

The No Child Left Behind Act – It’s Hurting Our Children!

**By Melanie West
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The No Child Left Behind Act was conceived in an attempt to improve the performance of students attending Kindergarten through grades 12. However, the idea of increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts and schools is having a negative impact on many of our brightest students. Based on my many years of working within the school system, I have seen some of the most talented minds being left behind based strictly on their so-called inability to learn. While some perceive certain young people as difficult learners, the truth is they simply learn differently.

The Impact of Driving Test Scores Up is Creating an Educational Meltdown

In an effort to improve test scores; our nation’s teachers are under constant pressure to drive test performance upwards at the end of each school year. However, teaching using a test-prep orientation has all but eliminated curriculums that encourage students to develop creative, problem-solving thought processes. In fact, risk taking, brainstorming and learning through experimentation, is nearly extinct. Yet, these are the precise skills that create an inherent drive toward learning and are essential processes for many types of learners.

In a recent study amongst classroom teachers, it was discovered that while teachers value some creative thinking, a creative student is often considered undesirable in the classroom setting. Qualities that rank as most valued among teachers come from students who follows rules, work quietly and who can complete pencil-paper tasks. In contrast, one of America’s leading corporations recently released a study, which indicated that the greatest need for future corporate success will be found among employees with strong creative thinking skills. In other words, employees that are able to problem-solve, think outside of the box, and take risks are the most desirable. So, if that’s the case, how will our children expand on these skills when they are not being given the opportunity to develop them?

Drill and Kill

To quote Monty Neill: “Today’s drill and kill curriculum undermines rather than improves the quality of education.” I agree. In fact, in my opinion, it is draining the life out of many students, destroying creativity and ingenuity. Creative minds are literally “checking out” of the educational environment, while those with attention difficulties, deficits in writing, and weak comprehension

skills are rapidly growing in numbers. What's happening? Instead of finding ways to match all learning styles, schools continue to cater to left-hemisphere thinkers, factoring out some of our brightest and most creative students, students that are actually right-brained learners.

The Need to Expand on Right Hemisphere Processing

While schools have done an extraordinary job focusing on the development of the left-hemisphere of the brain, many programs have virtually factored out the inherent need to nurture and expand on right-hemisphere processing. The ever increasing use of rote memorization and test-prep learning is causing an overload within the left hemisphere, creating a stress response in the brain and bringing about a disconnect between the two hemispheres. However, the two hemispheres of the brain are designed to be intricately linked. The right hemisphere is the mechanism for conceptual understanding and deep personal meaning. It is a picture-making machine that stores vast quantities of information within a single snapshot. The left side of the brain hosts the language center and while this hemisphere is logical and sequential, it cannot understand a concept until it is able to build a link with the right hemisphere. The right hemisphere of the brain needs the opportunity to design visual images, build tactile models, present and assimilate information through social interactions and creative dialogue.

It's Never Too Late to Get Education Right

Now is the time. In today's world, we are more equipped than ever to teach all children how to *really* learn. Use of video, image streaming, and the ability to substitute rote memorization with right-brain learning strategies are incredibly effective ways to successfully teach both right and left brain dominant children. Traditional school systems must let go of the idea that a good education is a gift given only to a strong left-hemisphere thinker. Our right-brained thinkers must move out of the 'middle' of the bell curve and claim their place at the front of the class. Valuing creative thought is the necessary key to securing a strong, cutting edge economy for our children.

About the Author

Melanie West is America's leading authority on "Right Brain Learning" and the founder of The Right Side of Learning program. As an Educational Psychologist and expert in her field of endeavor, Melanie is affectionately referred to as the "Child Whisperer" as she has helped thousands of children and families get back on the educational track. Her revolutionary approach uses a visual, kinesthetic, and auditory approach to mastering the art of learning. Melanie can be contacted through her website at www.therightsideoflearning.com, by e-mail at melanie.west@therightsideoflearning.com or by phone at 310.947.2662.

