

# HIGH SCHOOL FOCUS GROUPS

# TESTING

In the educational system, testing is represented by two separate yet equally important groups: the teachers, who teach; and the students, who learn.

20 out of 38 students in a computer app courses were asked,

*“What do you think of when you hear the word ‘testing?’”*

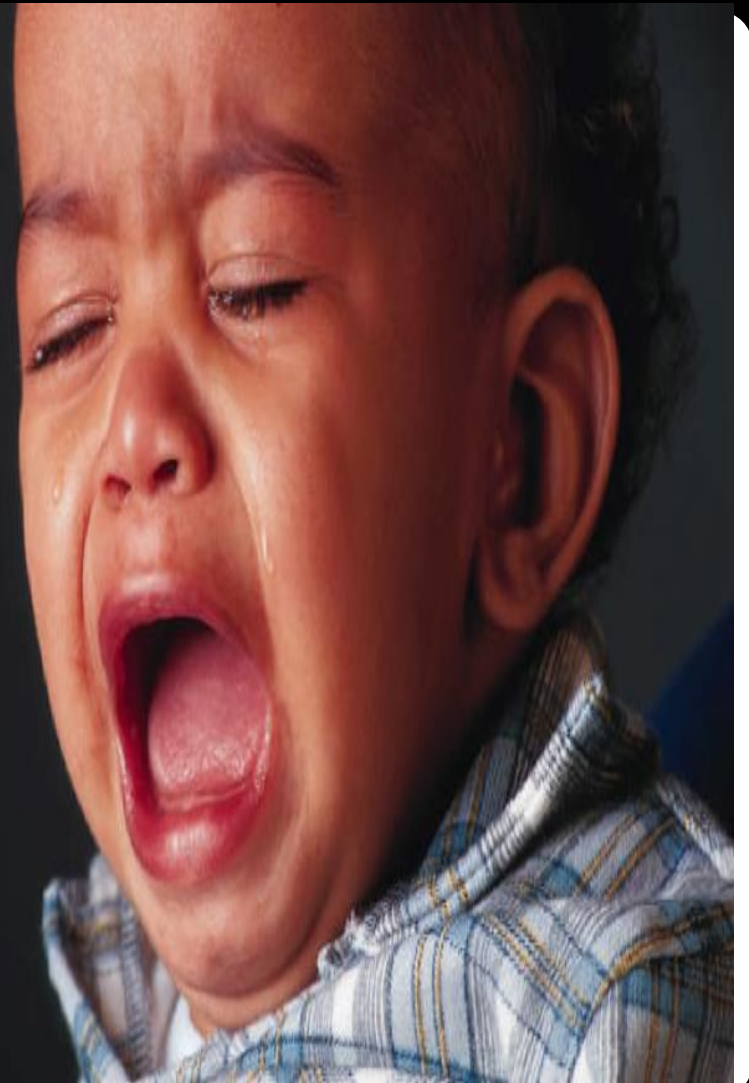
These are their visual stories

14 = 9<sup>th</sup>

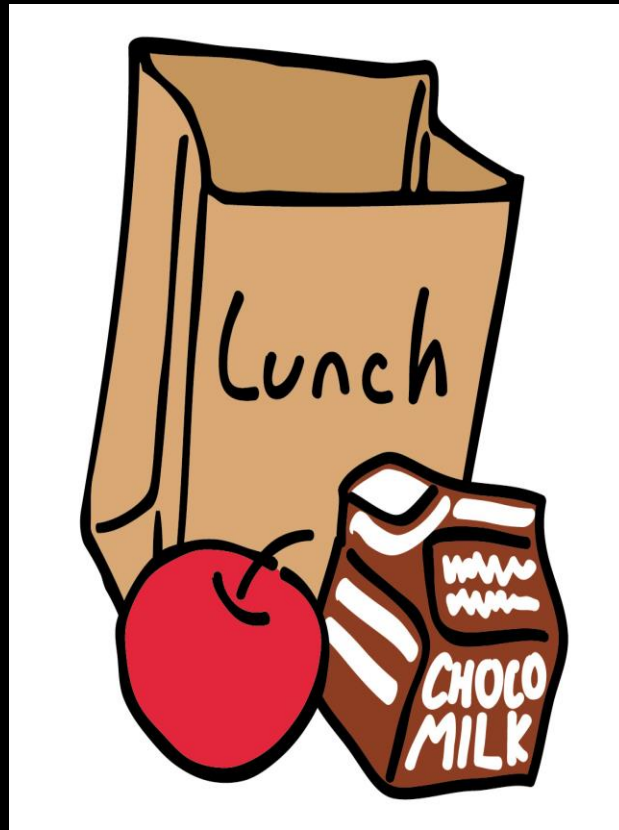
11 = 10<sup>th</sup>

9 = 11<sup>th</sup>

4 = 12<sup>th</sup>



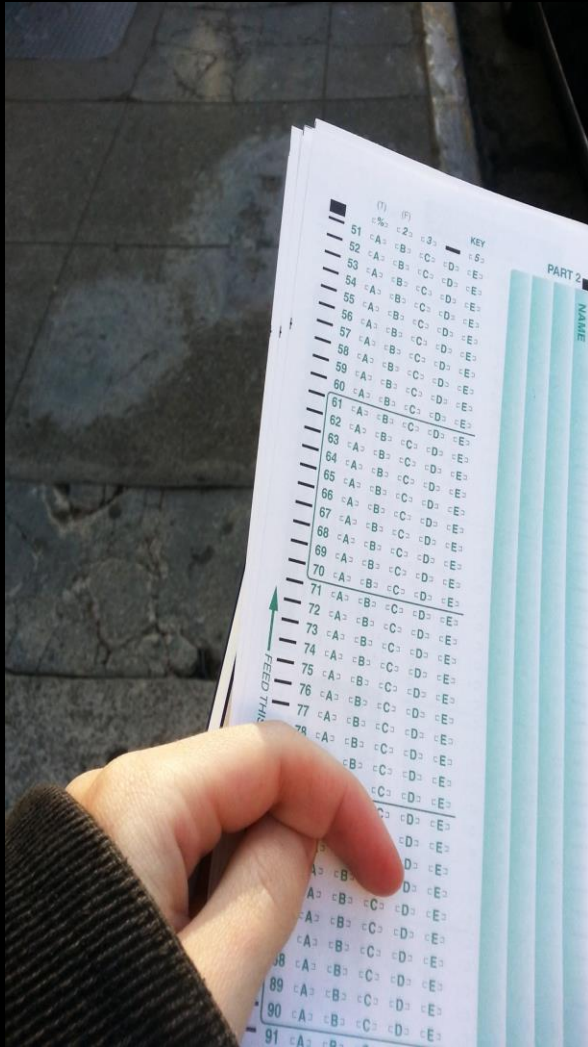




Eat well before testing

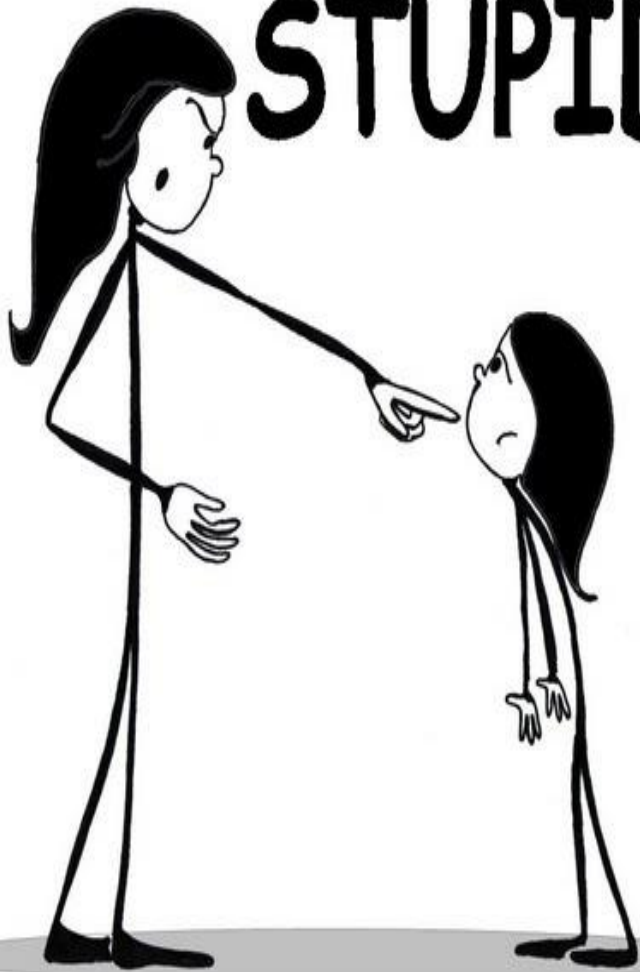
**CLASSWORK:  $2+2=4$**

**TEST: JOHN HAD 3 APPLES AND LOST 1.  
CALCULATE THE MASS OF THE SUN**





**STUPID!**



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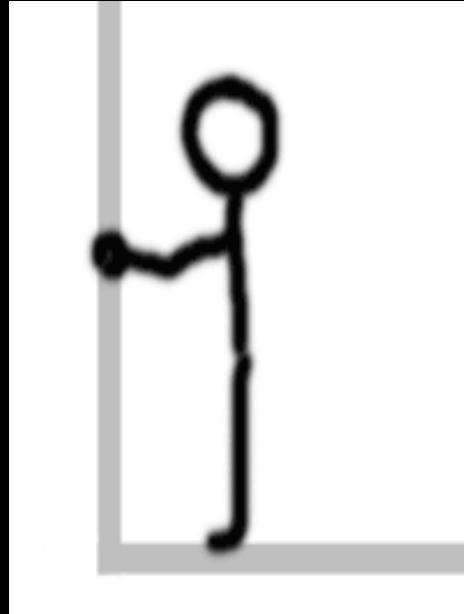


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# Testing in a nutshell

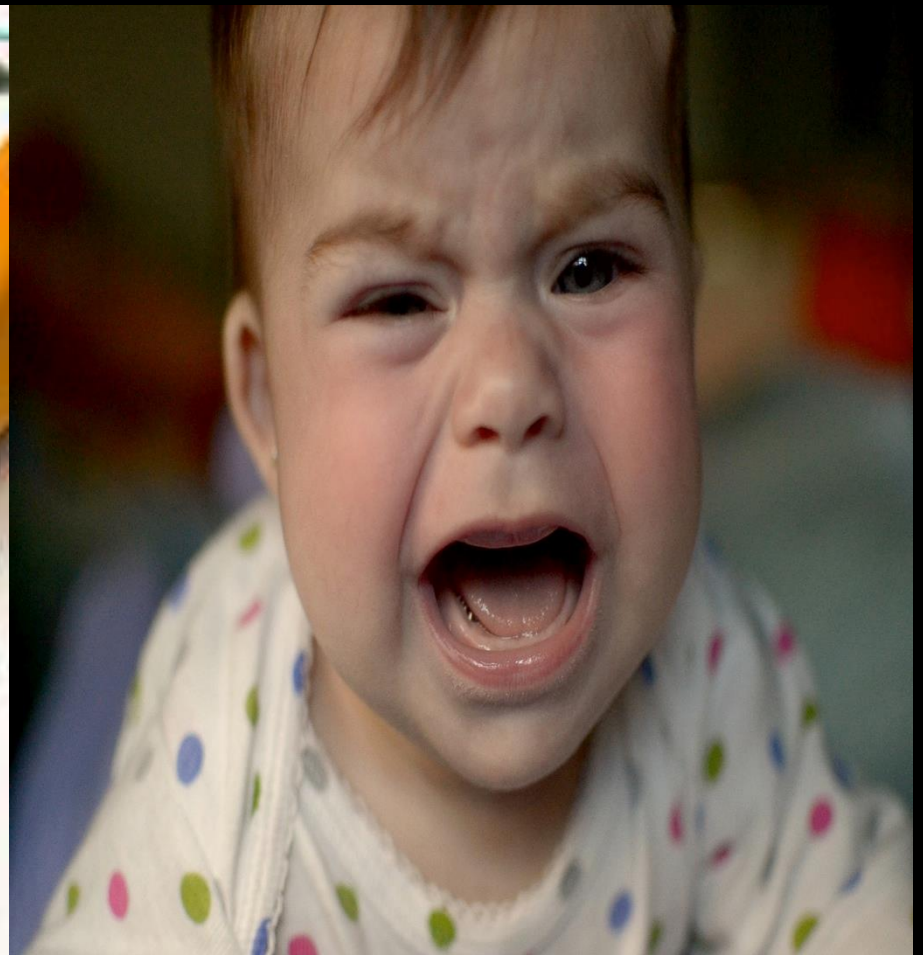


How I feel about tests

What I think of When I hear testing :)



# TEST = TEARS



# EOCs





# Me When I See the Test



# Testing



N.H.



# When I Hear “Test”





# Testing



# Group Composition

- 2 PE classes at Bearden
- 1 PE class at Central
- Mixed grades – mostly Jrs & Srs

# What Is The Purpose of Tests?

- Give you grade
- Assess what you know
- To measure strengths & weaknesses
- Determine if ready for next step
- For Placement
- To measure improvement in skill sets & standards



# Name the Types of Tests

ACT	Unit Test	Final	EOC
Pop Quiz	TCAP	Midterm	Benchmark
MIST	Pretest	Writing Assmt	Reading Comp
SAT	Oral Tests	Ability test (e.g. musical)	Agility /physical tests
PSAT	AP Exams	Homework tests	Activities

# Most Important

- EOC – 25% of grade; important for GPA. You can go from an A to a C if you don't do well
- ACT/SAT – important for college and future (even if you have the best GPA); can get scholarship money
- EOC – That's your grade. You can go from an A to a C
- AP exam
- PSAT

# Somewhat Important

- Midterm
- Oral test – can be more important in foreign language vs. a written test
- Writing Assessment
- Unit Test
- Reading
- Pretest – tells you what you need to learn/revisit so you don't waste time on what you know
- Unit Tests
- AP Tests

# Least Important

- Benchmarks
- Agility
- Ability
- TCAP
- Pop quiz – have these every day
- Placement –
- Explore/PLAN
- Homework
- Practice tests (don't always count)
- Pacer – (physical test in gym)

# Additional Comments

- Importance is driven by getting good grades. If you don't do well on an EOC, you can almost fail a class.
- It's not about how smart you are, just how good you take tests.
- EOCs can either be a joke or be really hard.
- Dumb to take a written test in orchestra; I have been playing for 7 years.
- I experience test anxiety.
- I love school and look forward to tests and homework.

# Additional Comments

- I like oral test because I love talking. They teach you how to speak for interviews.
- Pop quizzes shouldn't be a part of grade; they can kill you.
- We grade people in the wrong manner. Assess people on strengths. With current grading, you can fail one test and get a B.
- Teachers teach to the test, and we cram everything in. Curriculum is messed up!

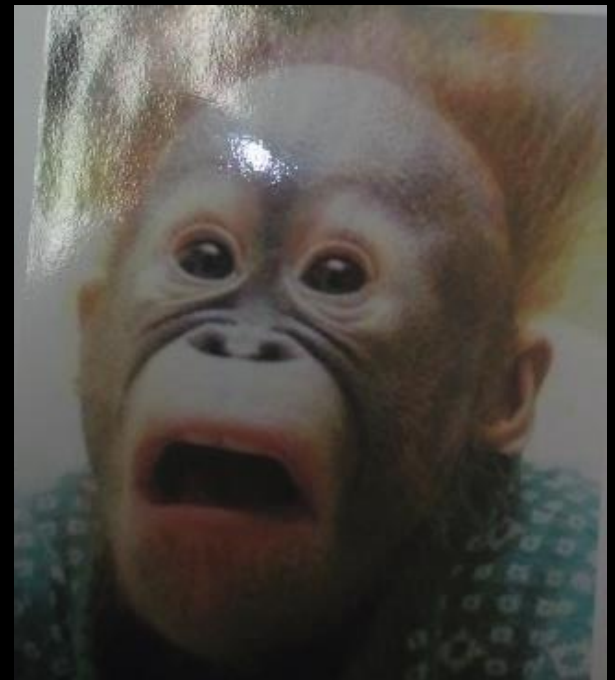
The previous visual stories plus some picture cards from the middle school focus groups were presented to the high school students.

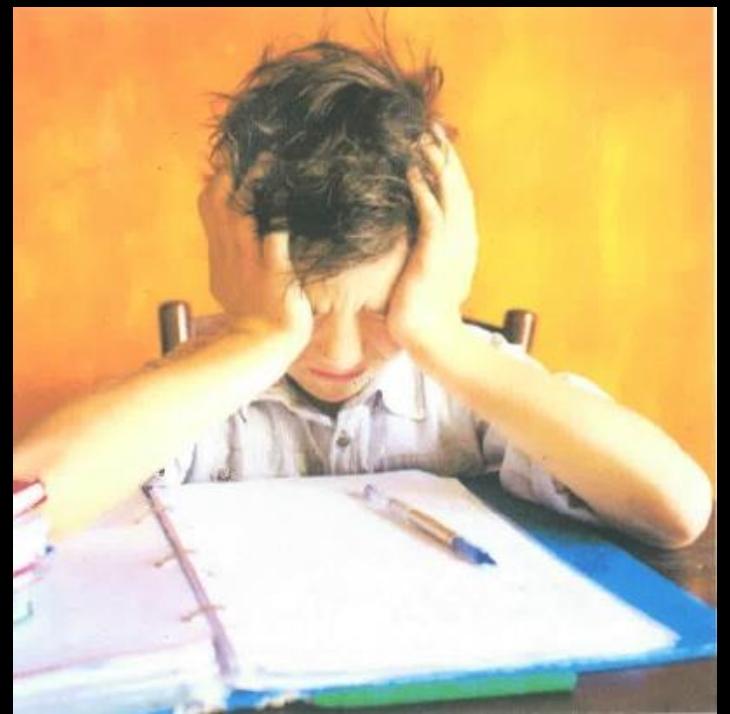
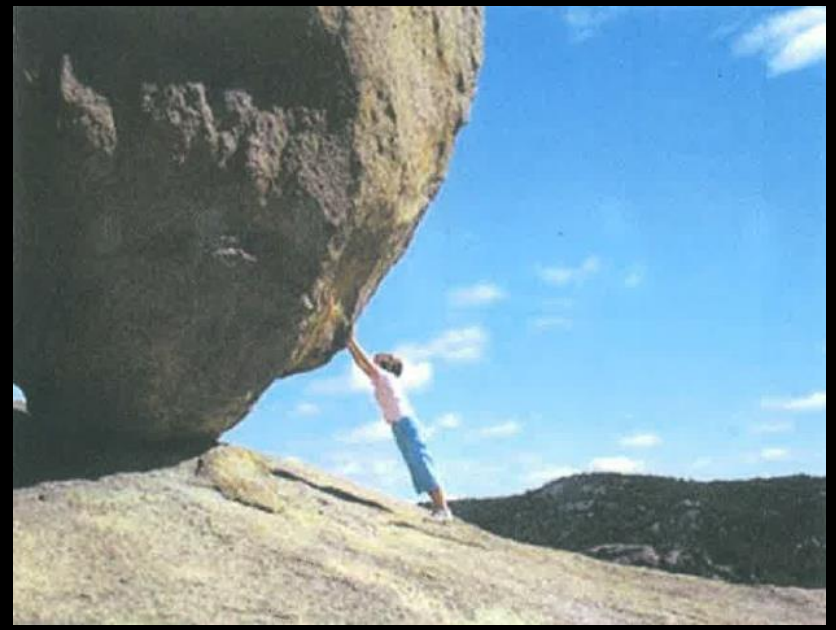
From the total collection, a student picture gallery was formed.....







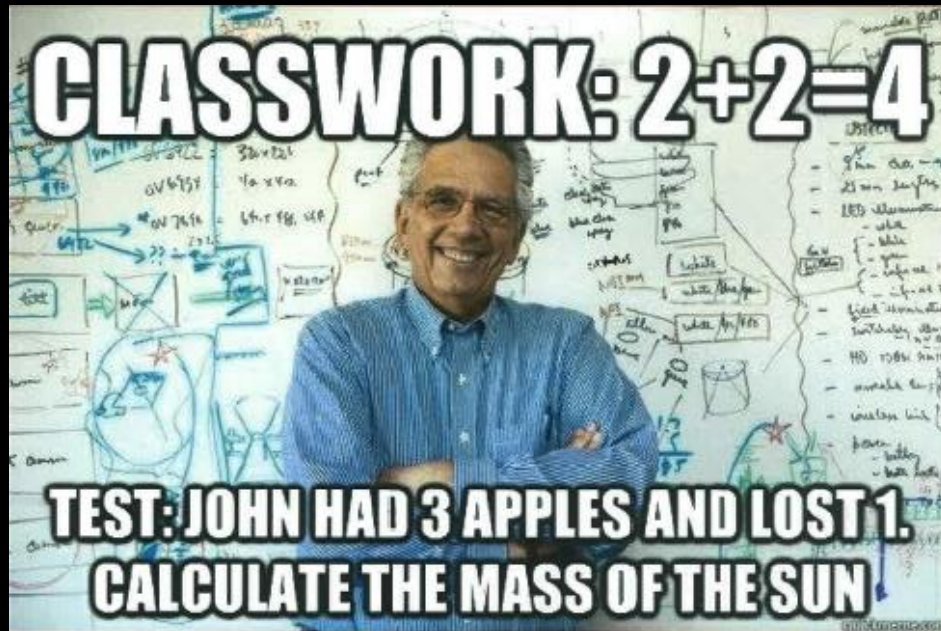






Student  
Pics-of-the-day  
Gallery

# No Clue What I'm Doing



“This is nothing about what I learned.  
Everything is different.”

# A-OK

“I don’t stress or study.”



# Cramming



“I have to work at it a lot.”

# Oh Crap!



“I didn’t realize the test was that day. I’m screwed.”

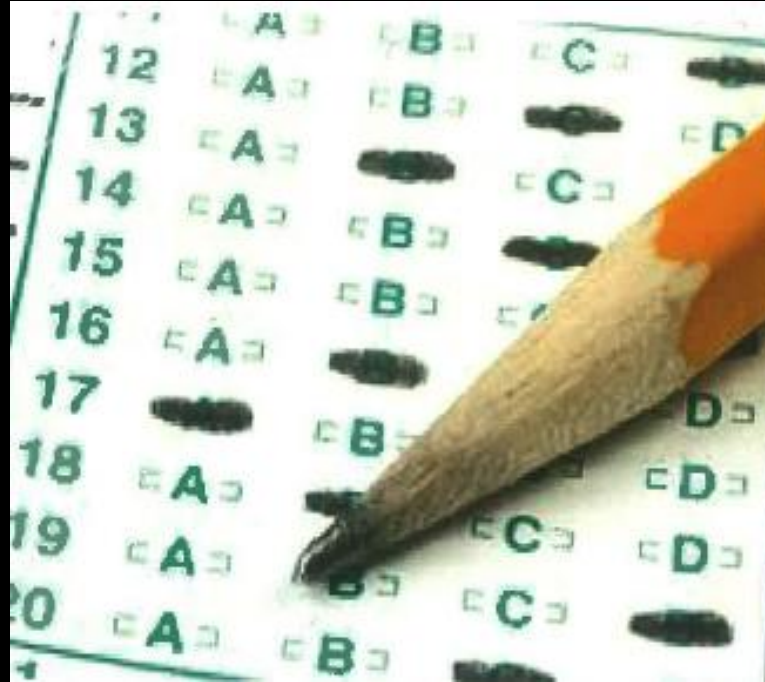


# Frustrated & Stressed



“I am stressed out, tired, and frustrated because I have studied all night.”

# Worthless Piece of Paper



“I always mess up the bubbles.”

# I'm Sorry



“I’m sorry for not doing well in my AP class. It is a hard class. It fries your brain. Teacher asks why we missed a question. “I’m sorry. I’m stupid.” Teacher looks at me, “I’m so disappointed.”

# EOC & ACT



“Tests make you feel stupid. They are difficult and hard to do well on.”

# I'm A Pretty Good Test Taker



# If You Think You Can, You Know You Can



“I’m queen of 2<sup>nd</sup> thoughts and have trouble making a decision.”

# Confusion



“For ACT/SAT, a lot is based on intuition. You can’t study for it. You don’t know if you have the right answer and are constantly erasing.”

# Rushed



“Don’t give enough time.”



# Time Management



“During the SAT, I don’t have enough time. I read and think about answers.”

# Annoyance



“Students talk about how they did really well on the ACT, while another person is made fun of.”

# Forget You! Leave Me Alone!



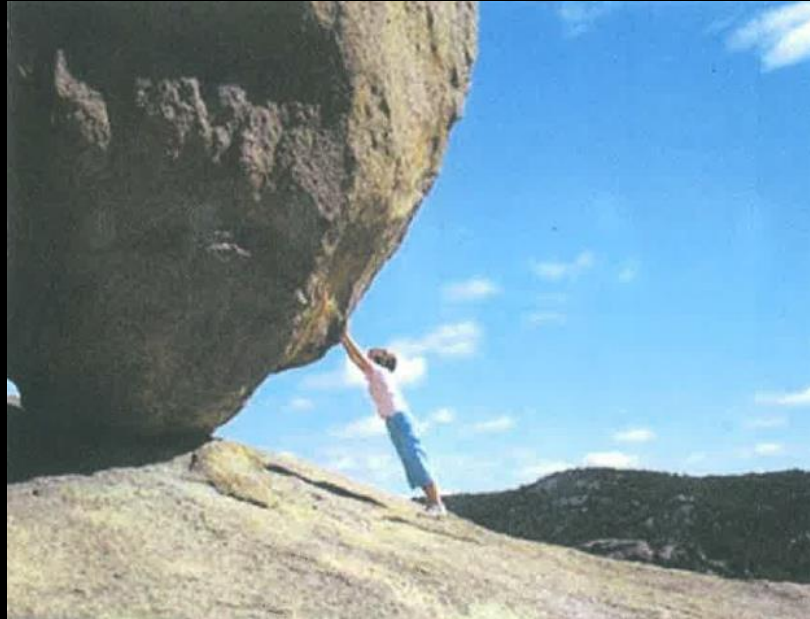
“This dude is like: Back off! Why isn’t work in school enough? I am not a good test taker on standardized tests. This is messing up my future. I’m told, ‘You have to do good on this.’”

# Non-Interest



“I have no interest in this because the teacher has no interest. It takes 3 weeks to get the test back. You don’t want to put the work in because the teacher doesn’t want to put the work in [grading]. It’s boring, and I am not interested.”

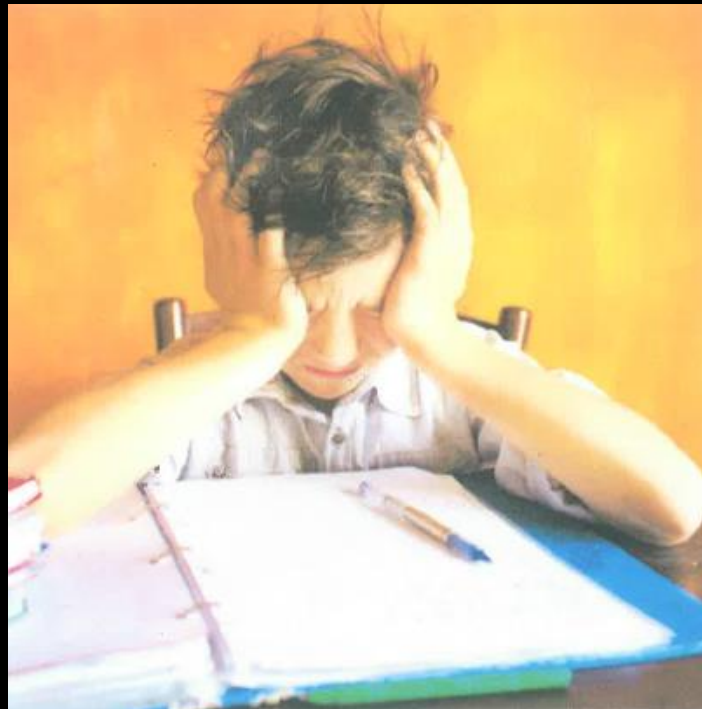
# Weight On My Shoulders



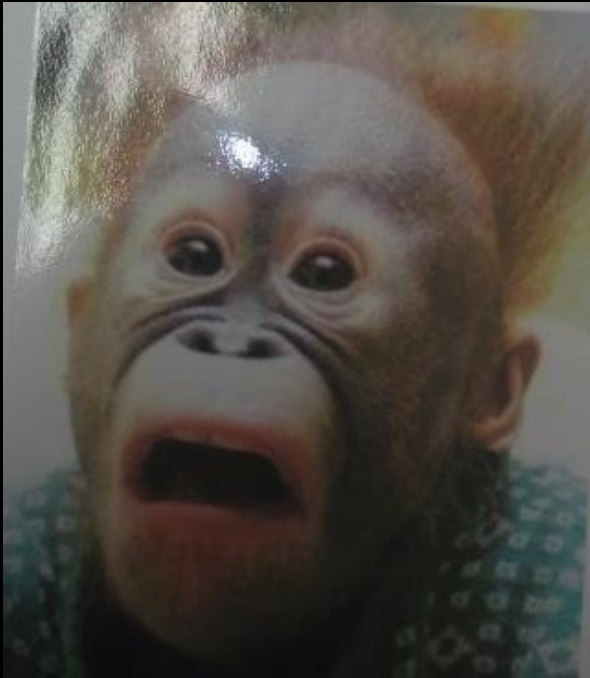
“Boulder is the weight of the ACT. It is so much you can’t handle it. I need to beat my last score. At the school I want to attend, you have to have at least a 19. Some schools don’t really look at your GPA.”

# Frustrated for the Test

“I get nervous; the test is long; I don’t like sitting.”



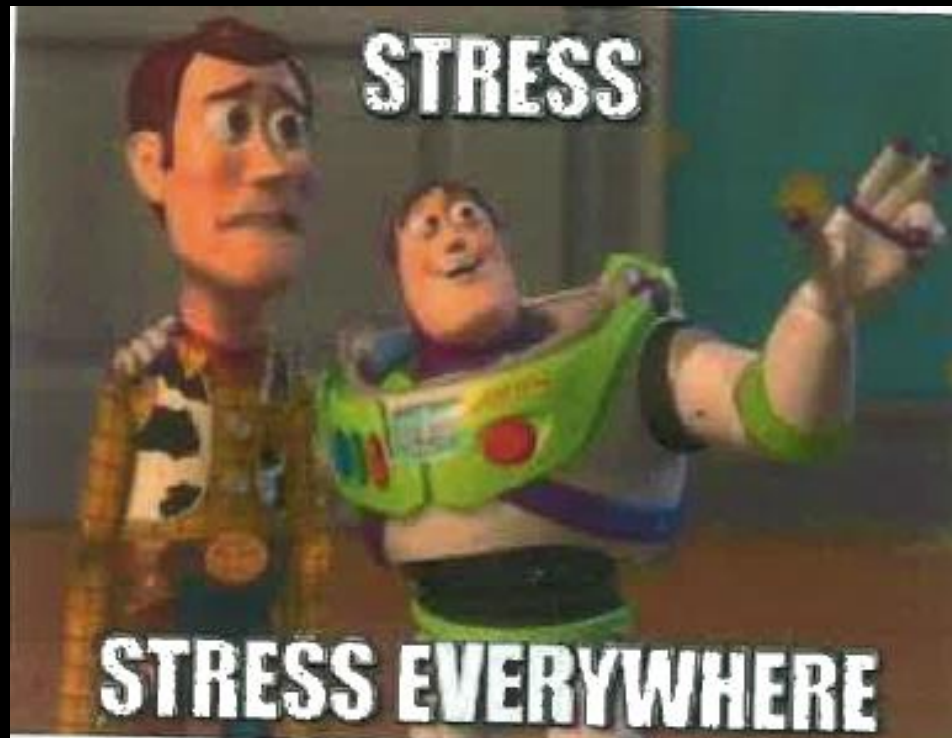
# Thoughtless Monkey, Dumb Cake



“Thoughtless; he doesn’t know anything; I didn’t pay attention. I knew some stuff but a lot I didn’t.”

# Stressed

“None of them describe my opinion; my grades are average. I rely on EOC to get good grades; somewhat stressed out.”





# College Bound Credits



“If I made good scores, I will be college bound”

# Scared

“Tests aren’t a big deal; EOCs aren’t scary alone, but the % toward grade is. Colleges look at SAT.”



# Anxiety

“I recently took the ACT, stressed out leading up to it. I was so nervous and stressed out, but I got through it.”



# Study

“Study forever stressing out to see if I knew everything.”



# Menacing Teacher



“How they word the questions; it’s hard to understand. I still want to go to college.”

Stress

# What Is Stressful?

- Managing my time through the test
- Staying focused for the entire time

# Experiencing Stress

Confused	Over-study	Parental stress	Get antsy
Upset stomach	Want to eat a lot	Pick my nails	Tug at my eyebrow
Mess with callouses	Play with my hair	Break out	Sweat
Lose confidence*	Get mad at little things	Headache	I stop**
Headache	Feel hot	Feel agitated	Panicked during math
Can't sleep	Get frustrated & act mean toward others	Get quiet and clam up	Feel mad and pissed off



# Coping Strategies

- Sleep
- Workout
- Just get done with the test
- Visualize leaves falling
- Power through
- Take deep breathes
- Take off my glasses
- Pretend it's a normal test...not a big deal if I fail
- Stop & take a break
- Guess & turn it in
- Zone everything out; sing songs in my head
- Listen to music
- Eat
- Close my eyes
- Twirl my hair

# Most Stressful Tests

- ACT/SAT – they are longer (4 hours!) and mentally draining. You need to get up early.
- Final EOC – one chance, can take ACT again. However, less stressful because you can study for it.
- Unit Test
- AP Test
- Writing Assessment – Stressful. Teacher puts so much effort on it. You need to get down to the point. They want cookie cutter essays.

# Additional Comments

- Time restriction is stressful, but there are time constraints in the real world.
- Why we stress out is related to how they grade it.
- For foreign language tests, the directions are in foreign language!
- With Common Core, everything is dumbed down. Before you had to know the basics; now you just have to know how to punch numbers in a calculator.
- Teacher said that with Common Core, as long as you explain your answer it is correct – even if you just put down random letters.

# Additional Comments

- I want to know useful things in life. Teach me to do my taxes, not graph a parabola.
- The EOC tests should count for less % (15% not 25%)
- They should cut the test in half
- At AE and L&N STEM, you take classes based on what you are interested in. You take classes you need for a job.
- Last time I learned something new was when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and wrote a research paper.

Feedback

# Tests With Most Helpful Feedback

- TCAP and Unit Tests (get stuff back and see it); teachers go over unit tests
- Pre-Tests
- Ability Tests
- Unit tests – get them back the next day
- Practice ACT
- Homework – if you don't do homework, you won't do well on the test

# Tests With Somewhat Helpful Feedback

- Midterms
- EOC and AP Tests – there are tools to learn from. You can do review problems.

# Tests With Least Helpful Feedback

- Agility
- Oral Test
- EOC- only get score – and no feedback
- Writing Assessment
- Benchmarks
- Reading Comprehension
- ACT – break it into categories, but you don't get to see the questions
- SAT



# Talking with Teachers

# Examples of Good Teacher Feedback

- When my teacher says, “I’m so proud of you. Do you want to go over the questions you missed?”
- When I ask for help and my teacher says, “Here is what worked with other students.”
- When the teacher takes the time to show they care about how you do.
- Most teachers are willing to help.

# Examples of Bad Teacher Feedback

- Yelling
- Asking students, “why didn’t you study harder?”
- Asking me to show up early in the morning, but then the teacher is a half hour late.
- If there is no comment for what is wrong, it’s not helpful.

# Talking with Parents

# Discussing Tests with Family

- I never talk to them. I am afraid.
- I talk to my Dad. He asks, “How did it go? How do you feel? What will you do differently next time?” I feel encouraged.
- If I do bad on something, I have no rights for sports.
- In elementary, they checked on my grades and report card. Now as long as I don't fail, it's OK. Now it is put on you.

# More Family Conversations

- My grandparents don't understand. My grades are fine, but studying for the ACT is the hardest thing I've ever done. They have never taken the ACT.
- They just think I'm not trying.
- I do well in classes, but I am a bad test taker. That's just how I am. My mom knows me; she knows I am not goofing off.