High stakes tests are tests that involve an important consequence for the test taker, such as earning a high school diploma or receiving a scholarship for college. These tests signify that something is at stake, meaning failing could result in serious consequences. High stakes tests have a few main qualities: one single, defined type of assessment, a clear line of pass or fail and a consequence for passing or failing. Common examples of high stakes tests are standardized tests that measure school progress for the No Child Left Behind Act and the SAT tests which require certain levels of scores to get into college. Regardless of the consequence that comes along with these different types of tests, they pressure students and teachers to learn and teach the correct content in order to ensure passing scores. High stakes testing is detrimental to school curriculum because it often does not truly express a student’s ability to grasp certain concepts, it takes away time for teachers to teach other content areas and it places extra, unneeded stress on students and teachers.

Standardized tests that are required for all students to take can often be misinterpreted when the score reports come out. These exams are mostly long tests, given in one or a few several hour settings. Children are restless and sitting for long periods of time can lead to them losing focus and concentration; this can result in them giving up or trying less half way through these long tests. To put such high standards on these tests, such as the decision to admit a person into college or not, is a bad idea. According to FairTest, The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, “Some students simply do not test well. Many students are affected by test anxiety or do not show their learning well on a standardized test, resulting in inaccurately lower scores” (Par.
1). Therefore, basing the majority of a teenager’s future on one test is a bad representation of that person.

With new laws in place from the No Child Left Behind Act, schools are required for the entire student bodies to perform at required levels or else the schools undergo certain consequences. Passing these tests, as an entire school, has become very important to school corporations. Because of this pressure to do well, educators are required to thoroughly cover certain material repeatedly. According to the textbook *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, "Many educators fear that the press to meet the demands of NCLB and other state and assessment goals will result in more time spent strengthening students’ basic math and reading/language arts skills at the expense of time for such subjects as art, music, and foreign languages" (535). High stakes tests are beginning to take away from the broad horizons which students used to be able to encounter while in school. Now, curriculum is becoming solely based around basic math and reading with little emphasis on outside subjects. In reality, less emphasis needs to be placed on these high stakes tests so that students feel more comfortable learning about a wider range of subjects instead of worrying about failing standardized tests.

The pressure and stress that comes along with high stakes testing is disadvantageous to the atmosphere that students have to learn in. Marcia Clemmitt’s article “Students Under Stress,” states that in at least some classrooms, “teachers' testing anxiety clearly affects students,” says Marshalita Peterson, an associate professor of education at historically black Spelman College in Atlanta. "There are some teachers who say, 'You have to do well on this test,' and in response students self-impose requirements to achieve,” Peterson says. “Some can't take the emotional strain of that, and it shows” (10). Students are constantly reminded of the importance of passing these standardized tests that extra stress is added onto their course load. Students realize the
reality of not passing a high stakes tests, and therefore, they undergo high levels of stress as they try to learn all the required concept areas. If so much importance was not put into high stakes testing then students could feel more of a freedom to learn and less of the stress to pass a test.

High stakes tests’ disadvantages outweigh the advantages by far. They require too much extra work for schools, students and teachers and take away too much time for other curriculum to be taught. Between normal school work and normal exams within a class, students do not need the extra pressure of passing an extremely long standardized test. Enough is taught in school that grades can represent an adequate score as to how much a student knows. High stakes tests are simply not beneficial to students.