

Frankly Speaking

No Child Left Behind leaves many behind



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The No Child Left behind Act is an act instilled by the Bush Administration that mandates each state and its schools to test their students in reading and mathematics. These mandatory standardized scantron tests that we take, believe it or not, ultimately determine our schools use of funding and are supposed to display ones full academic progress year to year.

The NCLB Act directs our school's funding depending on our scores on those tests we take each year. NCLB determines which schools in the state are reaching the "adequate yearly progress" and which schools are not reaching it. Bloomington High School is currently not reaching the AYP.

This means that the funding at our school has to be directed towards classes such as mathematics and literature, which are the main areas we are tested in. This results in taking funding away from departments such as art education, which leaves the art department with the short end of the stick.

The Bush administration states that they are giving billions of dollars to schools and is helping them by giving administrators less paper work and more time to work with students. But then, in contrast, they state that "NCLB holds schools accountable for results."

To make this clear, it is a fact that NCLB rewards schools that do well on the standardized tests. This means, the funding (all those billions of dollars that are spent) are spent on schools that are ranking high on the AYP reports. The schools that typically do well on the mandated tests are the wealthy suburbs with numerous resources that have more opportunities and a better environment to learn in.

The act sounds like a great plan, but that's just it; the act sounds great, on the surface, yet it undoubtedly punishes schools that do poorly on the standardized tests. Schools that struggle with funding do not have the resources or environments to improve their students' test scores, yet the NCLB takes even more funding away from them.

NCLB is quite hypocritical because it indeed leaves many children behind. What about those who perform well in the classroom but do not test well? What do the tests say about them? These scantron bubbles simply devalue student's contributions in the classroom.

Experts in the field of education have criticized the NCLB because schools, in an effort to get funding, wind up teaching to the test. NCLB states that it "provides funding to help teachers learn to be better teachers." But in actuality, this statement really means "NCLB provides funding to help teachers to learn how to teach their students how to take standardized tests."

Instead of true experiential teaching, teachers are now teaching to test. Critics say that these mandatory tests only judge our ability of test taking, not our true mind's ability.

Do not be afraid to question the necessity of standardized tests and the use of teaching to test in the classroom. As students we should have the right to be taught, not trained to take tests.

The Bush administration may publish supposable NCLB statements such as "NCLB gives school districts more money." But actions speak louder than words. The past seven years have shown the significant impact of NCLB, which unfortunately, was not a good one.

Candidates campaign actions lack good taste



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By simply turning on the television Americans are bombarded by politicians, the future leaders of the country, slinging insults at one another. These political campaigns have turned into a competition of who can dig up the most dirt on the other, as opposed to who will be the best leader of our country. It has gotten to the point where it is hard to distinguish the two men running for president from a group of high school girls being catty in the hallway.

It is ridiculous that politicians have to resort to name-calling and finger pointing when trying to prove who the best person for the job is. Either John McCain or Barack Obama will be the president of the United States, one of them will be leading the country for the next four years, so why are they putting out this image of themselves as being petty and childish?

Maybe if candidates spent half as much time and money on campaigns that explain to voters where they stand on issues and what they want to do in Washington, than they do bickering and name-calling, Americans would be more informed on the issues that are affecting them and what will be done to help them. Many Americans have no idea where the candidates stand on certain issues, all they are basing their decision on is

what candidate they have heard the least dirt on. But, maybe that is the true point of all these negative ads- to take the attention off one candidate's weaknesses and insufficiencies as a leader by casting a negative light on the other candidate to take the attention off of themselves, and the media only worsens the problem by taking small tidbits and blowing them way out of proportion. Newspaper and news programs think that they are doing Americans a great service by exposing candidates, but really they are doing exactly what the candidates want by publicizing all this ridiculous information so the candidates do not have to.

While some negative campaigning and news attention does play an important part in the election, in the sense that, it informs the public of crucial information regarding each candidate, it sometimes goes overboard. There is a difference between telling the public how a candidate voted on certain issues and making insinuations about a candidate based on his race.

How campaign advertisements are used now only further divide the country, which only makes it that much harder for the country to united behind one leader at the end of the election. I understand that this is, in a sense, a competition to determine who will be the best person to run the country, and I also understand that Americans pay more attention to negative propaganda than they do positive statements about what a candidate will do once in office. But shouldn't candidates take the initiative, and try to present a united front and lead Americans by example.

