

TEXT 1



Don't blame the tests: Getting rid of standardized testing means punishing poor students

Eliminating meritocratic opportunities for students to excel will cause colleges to rely on the 'soft' parts of a résumé, which will benefit the rich.

Sean-Michael Pigeon | Opinion contributor

March 23rd 2021

Teachers unions aren't happy, but this time, they're mad at President Joe Biden. In February, the Biden administration released guidelines to keep standardized tests in schools. Needless to say, a lot of school administrators weren't pleased. After all, school board officials across the country are trying to delegitimize test scores. But the administration did the right thing here. Standardized tests are crucial in giving poor kids in America a shot.

I grew up poor in a single-income household. I couldn't become a trained violinist or travel to Rome for summer school experiences. I could study, though. And because of good luck, hard work and high test scores, I now attend an Ivy League university with the help of significant financial aid. Testing and academic performance were the best way for someone like me to succeed.

Nevertheless, activists argue that standardized tests must be discontinued to dismantle "white supremacy." Consider the SAT, the test most high schoolers use for college admissions. Activists point to data that shows that richer, more privileged, children perform better on the SAT. This has led to allegations of cultural bias and systemic unfairness.

But the results of the SAT say less about the test and more about high schools' failure to properly educate. Students across the country are failing to meet testing federal benchmarks, even before COVID-19 disrupted education. It's our education system itself that needs improving and failing schools that need to be turned around.

Blaming the tests doesn't help anyone and, contrary to accusations of cultural bias, it is the math section that is hardest for students. Undeterred, some educators, like the Oregon Department of Education, now just criticize math itself for favoring the privileged.

Testing helps identify talent

It's no secret that tests aren't pleasant to take. They are stressful, long and hard. But they were useful for me, and they're useful for a lot of other poor kids.

The SAT has been a metric for college admission programs to measure academic potential since the 1930s. Research shows the test is a good predictor of student outcomes in college — which is where people like me could succeed. And testing can help identify gifted children who lack privileges. For example, when a large Florida school district implemented a universal, nonverbal

screening test for elementary school students in 2005, the number of Black and Hispanic students identified as gifted actually doubled.

The attacks on standardized tests are part of a broader assault on academic sorting. Advanced learning classes in Boston have been canceled lest they create unequal outcomes. Others are going further. A number of schools in California will stop using traditional A-F grading to combat inequality. Who benefits from these policies? Activists think they are helping marginalized communities, but they are actually stripping them of their ability to showcase their talents.

Rich parents will always find a way in

Taking away opportunities for students to excel in traditional ways at high school will not deter wealthy parents. They will still help their kids get to college.

Rich parents can afford extracurricular activities like dance, music lessons and unpaid internships. It was only two years ago that rich parents were busted for literally bribing admissions officers to get their kids into college.

And when eight private schools in Washington, D.C., banded together to drop out of the Advanced Placement program, they cited "the diminished utility of AP courses and the desirability of developing our own advanced courses."

Children of the rich and powerful don't have to worry about college admissions officers not looking at their AP-free transcripts, but students in rural and poor areas do. Removing quantifiable academic standards won't help the poor pursue elite higher education.

Two of the most important predictive metrics students like me have to show our academic success is the SAT and a student's GPA. Asking colleges to reject these in favor of "soft" or "holistic" parts of an application will only favor those who have money or connections — students at expensive, prestigious boarding and independent schools.

No, a student's SAT or GPA is not the only thing that matters. Character, leadership and kindness matter far more in life. But just because a test doesn't tell us everything about a person doesn't mean it is useless. It certainly doesn't make it racist. But if schools abandon these important benchmarks, they will certainly become classist.

Sean-Michael Pigeon is a contributor to Young Voices and a senior at Yale University, where he studies political science.

A-levels are far from perfect, but in the exam hall every pupil – rich or poor – is equally afraid

Despite the high stakes of these gruelling tests, they are still the best engines of social mobility

Martha Gill

Sat 17 Aug 2024

‘You may turn over your papers now.’ For how many of us, decades after A-levels, does that phrase still cause a ripple of nerves in the stomach? [...]

It’s a cliché, of course, but peculiar perhaps to Britain. Our exams are especially high stakes. In most other rich countries, excepting America, grades matter less. French universities are mostly happy if you get your baccalaureate. [...] Here, though, one missed mark in a single three-hour stretch can alter the course of your life.

This strikes some as harsh – and arbitrary. On results day, there’s now a tradition for telling school leavers that grades don’t really matter. Jeremy Clarkson releases an annual statement about his C and two Us: “And here I am with my own pub.” [...]

The sentiment is echoed in a burst of reforming zeal that has followed botched exams in the pandemic: a cohort of politicians, teachers and business people have argued that A-levels shouldn’t matter quite as much as they do. They are too stressful, they say, too narrow, and too elitist – branding a whole group of young people as failures.

Among those reformists is Peter Hyman, now a senior adviser to Keir Starmer, who once wrote in these pages that a period of teacher assessment would be better than the high-adrenaline snapshot of exams. We should assess things like “creativity, collaboration... and communication,” he says, to give a “holistic view” of every child. This is all well-meaning stuff: exams are far from perfect. But the celebs and the reformers have it wrong. A-levels do matter. What’s more, they should. They are one of the best engines of social mobility that we have. [...]

A more “holistic” assessment is a nice idea, but ambiguous, and therefore open to meddling by the posh. Oboe lessons, Mandarin, theatre classes, work experience with successful friends – there are no lengths to which rich parents will not go to help their children look “rounded” for their Ucas forms. [...]

In fact, the exam hall and the marking room are those rare and sacred spaces into which even wealthy parents cannot intrude. [...] The pandemic, meanwhile, has taught us the problem with teacher assessment: fee-paying pupils are marked up. And the French and German systems may be more relaxed, but they do far less for the bright pupil from a poor background who wants to demonstrate his talent. Both France and Germany, by the way, lag far behind Britain and the US when it comes to social mobility.

It's odd, then, that objections to rigorous, externally marked exams so often come from the left. [...] When in 2018, France tightened university selection criteria, there were widespread protests, and leftwing candidates promised to drop the changes.

Leftwing arguments against exams strike me as similar in tone to those against meritocracy: it isn't quite meritocratic enough, and endows its winners with the idea they deserve their good fortune.

But this avoids a brutal fact. Get rid of one sort of hierarchy and another will take its place. And the second will generally involve money and class. [...]

Impact of Covid lockdowns to disrupt England's schools into the 2030s, report says

Analysis from the Association for School and College Leaders warns extensive problems with learning, behaviour and absence to come

Richard Adams

Mon 9 Sep 2024

Repairing the damage to children's education caused by the pandemic lockdowns and closures will disrupt England's schools until the mid-2030s, according to a new report.

The analysis, published by the Association for School and College Leaders (ASCL), forecasted that the after-effects of the pandemic will hit schools in a series of waves, with different age groups requiring varying solutions for their problems with learning, behaviour and absence.

Tim Oates, the report's author and an expert on assessment, said: "While secondary schools are reporting an increase in reading difficulties among year 7 pupils, poor personal organisation and challenging patterns of interaction, staff in primary schools are reporting very serious problems of arrested language development, lack of toilet training, anxiety in being in social spaces, and depressed executive function."

Oates said it was a mistake to think schools have returned to pre-pandemic normality that ignores "the massive scale and enduring persistence of Covid-19 impact in education". Recovery "will be a long slog, not a walk in the park", requiring "protracted, grinding effort" and cooperation between schools, parents and the government, he added.

Pepe Di'lasio, the general secretary of the ASCL, said: "This report shows that, while the headlines have moved on from Covid-19, the impact on schools and children remains a day-to-day reality.

"Unfortunately, the previous government failed to get to grips with this issue, ignoring recommendations from its own education recovery commissioner for a substantial and ongoing package of support for children and young people.

"Schools continue to see high rates of pupil absence and they have many pupils with complex needs. At the same time they are struggling with severe budget pressures, staff shortages and a special educational needs system on the brink of collapse.

"We urge the new government to work with us on developing targeted, well-funded policies that respond to the challenges outlined in this report."

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "We know the pandemic has had a profound impact on children's development – and we are determined to break down barriers to opportunity and improve the life chances of all children.

“We’re also committed to providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school, introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school to increase attendance, and ensuring earlier intervention in mainstream schools for pupils with special needs.”

The Guardian has reported concerns among school leaders and experts that there could be further classroom disruption in the coming school year, as a “behaviour bubble” of pupils affected by the Covid-era lockdowns at primary school reach the peak ages for suspensions and exclusions.

But Oates’ report said that even babies born during the pandemic now starting in primary schools were likely to be profoundly affected throughout their education.

“Covid-19 impact is not a thing of the past; it is moving like a series of different waves up through the system,” Oates said.

“Eleven-year-olds affected by interrupted learning are entering secondary school with very different problems to those born and young in the pandemic entering primary schools, who are displaying acute developmental needs,” said Oates, the group director of assessment research and development at Cambridge University Press and Assessment.

Those born during the pandemic “now appear to be prone to fundamental problems in cognitive and social development”, he said, bringing educational challenges that “will continue to unfold over the next five to 10 years as children whose early development was affected by the pandemic pass through school”.

The report criticises the government’s post-pandemic response, including funding extra academic help for pupils through the national tutoring programme (NTP), as uneven and “headline-grabbing” that failed to reach disadvantaged children.

Di’lasio said: “While this report shows that the NTP had mixed success, it was at least something, and it has been replaced by nothing.”

Oates said that recovery policies now in place do not match the scale of the challenges facing schools.

“An evidence-driven response requires strategy and resources co-designed by schools, unions and the government. It will require parental support and community engagement. It will require protracted, grinding effort. It will require politicians dedicated to following the detail of what is happening on the ground, analysing data, listening to schools and fine-tuning strategy,” he said.

TEXT 4



AI ban or fan? The debate over using generative AI in schools

By Mikayla Denault

February 5, 2025 / 5:45 PM EST / CBS News

Since ChatGPT was released just over two years ago, its use everywhere from the workplace to academia has expanded significantly. In schools across the country, teachers and administrators have been grappling with how to contend with this new tool. While some say it has benefits, others point out the negatives, like cheating.

This is leading to a divide in classrooms across the country with some teachers encouraging the use of AI and others voting to ban it completely.

"We believe very strongly that AI literacy, actually teaching kids in developmentally appropriate ways, what A.I. is and isn't and then how to use those tools responsibly, is a better approach than just outright AI banning," Amanda Bickerstaff, CEO of AI For Education, a group that provides what it calls "AI literacy training," told CBS.

A former high school biology teacher, Bickerstaff now works with educators across K-12 and higher to adopt AI in their classrooms so students can learn how to use the tool ethically. She believes students need to be prepared for both the short- and long-term changes technology brings.

However, philosophy professor James Taylor from The College of New Jersey disagrees.

Taylor told CBS that he was open to using AI at first. But, after seeing many identical essays, often full of false or misleading information that was obviously AI-generated, he decided to ban it.

"If you type in a prompt, boom! There's the answer. But that means the student has now outsourced all of their thinking to a machine. They haven't worked out and developed the skills themselves," Taylor explained.

In Taylor's philosophy classes, students have to complete handwritten assignments without any devices. Rather than allowing AI to do all the work, students are encouraged to discuss their views, analyze others' arguments and come to a conclusion on what's right.

"Using it responsibly is important, but I think there has to be some classroom spaces where it's prohibited and its use is eliminated," Taylor said.

"As soon as it's banned, it's forbidden fruit," Bickerstaff pointed out. She believes kids will use AI in ways that could be harmful if parents and educators don't allow or encourage their use.

Instead, she's teaching students and teachers how to write effective AI prompts, which she says will enhance learning, and how to verify AI outputs.

While both Bickerstaff and Taylor may not see eye-to-eye on bans, they both believe in taking a proactive, balanced approach to AI.

"We're living through an inflection point unlike anything we ever lived before," Bickerstaff said. "Generative AI is becoming ubiquitous in a lot of our tools, social media and devices. If you have a new iPhone, then you already have generative A.I. models that are in your hands."

TEXT 5

euronews.

Estonia announces new AI initiative with OpenAI to roll out chatbots in schools

By Lauren Chadwick

Published on 25/02/2025

The education minister said that the country's competitiveness would depend on preparing people for the age of artificial intelligence (AI).

Estonia has announced a new artificial intelligence (AI) initiative that will provide students and teachers access to popular chatbots such as an educational version of ChatGPT in a bid to help them build new digital skills.

"Artificial intelligence has permanently changed the world, and like all sectors, the education system must adapt to these changes," Estonian President Alar Karis said in a statement on Tuesday.

Called "AI Leap," the programme will initially include 20,000 high schoolers and 3,000 teachers from September 1, 2025, the education ministry said.

Estonia then hopes to expand to vocational schools and an additional 38,000 students and 3,000 teachers from September 2026.

"Estonia's economic competitiveness depends on how well we can prepare young people for the age of artificial intelligence," Kristina Kallas, the Baltic country's education and research minister, said in a statement.

Kallas added that Estonia would invest in teacher training as part of the initiative.

A 'model' others may follow

The programme is a private-public partnership and "negotiations have begun" with US AI companies OpenAI and Anthropic, the education ministry added.

OpenAI said in a statement sent to Euronews Next that it was "proud" to work with Estonia to bring ChatGPT Edu, a specialised version of its AI chatbot ChatGPT for education systems, to students and teachers.

It added that the initiative would ensure the students are "better equipped as the workforce of the future". The company said Estonia was already among the top 15 countries globally for usage of ChatGPT, which was released in November 2022. Neerav Kingsland, head of business development at Anthropic added in a statement that Estonia was "creating a model that other countries will likely follow". "We're proud to support Estonia's vision of using AI to help improve the lives of teachers and provide an amazing education to every student," he said.

It comes as the EU aims to increase the number of Europeans with basic digital skills to 80 per cent by 2030.

UK universities warned to ‘stress-test’ assessments as 92% of students use AI

Survey of 1,000 students shows ‘explosive increase’ in use of generative AI in particular over past 12 months

Sally Weale

Wed 26 Feb 2025

British universities have been warned to “stress-test” all assessments after new research revealed “almost all” undergraduates are using generative artificial intelligence (genAI) in their studies.

A survey of 1,000 students – both domestic and international – found there had been an “explosive increase” in the use of genAI in the past 12 months. Almost nine out of 10 (88%) in the 2025 poll said they used tools such as ChatGPT for their assessments, up from 53% last year.

The proportion using any AI tool surged from 66% in 2024 to 92% in 2025, meaning just 8% of students are not using AI, according to a report published by the Higher Education Policy Institute and Kortext, a digital etextbook provider.

Josh Freeman, the report’s author, said such dramatic changes in behaviour in just 12 months were almost unheard of, and warned: “Universities should take heed: generative AI is here to stay.

“There are urgent lessons here for institutions,” Freeman said. “Every assessment must be reviewed in case it can be completed easily using AI. That will require bold retraining initiatives for staff in the power and potential of generative AI.

“Institutions will not solve any of these problems alone and should seek to share best practice with each other. Ultimately, AI tools should be harnessed to advance learning rather than inhibit it.”

Students say they use genAI to explain concepts, summarise articles and suggest research ideas, but almost one in five (18%) admitted to including AI-generated text directly in their work.

“When asked why they use AI, students most often find it saves them time (51%) and improves the quality of their work (50%),” the report said. “The main factors putting them off using AI are the risk of being accused of academic misconduct and the fear of getting false or biased results.”

One student told researchers: “I enjoy working with AI as it makes life easier when doing assignments; however, I do get scared I’ll get caught.”

Women are more worried about these factors than men, who show greater enthusiasm for AI, as do wealthier students and those on science, technology, engineering and maths (Stem) courses.

According to the report, half of students from the most privileged backgrounds used genAI to summarise articles, compared with 44% from the least privileged backgrounds. “The digital divide we identified in 2024 appears to have widened,” the report concluded.

Students generally believe their universities have responded effectively to concerns over academic integrity, with 80% saying their institution’s policy is “clear” and 76% believe their institution would spot the use of AI in assessments. Only a third (36%) of students have received training in AI skills from their university.

“They dance around the subject,” said one student. “It’s not banned but not advised, it’s academic misconduct if you use it, but lecturers tell us they use it. Very mixed messages.”

Dr Thomas Lancaster, a computer scientist at Imperial College London who researches academic integrity, said: “Students who aren’t using generative AI tools are now a tiny minority.

“I know some students are resistant to AI, and I can understand the ethical concerns, but they’re really putting themselves at quite a competitive disadvantage, both in education, and in showing themselves as ready for future careers.”

A spokesperson for Universities UK said: “To effectively educate the workforce of tomorrow, universities must increasingly equip students to work in a world that will be shaped by AI, and it’s clear progress is being made.

“But they need to balance this with the challenges posed by a rapidly developing technology. This survey shows that universities and students are alive to the potential risks posed by AI tools in the context of exams and assessment.

“All have codes of conduct that include severe penalties for students found to be submitting work that is not their own and they engage students from day-one on the implications of cheating.”

The New York Times

These Students Are Learning About Fake News and How to Spot It

News literacy instruction is flourishing in the wake of the 2016 election as worries about fake news grow.

By Alina Tugend

Feb. 20, 2020

The students sit at desks in groups of four, watching videos about the recent bush fires in Australia. One shows an apocalyptic landscape in flames, the other a tourist paradise, with assurances that much of the continent is safe.

Instead of dismissing both as fake news, the eighth graders know what questions to ask to tease out the nuances: Who put out the videos? What does each source have to gain? How big is Australia? Could both videos be true?

It is no wonder these students at Herbert S. Eisenberg Intermediate School 303 in the Coney Island neighborhood of Brooklyn approach their task with such sophistication. They have been studying news literacy since sixth grade in one of the only schools in the country to make the subject part of an English language arts curriculum that all students must take for an hour a week for three years.

News, or media, literacy — how to critically understand, analyze and evaluate online content, images and stories — is not new. But it has taken on urgency in the last few years as accusations of fake news and the reality of disinformation permeate the internet and people — especially young ones — spend hours and hours a day looking at screens.

“Media literacy is *the* literacy of the 21st century,” said a recent report by the nonprofit group Media Literacy Now. Research has shown that an inability to judge content leads to two equally unfortunate outcomes: People believe everything that suits their preconceived notions, or they cynically disbelieve everything. Either way leads to a polarized and disengaged citizenry.

Other recent research suggests that while so-called digital natives — preteens and teenagers — are technically savvy, most of them fail when it comes to assessing the veracity of news articles and images.

“If they were on a highway, it would be equivalent to not knowing you should stop at a stop sign. That’s really the state of ignorance we’re dealing with,” said Sam Wineburg, a professor of education at Stanford University and executive director of the Stanford History Education Group, a research and development consortium.

The issue is being attacked by dozens of organizations offering information and curriculums on the subject. According to Media Literacy Now, 14 states require some sort of media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools.

One such program, the News Literacy Project — which began more than 10 years ago and works with news organizations (including The New York Times) to educate students in grades six through 12 — has grown rapidly since the 2016 election and is now offering online courses across the country.

“The election was a sea change,” said Alan Miller, the program’s founder and C.E.O., who won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting at The Los Angeles Times.

In addition, several universities are working with middle and high schools and providing news literacy curriculums to them at no charge. College is too late to begin the lessons, said Howard Schneider, founding dean of the School of Journalism at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He worked as a reporter and editor at Newsday for 35 years.

“Increasingly, students are arriving at college with bad digital citizenship habits,” he said. “They are outsourcing their judgment to their peers and to technology.”

Young people are not alone in their online illiteracy. A study last year found that those 65 and older shared more fake news during the 2016 election than younger adults.

The Stanford History Education Group has conducted some of the leading research into young people’s digital savvy, finding that a high proportion of students in middle school through college do not have the tools to evaluate the truth of online content.

Spurred by the group’s 2016 research findings, Google’s charitable arm funded a coalition called MediaWise that included the Stanford History Education Group, the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the Local Media Association.

As part of the coalition, Stanford developed the curriculum, Civic Online Reasoning for middle and high school students. The goal is broader than just the media, but focused “on how we become informed about the issues of public policy that affect our lives,” Professor Wineburg said.

The aim of the Civic Online Reasoning curriculum is to get students to ask three basic questions when reading or watching online content: Who is behind that information? What is the evidence? What do other sources say?

Researchers focused on two major skills. The first is lateral reading. It encourages readers who come to an unfamiliar website to refrain from exploring the site more deeply until they have opened other tabs and found other websites to help them determine the authenticity or reliability of the newly discovered site.

The other skill is click restraint. Ideally, users would resist the impulse to click on the first results that appear in say, a Google search, until they have scanned the full list for credibility and then click selectively.

Professor Wineburg said that he learned these skills from professional fact checkers and that “focusing on a very small set of high-leverage skills can make a dent in students’ abilities to make wise judgments.”

Robert White, a government and politics teacher at a high school in Lincoln, Neb., was part of a pilot program for the curriculum and has taught it for the last three semesters. He says it works.

“Most students believed what they saw on a news site, any news site,” Mr. White said. “By the end of the semester, I could see a lot of change — they questioned any media source and did fact-checking. I now have students fact-checking me.”

In the last 18 months, another university-level news literacy program, Stony Brook's Center for News Literacy, has reached out to secondary school staff members and teachers, offering them its summer academy, which runs about four days.

The idea of a journalism school now should be "not only teach the journalists of the future, but to prepare the audience of the future," Professor Schneider said.

Carmen Amador, the principal of I.S. 303, learned about the Stony Brook news literacy program at a conference and attended the academy when it was still aimed at higher education. Using what she learned there, her school adopted a news literacy curriculum seven years ago.

"Before they started talking about fake news, we were talking about it," Ms. Amador said. "But after 2016, the teachers became more excited and passionate about it." The goal, she said, is not only to better understand the news but also to take action through community service and other initiatives.

Students are taught to know the "neighborhood" they're reading in: is it journalism, entertainment, promotion, raw information or advertising? And an acronym, IMVAIN, is used widely as a cue: Are sources independent, are there multiple sources, do they verify evidence, and are they authoritative, informed and named sources?

"This generation is very disillusioned by news — everything is fake news," said Maria Carnesi, district chairman of social studies at the Plainview-Old Bethpage school district, which is Stony Brook's first demonstration district on Long Island. "News literacy is really empowering for young people."

In 2016, the News Literacy Project started offering a virtual classroom, Checkology, aimed at grades six through 12. The program offers 13 online interactive lessons that teachers can use. It began a partnership with New York City schools last fall.

So far, more than 20,000 educators and 140,000 students have registered to use Checkology nationwide and internationally, Mr. Miller said. The cost is \$3.50 to \$5 a student, depending on how many students are registered.

Brian Winkel, a high school journalism and English teacher in Cedar Falls, Iowa, uses Checkology in an elective course called 21st Century Literacy. He said he wished every student would be required to learn news literacy.

No long-term studies have been done on the effectiveness of teaching news literacy. But assessments of students before and after they complete courses and comparisons with students who do not take the classes show that students who learn news literacy are often better able to recognize false content and judge if a source of information is credible, and they are often more engaged in current events and news.

Students at I.S. 303, who are fast becoming more proficient than some adults in evaluating online content, now see a need to teach their peers and parents.

"My mom doesn't watch the news all that much, but sometimes she'll read something, and she'll automatically believe it and tell me about it," said Nafisa Patwary, a seventh grader. "And I'll help her fact check."

The New York Times

Get Tech Out of the Classroom Before It's Too Late

April 10, 2024

Jessica Grose

Opinion Writer

Jaime Lewis noticed that her eighth-grade son's grades were slipping several months ago. She suspected it was because he was watching YouTube during class on his school-issued laptop, and her suspicions were validated. [...]

She decided to do something about it. Lewis told me that she got together with other parents who were concerned about the unfettered use of school-sanctioned technology in San Luis Coastal Unified School District, their district in San Luis Obispo, Calif. Because they knew that it wasn't realistic to ask for the removal of the laptops entirely, they went for what they saw as an achievable win: blocking YouTube from students' devices. [...]

I don't think educators are the bad guys here. Neither does Lewis. In general, educators want the best for students. The bad guys, as I see it, are tech companies.

One way or another, we've allowed Big Tech's tentacles into absolutely every aspect of our children's education, with very little oversight and no real proof that their devices or programs improve educational outcomes. [...]

The issue goes beyond access to age-inappropriate clips or general distraction during school hours. Several parents related stories of even kindergartners reading almost exclusively on iPads because their school districts had phased out hard-copy books and writing materials after shifting to digital-only curriculums. [...]

I've heard about kids disregarding teachers who tried to limit tech use, fine motor skills atrophying because students rarely used pencils and children whose learning was ultimately stymied by the tech that initially helped them — for example, students learning English as a second language becoming too reliant on translation apps rather than becoming fluent. [...]

Resources are finite. Software costs money. Replacing defunct or outdated laptops costs money. When it comes to I.T., many schools are understaffed. More of the money being spent on tech and the maintenance and training around the use of that tech could be spent on other things, like actual books. And badly monitored and used tech has the most potential for harm.

I've considered the counterarguments: Kids who'd be distracted by tech would find something else to distract them; K-12 students need to gain familiarity with tech to instill some vague work force readiness.

But on the first point, I think other forms of distraction — like talking to friends, doodling and daydreaming — are better than playing video games or watching YouTube because they at least involve children engaging with other children or their own minds. [...]

On the second point, you can have designated classes to teach children how to keyboard, code or use software that don't require them to have laptops in their hands throughout the school day. [...]

Holly Coleman, a parent of two who lives in Kansas and is a substitute teacher in her district, describes what students are losing:

They can type quickly but struggle to write legibly. They can find info about any topic on the internet but can't discuss that topic using recall, creativity or critical thinking. They can make a beautiful PowerPoint or Keynote in 20 minutes but can't write a three-page paper or hand-make a poster board. Their textbooks are all online, which is great for the seams on their backpack, but tangible pages under your fingers literally connect you to the material you're reading and learning. These kids do not know how to move through their day without a device in their hand and under their fingertips. They never even get the chance to disconnect from their tech and reconnect with one another through eye contact and conversation. [...]

We need to reframe the entire conversation around tech in schools because it's far from clear that we're getting the results we want as a society and because parents are in a defensive crouch, afraid to appear anti-progress or unwilling to prepare the next generation for the future. [...]