro, 15 (Lisa Lachlan-Haché, Ed.D - Ph.D. in Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations, principal researcher at AIR, conducting educational policy research at all governmental levels in teacher quality, teacher accountability, performance management, specifically the implementation of effectiveness systems, previously a researcher at the New Teacher Center. Marina Castro – degree in psychology at U.C. Santa Cruz, has over 7 publications with AIR and specializes in data management and research, April 2015, American Institutes For Research, Proficiency or Growth? An Exploration of Two Approaches for Writing Student Learning Targets http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Exploration-of-Two-Approaches-Student-Learning-Targets-April-2015.pdf)

Proficiency targets encourage teachers to think about a minimum expectation for student performance. When setting proficiency targets, teachers must determine the minimum amount of content mastery that students must demonstrate by the end of a course. Proficiency is a valuable concept that supports teachers in aiming for a common expectation of student learning. Generally, measures of student proficiency are based on common standards and are determined by common expectations regarding the critical skills and content knowledge necessary for students to be prepared for success. Proficiency targets do not require preassessments or any other baseline data. Because the targets reflect minimum expectations (rather than growth) at the end of a course, proficiency targets do not require preassessments and therefore may reduce the need for additional assessments. For this reason, proficiency targets can be valuable, particularly in subjects lacking baseline or trend data (e.g., physics, economics).4 Proficiency targets reflect a focus on narrowing achievement gaps. In schools challenged by persistent achievement gaps, a focus on proficiency for all students may be valuable, as long as proficiency is defined in a meaningful way. In some cases, achieving proficiency for all students in one year or semester is not likely or possible, but acknowledging this need is crucial for teachers to lead students to proficiency across time. Proficiency targets are likely more familiar to teachers. Proficiency goals are similar to the annual measurable objectives used in NCLB, in which a certain minimum percentage of students must meet proficient or above on the state examination each year. Thus, setting a minimum percentage of students who must meet a minimum threshold is commonplace in most schools. That said, teachers are probably more familiar with thinking of proficiency as it applies to school accountability. Teachers may need support to determine what proficiency looks like and how to assess it at the classroom level. Proficiency targets, in many cases, simplify the scoring process when student learning measures are incorporated into evaluation. Identifying the number or the percentage of students who meet the student learning target can be done easily. On the other hand, scoring growth targets may require calculating each individual student’s growth to determine whether the learning target has been met.

#### Proficiency is the best metric for preparing kids for college

Pekow, 17 (Suzanne Pekow, a reporter for Minnesota Public Radio, has a Master’s degree in Journalism and has done multiple pieces on education for APM, 6-26-2017, "When a diploma means more than just 'seat time'," American Public Media, [http://www.apmreports.org/story/2017/06/26/when-a-diploma-means-more-than-just-seat-time)](http://www.apmreports.org/story/2017/06/26/when-a-diploma-means-more-than-just-seat-time%29)

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In the United States, more than half of recent high school graduates who go on to community college end up taking remedial courses. That means high school didn't teach them everything they needed to know to be ready for college. Some people are trying to change the way school is structured in order to make sure all students master a pre-determined set of skills. It's an approach called competency-based learning. "The basic idea there is that kids are judged on having achieved a certain level of mastery in a skill as opposed to having completed a course," said Lillian Mongeau, a reporter at the Hechinger Report, in an interview for the Educate podcast. Some of the key components of this approach are that students must master a skill or competency before they move on. If they are having trouble mastering a specific skill, they can get help from their teacher and get tested multiple times until they get it. In the traditional system, a student takes a test, gets a grade and moves on to the next lesson, even if their command of the material is shaky. Mongeau wrote a series of stories about competency-based education (also called mastery-based and proficiency based learning). Maine has a law that requires all schools to convert to a proficiency-based diploma by 2021. "The idea in Maine is that if all diplomas are being awarded based on proficiency then the diplomas will be somewhat equivalent to each other and they'll really ~~stand~~ [symbolize] for something concrete," Mongeau said. "We want the diploma to have meaning again," said Chris Sturgis, co-director of Competency Works, an advocacy organization. "Because students are graduating in our country who can barely read at a high school level, and that is a failure of our education system." In this podcast episode, we hear from Kylee, a student at Nokomis Regional High School in Newport, Maine, who struggled at the beginning of the year in an honors algebra class. "I wouldn't know how to do certain things," Kylee said in an interview for this podcast. "I'd have to get lot of help and I'd study for my test and everything and then the test day would just hit me and I'd draw a blank." Before competency-based learning came to Nokomis, Kylee's teacher Ellen Payne said teachers sent students on to the next level, even if they got a mediocre grade on a test.

#### Proficiency systems are amazing for schools – ask Maine

Mongeau, 17 (Lillian Mongeau has a Master’s in Journalism , she was a 2017 Livingston Award for Young Journalists finalist for her series on public preschool in the United States. Lillian was also awarded by the Education Writers Association, she is currently a freelance education reporter, 6-11-2017, "How diplomas based on skill acquisition, not credits earned, could change education," Hechinger Report, http://hechingerreport.org/how-diplomas-based-on-skill-acquisition-not-credits-earned-could-change-education/)

\*edited

The law requires that by 2021, students graduating from Maine high schools must show they have mastered specific skills to earn a high school diploma. Maine is the first state to pass such a law, though the idea of valuing skills over credits is increasingly popular around the country. “Maine is the pioneer,” said Chris Sturgis, co-founder of CompetencyWorks, a national organization that advocates for the approach in K-12 schools. This year’s nearly 13,500 eighth graders will be the first students required to meet the changed requirements, which are being phased in gradually. By 2021, schools must offer diplomas based students reaching proficiency in the four core academic subject areas: English, math, science and social studies. By 2025, four additional subject areas will be included: a second language, the arts, health and physical education. When such a system works, it’s meant to offer students clarity about what they have to learn and how they are expected to demonstrate they’ve learned it. Students have more flexibility to learn at their own pace and teachers get time to provide extra help for students who need it. Ideally, every diploma in Maine would signify that students had mastered the state’s learning standards. But the law grants local districts lots of leeway in determining what students must do to prove their proficiency, which means the value of the new diplomas will still be largely determined by where students live. Logistical hurdles, resistance from teachers fed up with top-down reforms, confusion about exactly what the law requires, and missing information about how districts will be judged on their compliance are among the challenges that come with overhauling the state’s high schools. Five of the state’s 124 high schools are on target to hand out the new diplomas next spring, according to a spokesperson for the Maine Department of Education, while others have barely started to make the transition. Erika Stump, a research associate at the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation at the University of Southern Maine, has written seven reports on proficiency-based education in the state. Asked how it’s going so far, Stump replied: “It depends on how you define ‘it’ and how you define ‘going.’” Since the mid-1990s several New England states have looked to proficiency-based education in an attempt to ensure a more equal education for all students. In fact, several Maine districts, including Gray-New Gloucester, were already working toward a proficiency-based model at the time the diploma law was passed. Starting in 2011, several key groups and people in Maine worked to put the state ahead of the pack in terms of legal requirements for proficiency. Educate Maine, a local nonprofit with several business and technology leaders on its board of directors, spoke out early in favor of the diploma law. Former state education commissioner Stephen Bowen was a cheerleader for the idea during his tenure at the Maine Department of Education from 2011 to 2013. “Maine has really had a struggle making the transition from a natural resource-based economy to whatever this new economy is,” said Bowen, who now directs innovation initiatives for the Council of Chief State School Officers, a national association for state superintendents. “There was a sense that we needed to swing for the fences to make the economic transition the state needs to make.” Bowen said that test scores had been flat and educators told him they felt they had squeezed all the success there was to squeeze out of the current system. “It wasn’t for lack of trying,” Bowen said. “It was a systems design problem.” Initially, there was little pushback, said Lois Kilby-Chesley, president of the Maine Education Association, the state’s teachers’ union. “The way it was presented was that it was going to meet the needs of every student, and that sounds like what all of us want,” Kilby-Chesley said. As the rollout of the new system has proved challenging and confusing for many school districts, though, the union’s position has grown more cautious. Kilby-Chesley now worries that low-performing and special education students could be hurt. The proficiency-based idea has also created headaches at some schools for teachers trying to monitor students’ individual progress. Many teachers are skeptical of yet another in what seems like a series of endless “reforms” from the state government. Teachers report that some parents worry that switching to a new grading system with numbers instead of letters, which is an option for schools but not a requirement of the law, could affect college admissions. And the consequences for not meeting the terms of the law, including the way districts will be judged, have not yet been published by the Maine Department of Education. At this point, Kilby-Chesley said that the union would support legislation to repeal the current proficiency-based diploma law. “We do want all kids to be proficient, obviously,” she said. “But when you say, ‘Here’s the bar, and you’re never going to be able to jump over it,’ why would [students] bother to keep trying?” But at schools that have embraced the new system, teachers say they are finding that struggling students are seeing the biggest gains because teachers are given more time to re-teach skills and students better understand the parameters for earning a diploma. “I think it’s going to raise our graduation rate,” said Nokomis Principal Mary Nadeau. “It’s going to free us from backtracking. We can just cut to the chase and say, ‘Can you do this?’” If a student can write a great essay by the end of 10th grade, she pointed out, why should it matter that ~~he or she~~ [they] struggled to write essays for most of freshman year? Once the student can show proficiency in essay writing, ~~his or her~~ [their] grade on that skill in a previous course can cease to be a concern. “Part of this change has been about equity,” Nadeau said. Deciding to believe that all students are capable of learning all of the standards, she said, “was scary.” In the classrooms at Nokomis, tests are now broken down into specific sets of skills so teachers can identify how well students understand each task. When students get less than a proficient score, they must go back and study the skill they missed. They are then given a chance to retake the relevant portions of the test until they earn a satisfactory score. Kylee said that process is why she now loves algebra and is on track with the rest of her class. “I definitely would have struggled if I didn’t have to go through the process of retaking,” Kylee said. “It ties to what we’re doing now, so if I didn’t know it, I wouldn’t be getting the grades I get.” It has always been true that algebra students need to master variables in order to move on to factoring, for example, but ninth graders weren’t always so adept at understanding that, Kylee’s teachers said. A similar realization has motivated students who don’t master all the skills in a given course by the end of the school year, Payne said. In part, that’s because they now get to keep the credit for the skills they have learned. “While we will still have students having to repeat Algebra I—or any other class—they will at least not have wasted their year,” Payne said. “They will have fewer [skills] that they have to meet the next year which takes a little pressure off them.” If one of Payne’s algebra students gets through just half of the skills one year, he will be signed up for the course again the following year. The difference now is that he will be able to start where he left off. He might work independently from the rest of the class, with Payne providing guidance, until he masters all the necessary skills. The shift in thinking about how students learn best has inspired other changes at Nokomis too. A new algebra class for students who struggle the most with that subject meets daily instead of every other day to provide the needed extra time. English students can prove their understanding of concepts in more than one way, such as illustrating a poem to demonstrate a grasp of figurative language. Multiple-choice questions have virtually disappeared. Homework is checked, but not graded. “We really thought if we didn’t grade it, they wouldn’t do it,” Payne said of the homework she and her colleagues assign. She said that fear proved unfounded. Teachers and administrators here said they prioritized their students and families over fitting any preconceived idea of what proficiency-based education should look like. For example, they use the 1-to-4 grading scale in class to help students better understand how close they are to hitting their proficiency targets. For report cards, they convert those scores into letter grades to make it simple for parents, colleges and other post-secondary institutions to understand.

## Proficiency Bad

**------there are more indicts in the growth good evidence, consider reading it unless it conflicts with something else you have------**

#### Proficiency measurements bad

Lachlan-Haché and Castro, 15 (Lisa Lachlan-Haché, Ed.D - Ph.D. in Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations, principal researcher at AIR, conducting educational policy research at all governmental levels in teacher quality, teacher accountability, performance management, specifically the implementation of effectiveness systems, previously a researcher at the New Teacher Center. Marina Castro – degree in psychology at U.C. Santa Cruz, has over 7 publications with AIR and specializes in data management and research, April 2015, American Institutes For Research, Proficiency or Growth? An Exploration of Two Approaches for Writing Student Learning Targets http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Exploration-of-Two-Approaches-Student-Learning-Targets-April-2015.pdf)

Proficiency targets may not accurately reflect teachers’ impact on student learning. When student learning is included in teacher evaluations, proficiency targets may overlook student learning that did or did not occur as a result of a teacher’s instruction because proficiency targets may not take into account students’ baseline level of knowledge at the beginning of a school year. Students may make great gains in their learning as a result of a teacher’s efforts, but that success will not be reflected in the teacher’s student learning score if the lowest performing students do not achieve proficiency by the end of a school year. For example, in a reading class, if a fourth-grade student begins the year reading at a first-grade level and ends the year reading at a third-grade level, the target might be considered unmet if the goal was for all students to be proficient on the fourth-grade standards at the end of the year—even though the teacher’s efforts resulted in two years of growth in one year. Similarly, a reading teacher with a group of fourth-grade students beginning the year reading at above grade level may not increase students’ learning but will still be recognized as being effective with those students because the students met the minimum expectation. If the proficiency level is set artificially low or high, it may seem as if either all students or no students achieved proficiency when that may not actually be the case. Proficiency targets may neglect the highest and lowest performing students. Because proficiency targets focus on a minimum threshold (generally, what is considered a passing or a proficient score), students who begin at or above the proficient level often do not need to demonstrate any increase in learning at the end of a course for a teacher to meet the student learning target. In addition, teachers may perceive proficiency targets for their lowest performing students as unattainable and instead focus their efforts on the bubble students—those who are not yet proficient but are close to being proficient. Thus, in practice, the implementation of proficiency targets can neglect both the highest performing and the lowest performing students. For an example of how proficiency targets may neglect the highest performing students, see the example of Student A in the appendix. Expecting all students to achieve proficiency within one academic year may not be developmentally appropriate. Students who begin the year significantly deficient in the prerequisite skills or those with severe disabilities may be unable to achieve proficiency within one school year. For an example of how proficiency targets may expect students to show too much growth in one year, see the example of Student B in the appendix. Proficiency targets may not meet national and state policy requirements. Some federal and state initiatives require that evaluation ratings be tied to student growth, not achievement or proficiency. States and districts should check applicable regulations to determine whether proficiency measures are allowed. For example, under Race to the Top, School Improvement Grants (SIG), TIF, and the ESEA flexibility waivers, the U.S. Department of Education calls for measures of student growth, not measures of student proficiency. These initiatives expect teachers and leaders to set expectations based on predicted student learning or the individual progress toward proficiency, not general proficiency levels.

#### Schools are an awful way to judge schools

Barnum, 17 (Matt Barnum has a bachelors in psychology from UChicago. has been a middle school English teacher, the director of policy at Educators 4 Excellence, a senior writer at the 74, and a national writer at Chalkbeat, January 18, 2017, "Barnum: The Growth vs. Proficiency Debate and Why Al Franken Raised a Boring but Critical Issue," The 74 is a non-profit, non-partisan news site covering education in America., [https://www.the74million.org/article/barnum-the-growth-vs-proficiency-debate-and-why-al-franken-raised-a-boring-but-critical-issue)](https://www.the74million.org/article/barnum-the-growth-vs-proficiency-debate-and-why-al-franken-raised-a-boring-but-critical-issue%29)

Since proficiency scores are highly correlated with poverty, using them to rate schools inevitably means that low-income schools will, by and large, get the worst scores. This may make such schools less desirable places to work, since they face stigma and accountability pressure, potentially driving away good teachers from the schools that need them most. Accountability may be helpful when schools are genuinely struggling, but applying it indiscriminately to high-poverty schools is likely to backfire. A focus on proficiency may also create the wrong sort of incentives for schools. To the extent schools are able to push out students — and there are certainly examples of this — a heavy focus on proficiency may reward schools for doing just that, since it’s fairly easy to predict which students will hit proficiency each year. In most states, educators or policymakers set the benchmark for proficiency, based on what they believe students should know at that age. Schools may have some sense of which students will grow the most, but they probably can’t predict that with the same degree of certainty. Proficiency is often the most prominent set of data about a school. Presented without qualification in media reports or on school report cards, such scores can suggest to families that a school is better or worse than it actually is, leading, for instance, many students to compete over attending high-scoring selective enrollment schools, even when they actually have no effect on student outcomes. Proficiency-based measures also may increase the likelihood of school segregation, as affluent families avoid low-income schools, deeming them ineffective based on bad data.

#### Proficiency is a bad way to evaluate schools

Petrilli and Churchill, 16 (Michael J. Petrilli is president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, executive editor of Education Next, and a Distinguished Senior Fellow for Education Commission of the States, Petrilli helped to create the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement, the Policy Innovators in Education Network, and Young Education Professionals. He serves on the advisory boards of the Association of American Educators, MDRC, and Texas Aspires. Aaron Churchill oversees a portfolio of research projects aimed at strengthening education policy in Ohio, Aaron’s research interests include standardized testing and accountability, school evaluation, school funding, and educational markets, 10-19-2016, "Why states should use student growth, and not proficiency rates, when gauging school effectiveness," The Thomas B Fordham institute - an American nonprofit education policy think tank, https://edexcellence.net/gadfly-weeklys/the-education-gadfly-weekly-growth-v-proficiency-the-batman-v-superman-of-education)

States should use proficiency rates cautiously because of their correlation with student demographics and prior achievement—factors that are outside of schools’ control. Let’s illustrate what this looks like in the Buckeye State. One of Ohio’s primary school-quality indicators is its performance index (PI)—essentially, a weighted proficiency measure that awards more credit when students achieve at higher levels. Decades of research have shown the existence of a link between student proficiency and student demographics, and that unfortunate relationship persists today. Chart 1 displays the correlation between PI scores and a school’s proportion of economically disadvantaged (ED) pupils. Schools with more ED students tend to post lower PI scores—and vice-versa. Chart 1: Relationship between performance index scores and percent economically disadvantaged, Ohio schools, 2015–16 Data source: Ohio Department of Education Notes: Each point represents a school’s performance index score and its percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The red line displays the linear relationship between the variables. Several high-poverty districts in Ohio participate in the Community Eligibility Provision program; in turn, all of their students are reported as economically disadvantaged. As a result, some less impoverished schools (in high-poverty districts) are reported as enrolling all ED students, explaining some of the high PI scores in the top right portion of the chart. Given this strong correlation, it’s not surprising that almost all high-poverty urban schools in Ohio get failing grades on the performance index. In 2015–16, a staggering 93 percent of public schools in Ohio’s eight major cities received a D or F on this measure, including several well-regarded schools (more on those below). Adding to their misery, urban schools received even worse ratings on a couple of Ohio’s other proficiency-based measures, such as its indicators met and annual measureable objectives components. Parents and students should absolutely know whether they are proficient in key subjects—and on track for future success. But that’s a different question from whether their schools should be judged by this standard.

## GPA Good

#### GPA is good for identifying gifted students

Dickinson and Adelson, 2016 (Emily R. Dickinson describes her research as pertaining to Psychometrics, Educational Psychology, and Qualitative Social Research, she has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, Measurement, and Evaluation. Jill Adelson has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and is certified in Quantitative Research Methods in Psychology, “Choosing Among Multiple Achievement Measures: Applying Multitrait–Multimethod Confirmatory Factor Analysis to State Assessment, ACT, and Student GPA Data”, February 2016, Journal of Advanced Academics. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1932202X15621905)

Although not intended to evaluate the quality any of these achievement measures, the findings from this study provide empirical evidence to support that achievement scores derived from teachers’ interactions with students, such as GPA, reflect elements of the achievement construct other than what is reflected in large-scale assessment scores. Teachers may have unique insight into the qualities of gifted students that are not as readily captured by more formal assessment approaches (Foreman & Gubbins, 2015) but which introduce increased subjectivity into the identification process. Conversely, standards-based assessments, particularly computer-adaptive tests that allow students to demonstrate knowledge and skill beyond their grade level, may offer a more objective approach to identifying gifted students and may address the measurement limitations caused by ceiling effects when students are only given opportunities to demonstrate grade-level knowledge and skills (McBee, 2010; Swiatek, 2007).

#### GPA is more important that college-entrance tests and help disadvantaged students

Maitre, 14 (Michelle Maitre covers career and college readiness for EdSource and was previously a high school teacher, 2-21-14, "High school grades are a better predictor of college success than SAT, ACT, study says," EdSource, [https://edsource.org/2014/high-school-grades-are-a-better-predictor-of-college-success-than-sat-act-study-says/58033)](https://edsource.org/2014/high-school-grades-are-a-better-predictor-of-college-success-than-sat-act-study-says/58033%29)

\*edited

As California and other states work to define what “college and career readiness” means, a new study finds that a more reliable predictor of whether a student does well in college is ~~his or her~~ [their] high school grades, rather than ACT or SAT scores. “One of the core messages of this study is that high school grades matter, and they matter a lot,” said principal investigator William C. Hiss, a professor and former dean of admissions at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. The study analyzed student and alumni records from 123,000 students in 33 colleges where SAT or ACT scores are optional for admission. The results found that a student’s performance in college closely mirrored their performance in high school: Students with strong grade point averages in high school maintained similar GPAs in college, regardless of how well or poorly they scored on college entrance exams. Likewise, students with lower GPAs – even those with high SAT or ACT scores – had lower GPAs in college and graduated at lower rates. “That surprised me,” Hiss said. “I did not expect to see the correlation was that close.” The study, published Feb. 18 on the website of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, adds new fuel to debates over the role of entrance exams in college admissions. Students in the study who did not submit SAT or ACT scores were more likely to be minorities, the first in their family to attend college, come from low-income families, and have learning disabilities, the study said. Standardized admissions tests can create a barrier to college for many students, Hiss said. “For economic growth and social stability, America will need to find successful paths to higher education for hundreds of thousands of additional first-generation-to-college, minority, immigrant, rural and (learning disabled) students,” Hiss wrote in a fact sheet accompanying the study. “This study provides the research support for optional testing as at least one route by which that can happen.”

## GPA Bad

#### GPA and grades are inflated and doesn’t motivate students

Crouch, 13 (Chris Crouch has worked as a high school English teacher and an instructional coach. He has had previous blogs appear on The Aspen Institute, The Business Innovation Factory, and Education Weekly, 11-1-2013, "Grades Do More Harm Than Good," Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-crouch/grades-do-more-harm-than-\_b\_4190907.html)

Grades are Inflated. Ask most teachers and you’ll probably hear the same insight. Part of the reason is the cycle of interaction that happens between teachers, students and parents. Parents rely on grades to communicate their child’s progress (more on this in a bit). Students feel pressured to get “good” grades and work hard. Teacher assesses work and assigns a grade. That’s the typical cycle, but there is a next step. If the grade assigned by the teacher does not align with the parents’ perception of their child’s work, there is usually an awkward conversation that ensues. One way teachers avoid this awkward conversation is by inflating grades, either through awarding “bonus” points or by skewing assigned grades toward the higher end of the spectrum. So by “padding” the results of the student’s work, the true picture of a student’s learning gets lost. Grades Remove Intrinsic Motivation Grades and the havoc they impart on the teaching and learning process impacts the desire to learn for learning’s sake. When the goal of education is the grade at the end of an assignment, a specific period of time, or course, the intrinsic motivation to excel in other realms of life that may not have extrinsic rewards is much more difficult. How do we encourage our children to work toward a goal that may not have a tangible benefit at the end? By focusing and stressing grades as parents and teachers, we force our children to believe that the destination is more important than the journey. This message comes across loud and clear to our kids. Many kids feel pressured to cut corners, sacrifice ethics, and take easier courses, all in an effort to achieve better grades instead of better learning. Now, teachers own a part of this cycle as well. Do we always assign meaningful work? Do we always assess for growth? Do we always communicate expectations? I believe we are getting better at this but we certainly have some work to do. We complain about students only being interested in grades, but how much of that do we, as teachers, create ourselves? Reflecting back on my practice, I warrant to guess that we contribute a great deal. Grades Are Poor Communicators Somewhere along the way, there became an unspoken agreement that grades are effective communicators of student learning. And somehow we as a society have taken this bait; hook, line and sinker. The variability of student grades from teacher to teacher, course to course, school to school, and state to state are so great, I can’t believe that we realistically put any stock in what they measure and what they communicate. At best they are an accurate snapshot of where a student is but they do not provide parents or students meaningful feedback for improvement or even growth.

#### Grades are inherently biased

Guskey and Pollio, 08 (Thomas R. Guskey is a professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. He has taught at all school levels, worked as a school administrator in the Chicago Public Schools, and was the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national educational research center. Howard R. Pollio has written 4 books about education and knowledge retention. He specializes in education psychology with a Ph.D. from University of Michigan. "Grading Systems," 2008, http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2017/Grading-Systems.html)

Negative consequences result when subjectivity translates to bias. This occurs when factors apart from students' actual achievement or performance affect their grades. Studies have shown, for example, that cultural differences among students, as well as their appearance, family backgrounds, and lifestyles, can sometimes result in biased evaluations of their academic performance. Teachers' perceptions of students' behavior can also significantly influence their judgments of academic performance. Students with behavior problems often have no chance to receive a high grade because their infractions over-shadow their performance. These effects are especially pronounced in judgments of boys. Even the neatness of students' handwriting can significantly affect teachers' judgments. Training programs help teachers identify and reduce these negative effects and can lead to greater consistency in judgments.

#### Grades, especially curved ones, negatively affect learning

Guskey and Pollio, 08 (Thomas R. Guskey is a professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. He has taught at all school levels, worked as a school administrator in the Chicago Public Schools, and was the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national educational research center. Howard R. Pollio has written 4 books about education and knowledge retention. He specializes in education psychology with a Ph.D. from University of Michigan. "Grading Systems," 2008, http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2017/Grading-Systems.html)

At the same time, no studies support the use of low grades or marks as punishments. Instead of prompting greater effort, low grades usually cause students to withdraw from learning. To protect their self-image, many regard the low grade as irrelevant and meaningless. Other students may blame themselves for the low mark, but feel helpless to improve. Grading and reporting should always be done in reference to learning criteria, never "on the curve." Although using the normal probability curve as a basis for assigning grades yields highly consistent grade distributions from one teacher to the next, there is strong evidence that it is detrimental to relationships among students and between teachers and students. Grading on the curve pits students against one another in a competition for the few rewards (high grades) distributed by the teacher. Under these conditions, students readily see that helping others threatens their own chances for success.

#### GPA doesn’t indicate a student’s future success

Guskey and Pollio, 08 (Thomas R. Guskey is a professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. He has taught at all school levels, worked as a school administrator in the Chicago Public Schools, and was the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national educational research center. Howard R. Pollio has written 4 books about education and knowledge retention. He specializes in education psychology with a Ph.D. from University of Michigan. "Grading Systems," 2008, http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2017/Grading-Systems.html)

Because GPAs are significant in categorizing student performance, a number of evaluations have been made of their reliability and validity. One issue to be addressed here concerns field of study, where it is well documented that classes in the natural sciences and business produce lower overall grades than those in the humanities or social sciences. What this means is that it is unreasonable to equate grade values across disciplines. It also suggests that the GPA is composed of unequal components and that students may be able to secure a higher GPA by a judicious selection of courses. Although other factors may be mentioned aside from academic discipline (such as SAT level of school, quality and nature of tests, etc.) the conclusion must be that the GPA is a poor measure and should not be used by itself in coming to significant decisions about the quality of student performance or differences between departments and/or educational institutions. The GPA is also a relatively poor basis on which to predict future performance, which perhaps explains why such attempts are never very impressive. In fact, a number of meta-analyses of this relationship, conducted every ten years or so since 1965, reveals that the median correlation between GPA and future performance is 0.18; a value that is neither very useful nor impressive. The strongest relationship between GPA and future achievement is usually found between undergraduate GPA and first-year performance in graduate or professional school.

## Class Ranking Bad

#### School ranking is bad for students and doesn’t even mean anything to colleges

Guskey, 14 (Thomas R. Guskey is a professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. He has taught at all school levels, worked as a school administrator in the Chicago Public Schools, and was the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national educational research center, March 28, 2014, "Class Rank Weighs Down True Learning," Education Weekly, http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/03/01/kappan\_guskey.html)

If we go back to the original question about whether our purpose is to select talent or to develop talent, then the answer as to why we calculate cumulative grade point averages to determine students’ class rank is clear. Rank-ordering the students in every graduating class has nothing to do with developing student talent. Rather, it is unquestionably about selecting talent. Determining class rank does not help students achieve more or reach higher levels of proficiency. With the possible exception of the top-ranked student, class rank also does nothing to enhance students’ sense of self-worth, their confidence as learners, or their motivation for learning. On the contrary, evidence indicates ranking students may diminish student motivation (Covington, 1992). If we say our purpose is to develop talent, then computing class rank is unmistakably counter to that purpose. High school educators argue that they’re compelled to rank-order graduating students because selective colleges and universities require information about class rank on applications. But, although that might have been true in the past, it is not nearly as prevalent today. In a recent survey, Eric Hoover (2012) found that only 19% of colleges and universities give class rank “considerable importance” in the application process. Most admission officers expressed serious skepticism about the meaningfulness of class rank. Among the traditional measures of student quality, class rank was “widely described by admissions officers as the fuzziest” (Hoover, 2012, p. A1). The importance of class rank has changed significantly in recent years because college and university admission officers recognize the striking differences in student populations at different high schools and the tremendous variation in the way high schools compute class rank. Every state has high schools that serve advantaged student populations and send over 80% of graduates to some form of higher education. Every state also has high schools that serve primarily economically disadvantaged students and, often due to factors over which students have no control, less than 30% of graduates go on to higher education. The GPAs and class ranks of students at these schools can reflect significantly different levels of achievement. David Lang (2007) offered further evidence skeptical of class ranking. In a survey of 232 of the 500 largest public high school districts in the U.S., he discovered that schools varied widely in their ranking procedures. Many systems had inherent flaws that provided incentives for students to enroll in less rigorous classes or to avoid taking additional classes due to potentially detrimental effects on their class ranking. Some high schools used unweighted GPAs while others applied different weights to classes of varying perceived difficulty.

#### GPA/Grades/Class rank bad

**Kohn 16** (Alfie Kohn, Alfie Kohn is an American author and lecturer in the areas of education, parenting, and human behavior, 12-13-2016, "The Myth Of The Spoiled Child," Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/12/13/the-case-for-abolishing-class-rank/?utm_term=.c18d63a8f65b>) CH

\*edited for ableist language

When students are rated with letter or number grades, research shows they’re apt to think in a shallower fashion — and to lose interest in what they’re learning — as compared with students who aren’t graded at all. Alternative methods for reporting student progress are not only less destructive but also potentially more informative. Given the absence of pros to balance the cons, then, you have to wonder why grades persist. The only explanation that seems even halfway persuasive is the fear that kids won’t get into college if they aren’t tagged with a GPA. But of course that doesn’t explain why grades would be used in middle school (or, heaven help us, elementary school), where students’ performance is of no interest to colleges.[1] Moreover, some (public and private) high schools do not give any grades at all, and their graduates are regularly accepted by both large state universities and small, selective colleges. Logic and evidence argue for getting rid of grades, but that doesn’t have to happen overnight. School officials might start the process by setting up a student/teacher/administrator/parent committee to investigate the topic. That committee presumably would read the research on the damaging effects of grades and interview staff members at (or perhaps visit) a school that’s already grade-free. Moreover, there are intermediate steps that can be taken before abolishing grades completely. For example, a high school might start by eliminating them for freshmen, giving students one more year to be able to focus on the learning itself. Or, at a minimum, they can eliminate the particularly noxious practice of ranking students against one another, which turns academics into a competitive sport and designates the victor as “valedictorian.” That last suggestion is worth considering in its own right. The vicious rivalry and inevitable resentment on display as a handful of overachievers battle it out over tiny differences in GPA has led some schools to stop ranking, or at least to identify a batch of high-scoring kids as co-valedictorians — a tiny step in the right direction. Predictably, these moves often stir up furious objections, and not exclusively from parents of top-graded students. In part, such rage reflects a deep strand of social conservatism that resists logic or evidence. Elsewhere, I’ve suggested that it’s rooted in an ideological commitment to conditionality (the belief that anything desirable must be earned; no free lunch!), scarcity (viewing excellence as something that, by definition, can be attained only by a few), and deprivation (a conviction that children ought to have to struggle). In my experience, people who are outraged by the prospect of eliminating class rank tend to react similarly to the practice of handing out thanks-for-playing trophies after a children’s soccer game, since this threatens the principle that all but the conquering heroes must go home empty-handed. When pressed to defend the idea of class rank (and the practice of identifying a valedictorian), proponents rely principally on two arguments. First, they contend that recognizing a single student for exceptional achievement demonstrates our support for excellence and hard work. Second, such an arrangement is said to prepare youngsters for life, which is regarded as unavoidably competitive. These assertions are often accompanied by dismissive, sarcastic references to the hurt feelings of “the losers” — which, of course, includes every student but one. These six quick responses may be useful to anyone who encounters such claims: 1. The differences in grade-point averages among high-achieving students are usually statistically insignificant. It’s therefore both pointless and misleading to single out the one (or ten) at the top. Indeed, very qualified students at high-performing schools may end up looking less desirable to colleges just because they’re not in that select group. This possibility seems to have been more decisive in convincing some high schools to stop ranking their students than the deeper and more widespread harms of this practice. 2. Ranking provides little if any practical benefit. Class rank has much less significance to college admissions officers than a range of other factors, and the proportion of colleges that view it as an important consideration has been dropping steadily. Even a decade ago, according to the National Association for College Admission Counseling [NACAC], nearly 40 percent of high schools had either stopped ranking their students or refused to share those numbers with colleges — a shift that apparently has had no effect on students’ prospects for admission. More recently, “college admissions officers said they have seen a steep drop-off in the number of applicants who come from schools that rank students.” 3. What is rewarded by singling out those with the best grades isn’t always merit or effort but some combination of skill at playing the game of school (choosing courses with a keen eye to the effect on one’s GPA[2], figuring out how to impress teachers, etc.) and a willingness to sacrifice sleep, health, friends, reading for pleasure, and anything else that might interfere with one’s grades. “The most important reason that class rank is on the decline is because it really isn’t a direct measure of student achievement,” David Hawkins of NACAC told the Washington Post. Of course, one might argue that class rank should be on the decline primarily because of its destructive effect on kids — regardless of how well they play the game. One reporter described the process as follows: As early as ninth grade, top students figure out the selection procedures and find ways to improve their standing in comparison to classmates. They’ll take, for instance, an “easier” Advanced Placement course — AP Biology instead of AP Chemistry. Others don’t take certain required classes — namely courses that don’t carry bonus points — until the latter half of their senior year, after class rankings are tabulated and sent out in college applications. More worrisome is the practice of teenagers who won’t pursue an interest in, say, photography for fear of lowering their average. Those classes normally do not carry bonus points. “A client of mine told me that taking music or journalism was out of the question because she couldn’t justify what it would do to her GPA,” [education consultant David] Altshuler recalls. “I can tell you there was a lot less joy in her curriculum.”[2] 4. If the chance to be a valedictorian is supposed to be a motivator, then the effect of class rank is to demotivate the vast swath of students who realize early on that they don’t ~~stand~~ [have] a chance of acquiring this distinction. 5. What we’re talking about here is extrinsic motivation, which is not only different from, but corrosive of, intrinsic motivation (interest in the learning itself). This ultimately harms everyone, including the top students. As I noted earlier, the use of an extrinsic inducement such as grades promotes a more superficial approach to learning and diminishes students’ engagement with it. Research by educational psychologists also suggests that it leads students to prefer less-challenging tasks. The effect of class rank, honor rolls, and grade-based scholarships — all of which are essentially rewards for having been rewarded – is to make grades even more salient and thus to exacerbate all three of these disturbing effects. 6. Pitting students against one another for the status of having the best grades takes the strychnine of extrinsic motivation and adds to it the arsenic of competition. It not only shifts the focus from learning (what students are doing) to achievement (how well they’re doing it) but also teaches students to regard their peers not as friends or allies but as potential obstacles to their own success. Thus, ranking makes the high school experience unnecessarily stressful while simultaneously destroying the sense of community and any potential for peer support that can help students get through those years intact. \*\*\* Is there any disadvantage to getting rid of class rank? Well, doing so might eliminate bragging rights for a handful of sleep-deprived students with the highest GPAs. And it might pose a slight inconvenience to colleges that (a) would rather have applicants presorted for their convenience and (b) are desperate for their own higher ranking (since U.S. News & World Report looks at the number of students at each college who were in the top ten percent of their high school class). Judged by meaningful criteria, getting rid of class rank is an obvious first step — but only a first step — toward restoring ~~sanity~~ [peace], supporting a culture of learning, and promoting intellectual excellence (as opposed to an emphasis on academic rewards). Ideally it should be followed by moving away from grades altogether, which some schools have already proved is not only possible but enormously beneficial.

## Class Ranking Good

#### Class ranking good for guaranteeing students from low income schools college admission

Guskey, 14 (Thomas R. Guskey is a professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. He has taught at all school levels, worked as a school administrator in the Chicago Public Schools, and was the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national educational research center, March 28, 2014, "Class Rank Weighs Down True Learning," Education Weekly, http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/03/01/kappan\_guskey.html)

Such differences are especially problematic with the recent rise in scholarship programs for students based on class rank. Several states and state universities offer scholarships to students who graduate at the top of their class or maintain a high GPA throughout high school (Downs, 2000). Other states have “percent plans,” where students in a specified top percentile of their graduating class are guaranteed acceptance to a state college or university. In most instances, these plans are a response to the removal of affirmative action policies previously used in the admissions process at state universities (Lang, 2007). By guaranteeing that a certain top percent of students in each high school’s graduating class can attend a state university, policy makers can ensure that students from poor and sometimes segregated high schools have access to public universities and will continue to be represented in college classes.

## Graduation Rates Bad

#### Graduation rates are artificially boosted by lowering standards

Wiener, 16 (Michael Wiener, 8-14-2016, "Lower standards, higher graduation rates — who knew?," LA Times, http://www.latimes.com/opinion/readersreact/la-ol-le-lausd-graduation-rates-20160814-snap-story.html)

The standards for high school graduation have been steadily lowered in districts nationwide in a desperate effort to improve graduation rates, especially in lower income minority communities. (“L.A. Unified projects a record 75% graduation rate for Class of 2016,” Aug. 9) Only fools could believe that students who have demonstrated dismal academic performance over a period of years can achieve competence with a few weeks of make-up work. My school boasts a graduation rate of over 85% while producing less than 40% who are college ready. Even this teacher, who is no fan of standardized testing, would like to see a common exam that reflects basic high school coursework competence. The recently retired CAHSEE was a pathetic effort to do that. That exam was basically an 8th grade level test instead of a reasonably rigorous high school content assessment.

#### Using graduation rates as a metric would prevent selective schools from underserved backgrounds

NEA, 04 (National Education Association, January 2004, “Rethinking Graduation Rates as Accountability Measures”, National Education Association Higher Education Research Center, http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/vol10no1.pdf”

As shown in Figure 4, there are several student characteristics that relate to graduation rates. These include starting as a fulltime student, having the goal of receiving a bachelor’s degree, and being a recent high-school graduate. These factors each contribute independently to student graduation rates. Students with all of these characteristics have a graduation rate that is about 10 percentage points higher than that for all beginning students.8 These results show that reporting a simple institutional graduation rate distorts the success that many students have in completing college, especially those traditional students who enroll immediately upon graduating from high school. CONCLUSION Stressing institutional graduation rates has the potential to reduce the willingness of colleges to enroll non-traditional, high-risk students, including those with below-standard academic preparation, lower family incomes, parents without college experience, and those living in communities with limited public resources. If accountability is measured by graduation rates without considering these potential vulnerabilities, students with specific ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds may ultimately be underserved by higher education

#### Graduation rate ignores out of school factors – study analysis proves

Savich, 07 (Carl Savich has been an educator in Detroit for 11 years, he has B.A.in Political Science and a Masters in History, 12/13/2007, “Measuring High School Graduation Rates: A Review of the Literature”, http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED501570.pdf)

The high schools with the lowest graduation rates were in large urban school districts and in poor urban areas in the South and Southwest (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). The problem with this finding was that it was not related to the initial research hypothesis. The drop out rate in poverty and low-income areas was not due to the quality or effectiveness of the high school, but was due to economic and societal factors that were not related to the schools. This was an extraneous variable. This posed a problem of internal validity. This reflected a poorly designed research methodology because it did not control for socio-economic factors. Balfanz and Legters (2004) revised their research findings by removing twelve schools off of their list of “drop out factories”. They conceded that they had inaccurately measured the graduation rates for these schools because they did not take into account unusual or unique local conditions. For example, they did not take into account that one high school that they analyzed was a newly-constructed school that took students away from another school in the area. They incorrectly concluded that the students had dropped out when in fact they had enrolled in the new school.

## Graduation Rates Good

#### Graduation rates are a trustable metric for evaluating education – college empirics and cars

Selingo, 13 (Jeff Selingo is the author of College (Un)Bound: The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students. He frequently speaks before national higher-education groups and his writing has appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, and Slate., 5-19-2013, "Graduation Rates: Flawed as a Measure of Colleges, but Still Useful," The Chronicle of Higher Education, http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/next/2013/05/19/graduation-rates-flawed-as-a-measure-of-colleges-but-still-useful/)

Going to a college with a high graduation rate doesn’t guarantee that the student will get a degree, of course, but the so-called “peer effects” of being around other students who want to finish college make a significant difference. “There is evidence that schools with high graduation rates have a culture that encourages actually graduating,” says Mark Schneider, a vice president at the American Institutes for Research and former U.S. commissioner of education statistics. Vincent Tinto, a leading expert on the subject and author of Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action (University of Chicago Press), agrees that graduation rates speak to no one individual. Still, graduation rates are not all about the academic strength of students a college enrolls—as critics sometimes argue—because even institutions with similar selectivity in admissions have substantial differences in how well they graduate students. The problem as he sees it is that in the current system individuals are unable to obtain the information they need to make informed decisions about the likelihood that someone like them might graduate from an institution they are considering. He would like to see institutions publish more data on graduation rates by type of student. How well does the college graduate those with Pell Grants or who need remedial help? What are the graduation rates by major, or of students on Work-Study grants? “If institutions can’t tell you that information, then that is indicative that they are not focused on student success,” says Tinto, professor emeritus at Syracuse University. There is no question the government needs to improve how it measures the graduation rate to capture more students, such as those who transfer colleges. That is why we need a national unit-record system that tracks students who are increasingly swirling through higher education. But even with the flaws in how it’s currently measured, a college’s graduation rate should play a role in the college-search process. As Tinto says “in the absence of any other data, it is only logical that a student would use college graduation rates as a way of judging an institution. What else would they do?” As just one measure of many, using the graduation rate to evaluate colleges is as useful as judging a car by its safety ratings. Sure, you don’t know if buying a specific car will keep you from having an accident, but at least you reduce the probability that you will be seriously hurt if you purchase a car with a higher safety rating. The same is true with colleges that do a good job in graduating their students.

## Tracking Good

#### Tracking helps student achievement - empirics

Loveless, 16 (Tom Loveless writes The Brown Center Report on American Education (BCR), an annual report analyzing important trends in education. Loveless has authored articles in Education Next, American Journal of Education, Educational Policy, Educational Leadership, Educational Administration Quarterly, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal, Newsday, The Washington Post, USA Weekend, The New York Times and Education Week. Loveless holds a Ph.D. in education from the University of Chicago, an M.A. in special education from CSU Sacramento, and an A.B. in English from the UC Berkeley. Loveless was a 6th grade classroom teacher in the San Juan Unified School District. Loveless was selected as a National Academy of Education Spencer Post-Doctoral Fellow in 1995. From 2004 to 2012, Loveless represented the United States at the General Assembly of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Attainment, a sixty nation organization that governs international testing. From 2006 to 2008 he served on the President's National Mathematics Advisory Panel, 3-24-2016, "Tracking and Advanced Placement," Brookings, https://www.brookings.edu/research/tracking-and-advanced-placement/)

Experiments in which students are randomly assigned to tracked and untracked settings are rare. In 2005, an experiment in Kenya could be conducted because schools were granted extra funds to hire first grade teachers.[5] More than a hundred schools (121) had only one first grade teacher, and the new money allowed the addition of a second teacher. The schools were randomly assigned to either a tracked or untracked condition. In the tracked schools, one of the classes was made up of higher achievers, the other of lower achievers. Students were placed in either the higher- or lower-achieving class based on whether they scored above or below the median for all students. Students in the untracked schools were assigned to the two classes randomly, creating classes heterogeneous in ability.The experiment ran for 18 months. Both high- and low-achievers in the tracked schools gained more on achievement tests compared to students in the untracked schools. The benefit for students in higher-achieving classes was 0.19 standard deviations and for those in the lower-achieving classes,0.16 standard deviations. Conditions that allow for experiments are quite unique, so analysts have also used quasi-experimental designs to evaluate tracking. Takako Nomi investigated a 1997 policy in Chicago that abolished remedial math classes in ninth grade and created mixed-ability algebra classes in their place. Employing an interrupted time-series design and difference-in-differences analysis, Nomi found that high achievers paid a price for abandoning tracking in favor of heterogeneously grouped classes. An analysis of class composition using instrumental variables indicated that peer effects were driving much of the effect. A one standard deviation decline in peer skills was associated with about a one-quarter standard deviation decline in high achievers’ test scores.[6] David N. Figlio and Marianne E. Page (2000) also used an instrumental variable strategy to isolate the effects of tracking. They found that wealthier families consider whether a school tracks when making enrollment decisions. After controlling for those parental decisions, Figlio and Page found that disadvantaged students benefitted from tracking, contradicting the notion that abolishing tracking promotes equity. As they put it, “…tracking programs are associated with test score gains for students in the bottom third of the initial test score distribution. We conclude that the move to end tracking may harm the very students it is intended to help.”

## Tracking Bad

#### Tracking is bad for disadvantaged students

Loveless, 16 (Tom Loveless writes The Brown Center Report on American Education (BCR), an annual report analyzing important trends in education. Loveless has authored articles in Education Next, American Journal of Education, Educational Policy, Educational Leadership, Educational Administration Quarterly, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal, Newsday, The Washington Post, USA Weekend, The New York Times and Education Week. Loveless holds a Ph.D. in education from the University of Chicago, an M.A. in special education from CSU Sacramento, and an A.B. in English from the UC Berkeley. Loveless was a 6th grade classroom teacher in the San Juan Unified School District. Loveless was selected as a National Academy of Education Spencer Post-Doctoral Fellow in 1995. From 2004 to 2012, Loveless represented the United States at the General Assembly of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Attainment, a sixty nation organization that governs international testing. From 2006 to 2008 he served on the President's National Mathematics Advisory Panel, 3-24-2016, "Tracking and Advanced Placement," Brookings, https://www.brookings.edu/research/tracking-and-advanced-placement/)

But tracking is controversial. By definition, it involves differentiating students in terms of their skills and knowledge. Black, Hispanic, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students are historically underrepresented in accelerated tracks. As such, the charge that tracking discriminates against these students has shaped the frequency of its use across different communities. Tracking is more prevalent in suburban middle class communities and in schools serving white and Asian students and less prevalent in urban schools and schools serving predominantly black, Hispanic, or disadvantaged populations. Whether middle school tracking is associated with AP outcomes is a timely question. Recent research on tracking that employs techniques to minimize selection bias and other shortcomings of previous research, has documented examples of tracking being used to promote equity. AP classes, along with the International Baccalaureate program, represent the pinnacle of advanced coursework in U.S. high schools. They are the end of the pipeline preparing academically gifted students for college. Boosting access to AP classes for groups historically underrepresented in AP is a key element of the contemporary equity agenda for high schools. In opposition to these trends, tracking’s critics remain steadfast. The advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) may furnish critics with a politically powerful shield for dismantling tracking in middle schools (see the study of Common Core in this issue). In the 1970s, the charge that tracking produces discriminatory social effects rose to public awareness just as tracking itself was changing. Since the early 20th century, curriculum differentiation occurred by assigning students to tracks that encompassed all academic subjects. The names of tracks vaguely denoted post-secondary destinations, with “college prep,” “vocational,” and “general” being the most common labels. Students were assigned to tracks based on IQ tests measuring general aptitude or achievement tests measuring prior learning. By the 1970s, tracking had changed. Omnibus tracking was replaced by subject-specific assignment to courses (i.e., students simultaneously could be placed in remedial reading and a higher level math class), IQ testing fell into disfavor, and parents increasingly could override schools’ initial placement and demand a different track if they wanted more or less challenge for their children than schools recommended. The changes did not reduce the attacks on tracking. In 1985, Jeannie Oakes’ “Keeping Track” was published. Oakes acknowledged that tracking had changed but dismissed the modifications as trivial. Schools, Oakes charged, were still systematically denying kids opportunity in ways that correlated with race and class. Oakes built her critique on the theories of Marxian analysts Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, whose 1976 book, “Schooling in Capitalist America,” argued that schools are structured with the intention to reproduce social inequalities. Despite its ideological underpinnings, the tracking critique drew surprising support across the political spectrum. In What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?, two former members of the Reagan and Bush administrations respectively, Checker Finn and Diane Ravitch single out tracking as a cause of students’ poor performance on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests of history and literature.[3] The anti-tracking movement gained steam in the 1990s. It had little effect on high schools, but middle schools were another story. Across the country, middle schools began paring back tracking, especially in English-language arts, science, and history. By the end of the decade, a majority of middle school students attended heterogeneously grouped classes in those subjects.[4 ]Math classes remained tracked, but with fewer levels—typically just one level offering algebra and one level offering pre-algebra or a general eighth grade math course. The frequency of tracking in academic subjects remains similar today.

## Standardized Tests Bad

#### Standardized tests don’t measure student achievement

Gawthrop, 14 (Jeremiah Gawthrop has taught 9th and 10th grade in Washington D.C. and graduated from William Jessup University’s Public Policy program, April,29, 2014, “Measuring Student Achievement: A Study of Standardized Testing & Its Effect On Student Learning” http://my.jessup.edu/publicpolicy/wp-content/uploads/sites/39/2014/04/Gawthrop\_Jeremiah\_Final.pdf)

The primary function of standardized testing is to provide information, specifically calibrated to be helpful to legislators, school officials, university recruiters and other administrative positions, all of which operate from outside the classroom.10 Mass-producing assessment tests that are valid, reliable and norm-referenced make it relatively easy for policy makers to accumulate data on students. This is interesting, since the second key assumption about standardized testing, is that its primary function is to determine a student’s academic standing. However, test data is certainly more useful to administrators than students, because a competent teacher can determine a student’s proficiency level based off homework, quizzes or classroom participation. If standardized tests are not necessary to determine a student’s academic level, it raises an important question, whether test results (versus other sources such as teacher input), are the best source for determining policy or curriculum changes. Since standardized tests can only assess, not determine, a student’s academic status, the argument is made that it is dangerous for policy makers to rely predominantly on the data provided by these tests. The price and efficiency of using standardized testing, to accumulate vast amounts of information, is quite appealing to administrators, who require such information to make policy decisions. Standardized tests have been increasingly used, “to make major decisions about students, such as grade promotion or high school graduation, and schools. More and more often, they also are intended to shape curriculum and instruction.”11 It is assumed that newer tests have overcome the flaws of past tests and are accurately able to measure important data that is worth “testing to”. However, this argument completely ignores the real-world limitations to what a standardized test can actually do.12 Tests are created to assess a student’s knowledge base; meaning test results are not representative of the student’s total academic ability.

#### Standardized tests shouldn’t be used to evaluate teachers or students

Popham, 99 (W. James Popham began his career in education as a high school teacher in Oregon. He is professor emeritus at the University of California, Los Angeles Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. He is the author of twenty-five books and a former president of the American Educational Research Association., March 1999, "Educational Leadership:Using Standards and Assessments:Why Standardized Tests Don't Measure Educational Quality," Educational Leaderhsip, http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar99/vol56/num06/Why-Standardized-Tests-Don%27t-Measure-Educational-Quality.aspx)

Measuring Temperature with a Tablespoon For several important reasons, standardized achievement tests should not be used to judge the quality of education. The overarching reason that students' scores on these tests do not provide an accurate index of educational effectiveness is that any inference about educational quality made on the basis of students' standardized achievement test performances is apt to be invalid. Employing standardized achievement tests to ascertain educational quality is like measuring temperature with a tablespoon. Tablespoons have a different measurement mission than indicating how hot or cold something is. Standardized achievement tests have a different measurement mission than indicating how good or bad a school is. Standardized achievement tests should be used to make the comparative interpretations that they were intended to provide. They should not be used to judge educational quality. Let's look at three significant reasons that it is thoroughly invalid to base inferences about the caliber of education on standardized achievement test scores. Testing-Teaching Mismatches The companies that create and sell standardized achievement tests are all owned by large corporations. Like all for-profit businesses, these corporations attempt to produce revenue for their shareholders. Recognizing the substantial pressure to sell standardized achievement tests, those who market such tests encounter a difficult dilemma that arises from the considerable curricular diversity in the United States. Because different states often choose somewhat different educational objectives (or, to be fashionable, different content standards), the need exists to build standardized achievement tests that are properly aligned with educators' meaningfully different curricular preferences. The problem becomes even more exacerbated in states where different counties or school districts can exercise more localized curricular decision making. At a very general level, the goals that educators pursue in different settings are reasonably similar. For instance, you can be sure that all schools will give attention to language arts, mathematics, and so on. But that's at a general level. At the level where it really makes a difference to instruction—in the classroom—there are significant differences in the educational objectives being sought. And that presents a problem to those who must sell standardized achievement tests. In view of the nation's substantial curricular diversity, test developers are obliged to create a series of one-size-fits-all assessments. But, as most of us know from attempting to wear one-size-fits-all garments, sometimes one size really can't fit all. The designers of these tests do the best job they can in selecting test items that are likely to measure all of a content area's knowledge and skills that the nation's educators regard as important. But the test developers can't really pull it off. Thus, standardized achievement tests will always contain many items that are not aligned with what's emphasized instructionally in a particular setting. To illustrate the seriousness of the mismatch that can occur between what's taught locally and what's tested through standardized achievement tests, educators ought to know about an important study at Michigan State University reported in 1983 by Freeman and his colleagues. These researchers selected five nationally standardized achievement tests in mathematics and studied their content for grades 4–6. Then, operating on the very reasonable assumption that what goes on instructionally in classrooms is often influenced by what's contained in the texbooks that children use, they also studied four widely used textbooks for grades 4-6. Employing rigorous review procedures, the researchers identified the items in the standardized achievement test that had not received meaningful instructional attention in the textbooks. They concluded that between 50 and 80 percent of what was measured on the tests was not suitably addressed in the textbooks. As the Michigan State researchers put it, "The proportion of topics presented on a standardized test that received more than cursory treatment in each textbook was never higher than 50 percent" (p. 509). Well, if the content of standardized tests is not satisfactorily addressed in widely used textbooks, isn't it likely that in a particular educational setting, topics will be covered on the test that aren't addressed instructionally in that setting? Unfortunately, because most educators are not genuinely familiar with the ingredients of standardized achievement tests, they often assume that if a standardized achievement test asserts that it is assessing "children's reading comprehension capabilities," then it's likely that the test meshes with the way reading is being taught locally. More often than not, the assumed match between what's tested and what's taught is not warranted. If you spend much time with the descriptive materials presented in the manuals accompanying standardized achievement tests, you'll find that the descriptors for what's tested are often fairly general. Those descriptors need to be general to make the tests acceptable to a nation of educators whose curricular preferences vary. But such general descriptions of what's tested often permit assumptions of teaching-testing alignments that are way off the mark. And such mismatches, recognized or not, will often lead to spurious conclusions about the effectiveness of education in a given setting if students' scores on standardized achievement tests are used as the indicator of educational effectiveness. And that's the first reason that standardized achievement tests should not be used to determine the effectiveness of a state, a district, a school, or a teacher. There's almost certain to be a significant mismatch between what's taught and what's tested. A Psychometric Tendency to Eliminate Important Test Items A second reason that standardized achievement tests should not be used to evaluate educational quality arises directly from the requirement that these tests permit meaningful comparisons among students from only a small collection of items. A test item that does the best job in spreading out students' total-test scores is a test item that's answered correctly by about half the students. Items that are answered correctly by 40 to 60 percent of the students do a solid job in spreading out the total scores of test-takers. Items that are answered correctly by very large numbers of students, in contrast, do not make a suitable contribution to spreading out students' test scores. A test item answered correctly by 90 percent of the test-takers is, from the perspective of a test's efficiency in providing comparative interpretations, being answered correctly by too many students. Test items answered correctly by 80 percent or more of the test takers, therefore, usually don't make it past the final cut when a standardized achievement test is first developed, and such items will most likely be jettisoned when the test is revised. As a result, the vast majority of the items on standardized achievement tests are "middle difficulty" items. As a consequence of the quest for score variance in a standardized achievement test, items on which students perform well are often excluded. However, items on which students perform well often cover the content that, because of its importance, teachers stress. Thus, the better the job that teachers do in teaching important knowledge and/or skills, the less likely it is that there will be items on a standardized achievement test measuring such knowledge and/or skills. To evaluate teachers' instructional effectiveness by using assessment tools that deliberately avoid important content is fundamentally foolish.

## Standardized Tests Good

#### Tests are good for standardizing evaluations

CU, 12 (Concordia University, 6-21-2012, "Do Standardized Tests Accurately Show Students' Abilities?," Concordia University, http://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/news/do-standardized-test-show-an-accurate-view-of-students-abilities/)

Proponents say these tests measure student achievement, ensure teachers and schools are accountable to taxpayers and provide consistency. Measure of achievement for college readiness For many students, standardized testing provides them with a valuable outlet to set themselves apart from their high school. Tests like the SAT and the ACT give students the chance to show that, even if their high school didn’t offer a large number of Advanced Placement courses or extracurricular activities, they are still bright and motivated students with a lot of potential for colleges. On the other hand, students enrolled in highly competitive high schools get the chance to demonstrate that they are intelligent and qualified, even if being surrounded by a pool of similarly talented students prevents them from being in the top ten percent of their class. Consistent assessment In the classroom, every teacher grades differently, with different standards for evaluation. When all admissions committees can see is the overall GPAs, nuances between teachers with lower and higher expectations are lost. As such, standardized testing acts as somewhat of an equalizing force, providing colleges with the only relatively objective data point with which to compare prospective students. Teacher evaluation Several states have tied student performance to teacher evaluation. The National Council on Teacher Quality reported in January 2014 that “about a third of all states had adopted evaluation policies requiring teacher evaluations to include objective measures of student achievement as a signiﬁcant or preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations.” But the report noted, “Over the past five years, 37 states have improved their overall teacher policy grades by at least one full grade level because of significant reform, particularly in the areas of teacher evaluation and related teacher effectiveness policies.” In addition, the latest report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that students in grades 4 and 8 taught by teachers with a master’s education scored higher on standardized math and reading assessments than students whose teachers hold only a bachelor’s degree.

## States under ESSA

**- I didn’t highlight these because they probably won’t be read in round but if you have to attack a certain state then here’s a card about their education model under ESSA – if you’re looking at this a while after June of 2017 see if any other state released their standards -**

**-if the sentences make no sense to you then check out the link and see why the paragraphs are weird-**

#### Arizona = proficiency and grad rates

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)

The state wants proficiency gaps between 90 percent proficiency and baseline proficiency for all students and student groups to be cut at least in half by the 2027-28 school year; also, Arizona wants all students to hit at least 90 percent proficiency on state English/language arts and math exams by 2039-40; the state also wants a 90 percent graduation rate for the four-year adjusted cohort rate by 2030 As it has in recent years, Arizona plans to use a school rating system based on A-F school grades; an "A" school would be "excellent" and an "F" school would be considered "failing" Academic achievement, academic progress, graduation rates for high schools (including four-, five-, six-, and seven-year graduation rates), English-language proficiency For elementary schools: acceleration and readiness; for high schools: college- and career-readiness (these measures are still being finalized) 20 students (Arizona notes that this is not final) Hitting a 95-percent participation rate on mandatory exams will be a factor in school improvement decisions; in addition, schools that miss that participation rate over multiple years will have to use interventions to address the issue

#### Colorado = proficiency and grad rates

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)

The state wants all students scoring at the 50th percentile on state English/language arts and math exams to score, in six years, at the same level as a student scoring at the 53rd percentile today; state also wants all students and student subgroups to have a graduation rate of 90.3 percent in six years There will be a points-based system and four performance bands, with cut-offs for each performance band at the 15th, 50th, and 85th percentiles Academic achievement through mean scale score, median student growth percentile, four-, five-, six-, or seven-year graduation rates, progress in reaching English-language proficiency Reduction in chronic absenteeism for elementary and middle schools; reduction in dropout rates for high schools 16 students for academic achievement and graduation rate indicators, 20 students for growth indicators A school or district that misses 95 percent on the state E/LA or math exams has to create an improvement plan to address the situation and distribute information about the exams; low participation rates must also be included in ESSA program reviews

#### Connecticut = growth and grad rates. A bit of proficiency

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)

100 percent of all students and subgroups will hit various growth targets by 2029-30; 94 percent will graduate high school in four years by 2029-30 Rating based on a 0-100 index score Achievement in reading and math; growth in reading and math; four-year adjusted cohort for graduation; six-year adjusted cohort for graduation Chronic absenteeism; preparation for college-and-career coursework and exams; participation rates on tests; postsecondary enrollment; physical fitness; access to arts education; on-track graduation for 9th graders 20 students A school otherwise getting highest or second-highest ranking would be knocked down one ranking

#### Delaware = proficiency and grad rates. A bit of growth.

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)

Cut in half the share of all students and subgroups not proficient on English/language arts and math exams by 2030; cut in half the share of high school students not graduating after four years Index score to create a "text-based" rating Achievement; growth; social studies in certain grades; growth of students; on-track high school graduation for 9th graders; progress in English-language proficiency; four-, five-, and six-year cohort graduation rates; science in certain grade spans Chronic absenteeism; college-and-career preparedness (including things like SAT and ACT scores and career certification) 15 students A school would have to submit plan to increase testing participation, with further state action possible

#### District of Columbia = proficiency and grad rates

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)

By 2038-39, 85 percent of all students and subgroups will score a level 4 or 5 on the PARCC exam; 90 percent of high school students will graduate after four years Five-tier performance rating system Achievement, growth, graduation rates, English-language proficiency; college-readiness measured by ACT, AP, and IB participation and scores Chronic absenteeism; a mix of attendance indicators; choice to re-enroll in same school; standardized observations that take into account factors including classroom organization, emotional support, and instructional support 10 students A system would monitor and assist school, with interventions possible after multiple years

#### Illinois = mostly proficiency

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, [http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)](http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html%29)

By 2032, 90 percent of all students and subgroups will be proficient in English/language arts and math; by 2032, students in grades 3, 5, and 9 and high school graduates will meet four other percentage-based goals; 90 percent of students will graduate Four-tier school-rating system, ranging from "exemplary" to "lowest-performing" Proficiency, growth, English-language proficiency, graduation rates; plans to do science proficiency; exploring fine arts and another indicator for elementary and middle schools Chronic absenteeism; climate surveys; whether 9th graders are on track to graduate; an early-childhood education indicator; exploring an arts indicator 20 students A school could not get top score for academic proficiency; participation rate would factor into school-improvement decisions

#### Louisiana = mostly growth, and grad rates

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, [http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)](http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html%29)

Annual average improvement target of 2.5 percentage point gains in achievement on state reading and math tests between 2018 and 2025 for all students and student subgroups; plan includes goal of reaching a graduation rate of 90 percent by 2025 for all students and student subgroups A-F school grades, based on an index scores ranging from 0-150, would be given to schools; ratings system would shift in 2021 and again in 2024 Achievement on state exams, including high school end-of-course exams and an ACT/WorkKeys index; growth index; graduation rate index; English-language proficiency index; school quality indicators including access to a well-rounded education Middle schools would be measured on credit accumulation through 9th grade; high schools would be measured on the "strength of diploma" students receive; all schools would be measured on "interests and opportunities" that cover various programs 10 students All nonparticipants in the state exam will receive a score of zero, which will in turn impact school scores on the state's accountability system

#### Maine = proficiency

ED Weekly, 17 (Education Weekly, public record, last updated April 21, 2017 as of June 27, 2017. "Key Takeaways: State Accountability Plans Under ESSA," Education Week, [http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html)](http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html%29)

The state wants all students and student subgroups to hit various performance targets on state exams by 2030; goal is for 75.2 percent of all students to be proficient in reading/language arts, and 69.2 percent to be proficient in math; wants 90 percent of all students and student subgroups to graduate in 2030 or maintain their current graduation rate, whichever is higher, using the four-year adjusted cohort method A four-tier rating system, similar to one the state already uses, from "exceeds state expectations" to "requires review for supports" Achievement; growth; four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates; progress for English-learners Percentage of students who have consistent attendance 10 students Schools with participation rates between 75 and 94 percent would have to submit a plan; schools below 75 percent would have to show steps taken; participation not factored into summative school rating

#### Massachusetts = nothing but also everything (they mention grad rate, proficiency for reading and math but also growth in reading and math)

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No long-term academic goals are set because state says it must wait for new baselines; increase overall and subgroup graduation rates by 5 percentage points by 2020 Six-tier rating system, based on 1-100 index Achievement in reading and math; growth in reading and math; achievement in science; four- and five-year graduation rates plus percentage of students still enrolled in high school; dropout rates; English-language proficiency Chronic absenteeism; success in 9th grade courses; successful completion of a broad and challenging high school curriculum (including things like AP and IB course-taking) 20 students A school’s overall summative rating would decline

#### Michigan = proficiency

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Proposes that 75 percent of schools and 75 percent of all student subgroups reach various proficiency targets on state exams in English/language arts, math, science, and other subjects by 2024-25 The state included two options for A-F school grades, with one giving schools a final, summative grade, and the other only giving A-F grades to different components of the accountability system; the state is also developing a dashboard system combining the system's six elements 100-point achievement index; 100-point growth index; four-, five-, and six-year cohort graduation rates; 100-point English-learner progress index; various school-quality indicators depending on grade level; participation in state assessments State would include four factors in this indicator: chronic absenteeism; time spent in arts, library, and physical education programs in K-8; advanced coursework in grades 11-12; and postsecondary enrollment rates 30 students, except for English-learners, whose n-size would be 10 students Eligible students who do not take state exams would be recorded as having a score of zero when determining proficiency rates in the state accountability system

#### Nevada = Proficiency

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By 2022, have 61 percent of all students and subgroups proficient in English/language arts and 41 percent proficient in math; have 84 percent of high school students graduate after four years Five-star rating tool, based on 1-100 index Proficiency; English-language proficiency; growth; graduation rates for high schools Student engagement; college-and-career readiness (for high schools) closure of opportunity gaps for elementary and middle schools 10 students A school would initially be labeled with a "warning," then subject to increasing penalties after multiple years

#### New Jersey = proficiency

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By 2030, have 80 percent of all students and subgroups meet or exceed expectations on PARCC; have 95 percent of all students and subgroups graduate after four years in high school by 2030 Score based on 100-point scale Achievement, growth, four- and five-year graduation rates, English-language progress Chronic absenteeism 20 students As ESSA requires, each student at the school causing a participation rate below 95 percent would be scored not proficient

#### New Mexico = proficiency and grad rates (they didn’t even put growth as an academic indicator, this means very little if the states do include it but the fact they didn’t mention it at all means there is absolutely no growth measurements in this state)

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By 2022, 64.9 percent of students will be proficient on PARCC English/language arts test, and 61.2 percent proficient on PARCC math test A-F grading system Four-, five- and six-year graduation rates; achievement; growth in four-year graduation rate; STEM readiness; English-language proficiency "Opportunity to learn surveys" to capture climate, student engagement, and more; attendance measures; college-and-career readiness, including remediation and persistence 20 students A school will have its A-F grade decrease by one letter if 95 percent of students don’t take the state English/language arts or math test

#### North Dakota = all proficiency

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The state plans to set goals on the state reading and math tests for all students and several student subgroups for the 2023-24 school year; overall, the state's goal is to reduce "the number of nonproficient students for all students and for each subgroup of students by 33 percent within six years" North Dakota plans to use a "dashboard" accountability system "that will allow multiple factors to be used when summarizing a school’s measure of quality and assist the state in meaningful differentiation of school quality" For elementary school, academic achievement, growth, progress in English language proficiency; for high school, academic achievement, growth, progress in English-language proficiency, four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates Student engagement as measured through surveys for elementary schools, student engagement and career readiness for high schools 10 students A school or district where test participation fell below 95 percent would be labeled as having insufficient participation, and would be required to implement a plan to improve its test participation

#### Oregon = proficiency

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The state wants 80 percent of all students and student subgroups to score at a level demonstrating that they are on track for postsecondary readiness by 2024-25, based on state tests; also wants all students and student subgroups to graduate at a 90 percent clip by the same year There will be three broad categories for assessing school performance, but no single and final rating for all schools; for each indicator, there will be five levels of performance, ranging from "meets goal" to "in the lowest 10 percent of schools" Achievement in English/language arts and math; growth in E/LA and math; four-year graduation rate; English-language performance and growth All schools will use chronic absenteeism as an indicator of school quality; high schools will also be judged on two other indicators: involving 9th grade academic progress and high school completion 20 students Schools where one or more student groups fail to hit 95 percent participation have to develop a plan to improve participation rates; Oregon law allows parents to opt their children out of these tests for any reason

#### Tennessee = all proficiency

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Perform in top half of 4th and 8th grade NAEP scores among states by 2019; 75 percent of 3rd graders proficient in reading by 2025; average ACT composite score of 21 by 2020; 95 percent graduation rate by 2024-25 A-F grading system Achievement; growth; graduation rates combined with college-, career-, or military-readiness measures; English-language proficiency Chronic absenteeism and out-of-school suspensions; graduation rate indicator incorporates whether students have met ACT benchmarks or earned military or workforce certification 30 students A school would get an F grade in academic proficiency for all student groups not reaching 95 percent participation

#### Vermont = mostly proficiency

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All schools score, on average, at the midpoint of the Smarter Balanced test’s proficiency range by 2025; 90 percent graduation rates for all students and subgroups by 2025 There would be five separate ratings for different accountability measures Achievement, growth, four- and six-year graduation rates, English-language proficiency, English language proficiency in schools with sufficient numbers of ELLs College-and-career readiness, physical education, science, postsecondary outcomes 25 students School’s initial summative score would be multiplied by the percentage of students who took the exam