



The WYHS

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BRAINSTORM

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The WYHS
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Editor's Letter

Brainstorm is a unique publication. It displays what its title implies- the “brainstorms” of our students. Our main mission is to publish the thoughts of our students on current topics of interest. Each edition is packed with articles on a plethora of subjects ranging from science to thoughts on the educational system. Brainstorm is run by a dedicated team of students who contribute hours of their time to the production of this publication. Their jobs are to write, edit, and formulate the layout for each brainstorm edition. It makes the entire publication all the more special as a true “brainchild” of the students.

Being an op-ed magazine, this issue of Brainstorm focuses on many commonly debated topics. Each article depicts a student’s viewpoint on one of the topics. Every article is then presented with an opinionative article of the opposing side. So, with each sub-topic within the publication, there are two viewpoints: one supportive of the topic at hand and one opposing it. The reader, then, really has the ability to see and consider both sides of the argument. This offers both an engaging and erudite read.

We would like to everyone who participated in the creation of this issue of Brainstorm: editors, students, layout designers, and all of our readers. Our goal is to provide something that is not only educational but also enjoyable and appealing. With this publication, we believe that we have accomplished this goal.

Brett Wolff ('15)



Table of Contents:

Safety.....	4
Standardized Testing.....	5
Technology.....	7
Sports.....	8
Gap year.....	10

WYHS ARE WE SAFE?

Pro
Noah Light ('15)

It seems like second nature

for us to take every measure necessary to guard our valuables, so why

are we not guarding our most valuable possession, our children? The debate over schools having armed security guards patrolling their campuses is a controversial but important argument that must find resolution. Sadly, this type of security is now necessary in response to all the school shootings that have occurred in recent years. The truth is that there are many ways armed security can prevent a horrible tragedy from occurring both inside and outside of the building.

When an insane person plans to attack a place like a school, they must take the security into account. Knowing that an armed guard is in the area would immediately deter any attack being planned, and the small inconvenience could save precious lives. At places like banks, police currently use this tactic, and one look at an armed guard instantly scares away any would-be criminal.



The second and more important reason for armed security is to protect against internal danger such as harmful teachers or students. Re-

action time to an attack is greatly increased by having security on the inside, and this is possibly the most important aspect to

consider. Theoretically, if there was an attack on a school, it would take far too long for the police to arrive. Without any weapons to defend themselves, everyone inside would be in great danger. A security guard on scene could rush to the area and stop the situation before more harm

continued on page 11



Against
Jessica Griff ('15)

What is with all this new security at school? I first want to acknowledge the multiple tragedies that have transpired in schools, whether they are student gunmen or intruders that have disrupted school and killed students. I do not think lack of security is the definitive reason these types of events transpire. If someone wants to do harm, he will find a way whether the emergency exits are alarmed or not. WYHS's addition of surveillance, the alarming of the doors, and the installment of a security guard have simply been instituted for our peace of mind. We want to believe that if, G-d forbid, something bad were to happen, these deterrents would protect us.

However, instead of providing the students with a sense of security, these preventative measures have so far only hindered the students' accessibility to the school. Every morning, kids now need to walk all the way to the main entrance to enter the building. They cannot take the shortcut through the now "emergency exit" back door, and for those

While the intentions for blocking off the spots seem reasonable, why are there still spots to the immediate right

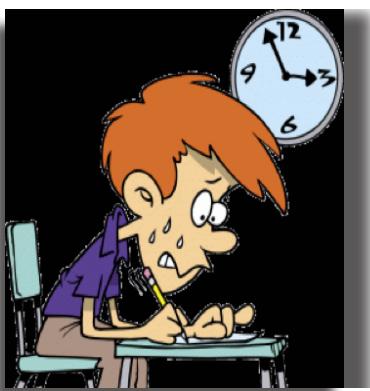
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STANDARDIZED TESTING

Pro **Kayla Petrover** **(‘15)**

Standardized test scores are considered for admissions to most colleges in America, but are they really as reliable as we seem to think they are? Thousands of students every year take the SAT, the ACT, or both, with high hopes of displaying their intellectual abilities to colleges. However, there are many stories of A students receiving low marks and C students receiving high marks, so how could colleges trust standardized test scores as much as they do?

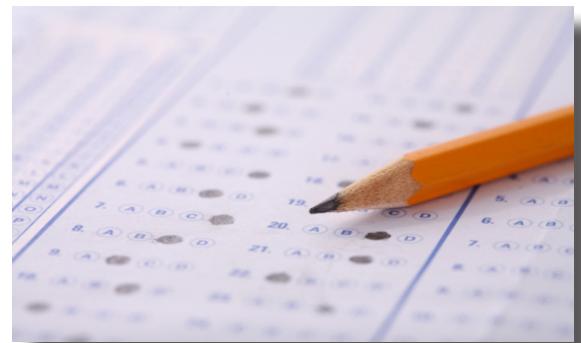
Standardized tests were originally designed to test only raw intellect, or in simpler terms, to measure the student's learning capability, not the extent of his knowledge. However, there are hundreds of SAT and ACT prep-books, tutors, and classes. So in order to compensate for that,



the SAT and ACT have been modifying their tests periodically to supply a more accurate score report.

But in order to truly understand what the SAT or ACT tell us

about a student, we must first understand how it is that they are scored. For the raw score on the SAT, every correct answer yields one point, every incorrect answer subtracts a quarter of a point, and every unanswered question neither adds nor subtracts. Finally, the raw score is reflected onto the 200 to 800 scale for a reading that we are more familiar with. For the raw score on the ACT all the correct answers are counted and the incorrect answers ignored, as well as the unanswered. Then it is scaled and broken up into three sections: subject test scores that range from 1 to 36, a composite score that is the average of those, and sub-scores that range from 1 to 18. But what does this tell us about the student? SAT and ACT scores are fairly reliable given that they take into account not only the test-taker's individual performance, but also the performances of all those who took that same test and looks at how our particular student performed compared to all the other test-takers. Therefore, the score gives a more accurate representation of the student's intellectual abilities. Just as students could be compared to their classmates based on the letter grade that they receive on a regular test, they could also be compared to students across the country based on the score they got on their standardized tests.



Against **Cherie Landa** **(‘15)**

The freshmen don't know what's in store for them, the sophomores await these notorious test in anticipation, the juniors are panicked the entire year by them, and seniors have flashbacks to the time they were sweating anxiously in the testing room a mere year earlier. All of this unwarranted stress due to the daunting standardized testing system. The SATs and ACTs have become a rite of passage for every high school student planning on going to college. The premise is simple: if you want to go to a good college, do well in school and get a killer high score on the standardized tests.

Before even touching upon the fact that standardized tests are not a solid way of testing anyone's intelligence, there's a simpler point to be made. What about the kid with the 4.7 GPA, great essay, is captain of whatever intense sports team, but only has a 1290 on their SATs? If the school he wants to go to requires a 1400 on the SAT, what is he, and many other students in the same position, to do?

continued on page: 6

SCHOOL SAFETY *continued from page 4*

and left of the sectioned off area where students are allowed to park? WYHS, stop being inconsistent and choose whether you want us to be safe or use the parking lot for what it is actually meant for—parking. After being marked late from davening because she had to circle around the school searching for a parking spot, Raquel Zimmerman ('15) conveyed her frustration: "I do not see how the coned off spots provide safety. They are the best spots in the school, and it's not fair for students who come after the cones have been taken away to be allowed to park in these prime spots. It's almost a reward for coming late."

While it is understandable that the school feels the need to be safer and to take preventative measures against possible tragedies, it needs to understand that so far, the measures that have been implemented have only frustrated students by being a hindrance to the laid back ambiance of the school.

**STANDARDIZED TESTING**
continued from page 5

His score is a reflection of one poor weekend morning out of his entire high school career.

Now if you were to say that it's impossible for someone with a 4.7 GPA to get that low of a score, you're wrong. A boy I know who is absolutely brilliant, taking 5 APs online and flying through them with all the colors of the freaking wind, took the ACTs three times. He received: 25. 26. 28. Those scores certainly do not correspond to the stellar academic record this boy has thus far showcased.

The other (and main) problem with standardized tests: the fact that they're "standardized." Sure, smart people tend to do better on them, but smart people tend to do better on most academic tests, no? But then there are some people who just don't test well; if they had the information presented to them in a different format then perhaps they'd score higher. The only problem is that wouldn't be 'standard.' Ask any senior or junior, the tests have a certain feel to them. The way the questions and answers are worded, the layout of the page, the amount of time it takes to fill in each bubble, the anticipation that builds up as you wait for the proctor to finish reading the endless list of instructions, looking around the test room wondering if that kid sitting next to you in the hoodie will break a 1400—which leaves you with just enough focus to stare in frustration at that mockingly organized page in front of you.

For those who do well and for those who fall short, at the end of the day, the tests are a huge stress on everyone. I think most teenagers can fill their quotas of stress without the help of the SATs or ACTs. But, colleges need to be fair, and therefore feel the need to test EVERYONE the same way. But are they really testing how smart we are, or are they testing how well we can take a standardized test?

TECHNOLOGY

Pro

Jonny Attais ('15)

Technological devices should by all means be permitted in the classroom, albeit not without restrictions, because they increase productivity and enhance the learning process by engaging students in ways that feel more natural to them.

Technology facilitates learning by reducing clutter and helping students stay organized—a key component of success at any stage in life. Taking notes and completing assignments on a computer or tablet, rather than on paper, diminishes the risk of losing one's notes and being forced to redo homework assignments or other assessments. Furthermore, by replacing costly physical textbooks with their virtual counterparts, students will be able to highlight and annotate as much as they'd like directly on the text, helping them learn the material faster. Lastly, by regularly synchronizing one's notes—a process that takes minimal time and effort—one will ensure that in the unfortunate case of a lost or damaged device, the notes will be recoverable with only a few clicks.

On the other hand, there is the concern that technology may

actually distract students more than it would enhance their learning process. That claim, however, is based on the faulty assumption that the technology itself is what is causing the student to get distracted. In other words, if a student is not interested in what is being taught, he will find another way to keep himself entertained for the duration of that class. Naturally, if he has a smartphone at hand, he may use it to play games or browse social media. But even if technology were to be



banned, he would undoubtedly find other ways to keep busy.

Due to the ever-decreasing attention span of today's youth teachers should embrace technology and learn how to creatively incorporate it within their lesson to better reach students and not ban it out of fear as to make use of its great benefits. However, the teacher must set rules and protocols in place in order to manage the students' use of technology, rather than simply ban it completely to prevent the students from misusing it. Thus, by having technology present in the classroom, students will inevitably learn how to handle potential distractions, something they will certainly benefit from for the rest of their lives.

Against

Matthew Samilow ('17)

The proliferation of mobile technological devices in recent years has had a dramatic effect on the educational landscape. Devices such as mobile smart phones and tablets have become increasingly prevalent in schools throughout the country. Many proponents of using these devices in classrooms claim that they are a great asset to both teachers and students. Schools have invested heavily into improving technological infrastructure, believing it is the way of the future. The attention and resources devoted to such devices necessitates the question—do they improve learning?

Gradually more and more schools have accepted technology and have begun to put devices in the hands of their students. This is highly detrimental to the student, especially at young ages when children are still developing. In a study, elementary school students were found to have diminished coordination as a result of spending too much time on tablets and not enough time actually writing. This is obviously the extreme, but it elucidates major question—why should schools be encouraging students to spend more time on screen than they already do? It is estimated that the average adolescent spends approximately $7 \frac{1}{2}$

continued on page 11

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Pro **Brett Wolff ('15)**

"Fourteen regular season games. Practice two nights a week, maybe. Limited exhibition games and non-league tournaments. Excusable absences for practice for schoolwork or school programs.



Complaints

about time commitments, playing time and working too hard" (Elliot Steinmetz). Are high school sports really worth all of this trouble? Are students actually gaining anything constructive from participating in these school athletics?

The following is a statistic presented by the University of Michigan department of psychology: "Researchers found that 46 percent of the females and 67 percent of the males who participated in team sports as sophomores...had better than expected high school GPAs...and were more likely to be enrolled full-time in college at age 21." Almost half

of girls and nearly three quarters of boys have earned higher high school GPAs than those that do not play high school sports. And, they are also more likely to attend a full four years of college. This is an astonishing statistic; teens who are exposed to and involved in high school sports are more successful and earn higher grades than those who do not.

Now, if this concept doesn't catch your eye, then get this. Not only

do high school sports enhance a student's academic career, but sports also educate them in valuable life-lessons. In basketball, for example, says Coach Elliot Steinmetz, "We teach our kids the importance of discipline, commitment, investment and teamwork...Players need to learn the importance of being part of one unit." Discipline, commitment, and investment are three qualities that are essential to success in life. Jobs and careers are open to those who are persistent, those who are committed to their field, those who invest all of their time and effort.

More importantly, however, is the notion of unity—this concept of being "a piece of the puzzle." You must be selfless, giving "everything you have for the sake of those around you regardless of the

circumstances" (Steinmetz). This is truly a major life-lesson that teens nowadays learn from their respective high school sports.

Finally, here is another mind-blowing statistic from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention: "Childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and tripled in adolescents in the past 30 years," and, "in 2010, more than one-third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese." Think about that! In this decade one out of every three teenagers is considered overweight. Thus, an excellent way for teens to stay fit and in shape is by involving themselves in high school sports. In just one hour, the average teenager burns around 560 calories playing basketball, 350 calories playing baseball or softball, and 630 calories playing football. Sports provide students with an enjoyable, exceptional method of exercise and way to stay in shape.

Without sports, even more high school students would be overweight, or more critically, obese. Therefore, as I have previously stated, high school sports are not just healthy for the mind, but are even healthier for the physical body. To sum it up, high school sports have proved to significantly enhance students' academic skills, have helped teach many fundamental life-lessons, and have given students more enjoyable ways to stay fit.

Against- **Isaac Kurtz ('14)**

If you listen in on any conversation going on during WYHS breakfast (unless you are at Starbucks) you are guaranteed some discussion about last night's game. As students hang around at the end of Gemara shiur, you are guaranteed a passionate argument over some fantasy trade. In fact, many classes have fantasy football leagues exclusively for the students in the class. Sports are deeply entrenched in American culture, but are also deeply entrenched in American schools.

At our school, we have 10 JV and varsity sports that go on throughout the year, along with fall conditioning. In contrast, the amount of academic teams that our school has is a grand total of...zero. That's right; our great academic institution does not have a single academic team to sport. So, what is the best way for an incoming freshman to fit into the WYHS community? Certainly not through any intellectual opportunities, rather the only way is to hit the gym and put up shots.

I certainly am not arguing for teenagers to stop playing sports, but I think it is time to take a step back and ask what we are hoping to accomplish with sports being such an integral part of the high school experience. What sort of message does it send to students when student athletes are paraded around the school during pep rallies, while "academics" are brushed aside? How does it look when whole teams are allowed to leave school and miss class in order to compete on their respective teams? Are sports so important that it is worth sacrificing these individuals' education?

Now I know many will counter with the timeless argument of how sports teach teamwork and the value of losing, but do only the athletically gifted need to learn such values? Are these not universal values that can be taught both in the classroom and on the court? This has led to perhaps one of the greatest downfalls in our education system; we compartmentalize school into separate aspects. Students are shown that the academic half of high school might be tedious and tiresome, but this half is tolerable as long as we also have school spirit and excitement in other aspects of school. Schools have moved farther and farther away from imparting enthusiasm and competition through learning and now believe that excitement is for only the select few on athletic teams.

This crisis can also be considered from an economic stand point, where across the country, school districts are short on funds. So what do these educated adults choose to cut out of the school? Well, certainly not the expensive football team. Rather schools are slashing education jobs and extending winter break, while sports budgets remain above the fray. Marguerite Roza, the author of Educational Economics, studied a public school in the Pacific Northwest and discovered that while \$1,348 dollars were being spent on each cheerleader, only a quarter of that (\$328) was being spent on math education. One can only hope that such a disparity does not occur at WYHS, but nevertheless, fields, refs, jerseys, and transportation—among other things—can be costly.

I think the real question is whether or not sports must be connected to an academic program. Students should certainly have the chance to participate and compete in independent sports leagues. However, the culture that is created through sports is one that is certainly not conducive for

learning. While, as a member of the basketball team, I love to hear that students stopped class to watch our games in Memphis online, we must question if this is the goal of an academic institution. It is time to end the marriage between school and sports and get our students back on track.



Gap Year **continued from page 9**

college with that driven sense of motivation rather than let it wane in the year abroad. Furthermore, it can be discouraging for a student to watch his or her friends graduate before he or she does because the person who takes a gap year will have to wait longer before starting a profession.

Unlike many people assume, the gap year is not a good idea for those hoping to get into a better college. It doesn't hurt, but it should not be the defining feature of one's resume. The gap year will most likely not improve a college resume unless the experience during the year was exceptionally outstanding or geared towards a specific major. And if this is the primary reason for taking a gap year, it is probably more beneficial to do a condensed summer program instead. Without a straightforward goal and reason for taking it, the gap year is nothing more than an excuse to take off from school. Understanding the drawbacks of taking a gap year is important because making the wrong decision can lead to a bad year.



THE GAP YEAR

For **Kayla Gross ('15)**

Although some people may view gap years as extraneous, taking a gap year does have many benefits and has proven to be extremely important. To begin with, many students, after graduating from high school, travel to Israel to learn for a year before heading off to college.

This allows

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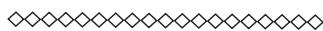
dents to strengthen their passion for Judaism and get in touch with the more religious and spiritual aspects of their lives. It is vital to learn about the laws and advantages of one's religion, and this year undoubtedly gives people a chance to do that. Some may say that a gap year is not beneficial because this long break from learning in a school-like atmosphere can ruin a student's pattern of intellectual success. However, this is not the case; rather, like in a job, it is essential to take a break from the monotony of everyday life. So, if a girl decides to join a seminary for a year, she gets to take a break from school-work while still learning, just in a different way. Or, if someone chooses to use their gap year to travel the world, they will still be partaking in life-changing adventures, while learning new things that can never be taught in a classroom. It can be exhausting for a student to spend twelve years straight

learning in a standard classroom environment—people deserve to relax a bit.

Moreover, after taking a year's break from textbooks and tests, students can approach their freshman year of

college

with a fresh start, with a new mind for learning. They will have had extra time during their gap year to make a decision about what they actually want to do in their lives, which major they will declare, and how they are going to accomplish their goals throughout college and thereafter. This year gives people a chance to hone in on the skills they will need in life, which they won't be able to accomplish once the stress of college kicks in. After taking a well-needed rest from stressing about the future, students will be academically recharged and ready to rock their first year of college. Thus, taking a gap year after high school is actually fundamental for a student's success in life



Against **Shoshy Ciment ('15)**

The gap year is a common phenomenon, especially among Jewish students. Some view it as an opportunity to get a break from a rigorous

academic schedule before college, while others look at it as a way to improve their resume for college.

The gap year, in reality, can be dangerous to those who take it without a focus or aim in mind. Aside from its usually costly expense, the gap year can cause students to forget much of what they learned throughout high school, if they do not spend their time wisely. One study found that students who took a gap year were on average more likely to have skipped school, smoked drugs, and earned less income by the age of 30. This study also showed that the students who took a gap year between high school and college were more likely to succumb to risky behavior and doubt their abilities. It would seem as though taking a gap year could go either way. Granted, taking a year off provides a break between high school and college for students to "discover themselves" when they have the time. However, the gap year, with its flexibility, can also readjust the mind into a slower pace, making coming back to school a painful surprise.

The gap year can also be detrimental because it is often quite costly, especially to those travelling abroad, such as students in Yeshiva or Seminary. Some may argue that money spent going to study in Israel would be better spent on a year in university. Additionally, students who take the year off are at greater risk of deciding to call off college altogether. Being away from the world of constant competition can lull one's mind into a false sense of security. It is better to go straight from high school to

continued on page 9

Technology continued from page 7

hours a day consuming media. The average adolescent uses his phone to text an average of fifty times a day. Schools are putting devices in the hands of students, claiming it is a boon to learning, despite the absence of definitive proof.

Health issues are another major concern. Although no scientific study has linked increased usage of technology to optical problems, the number of people who have developed myopia has increased from 25% to 42%. Many children bring smartphones to school and spend free time tapping away instead of partaking in physical activities. Many studies also show that increased screen time has led to decline in critical thinking. Recreational reading improves thinking and imagination in ways television and other forms of media cannot; reading for pleasure has declined significantly over the past decade.

How do we ensure students use their devices for academic purposes? Teachers have posited this question after seeing students misappropriate school-approved devices for activities such as games. Efforts to monitor students' usage often fall short. In these cases, technology deleteriously affects the students' performance. School efforts to integrate technology often fail as well, leaving a program that is hindrance, rather than an aide, to education.

Many parents want their kids to carry phones for safety reasons, yet the vast majority of adolescents are using their phones to text and check Facebook and Snap-chat (a photo messaging application). As a result, many schools have banned phones during school hours, invoking backlash from both students and some parents. School should serve as a refuge where students can escape the distractions presented by technology and focus on learning.

Technology is not free. As previously mentioned, schools are pouring monetary resources into technological infrastructure. Why? Talk to any older person and they will wistfully tell you how the American education system is a shell of its former self. Instead of investing in new devices, schools should be investing in their teachers, educating them in a manner that they can then edify their students. Learning the "old fashioned way" has produced some of the world's most brilliant people, so why fix something that isn't broken?

Pro-Safety continued from page 4

could be done. The truth of these situations is that the only person who can stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun. Schools need that good guy.

The reason these precautions have not already been put into place is because of the worries about the adverse effects on children. The truth of the situation is that there are actually many positive effects that armed security can have. The invaluable lesson that guns only belong in the right hands is best taught at a young age. When children see an armed security guard, it will teach them that a gun is not just a toy but a weapon that can only be used after the proper amount of training. Another positive impact that armed guards can have is giving parents and students a feeling of safety. According to many polls, most parents acknowledge that they feel safer when they know that there is armed security at their child's school; furthermore, this peace of mind can show in students' work. The fact that a school places value on security could reduce the stress on the students. It seems apparent that bringing armed security into schools can have a very positive impact, and save many lives. One can only hope that soon every school will realize this fact so that we can create a safer school system and a safer America.

