

SAT RULERS: Boys make their mark

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Friday, 03 December 2010 11:40

There has been a push the last few years to do away with the college SATs and return the focus on a student's college-readiness back to high school performance. All the numbers seem to validate the idea - except for one. And for boys, that "one" is big.

The SATs began as a way for colleges to identify bright students from less than spectacular high schools and give them an opportunity for a top-grade college education. The thinking was that an average student might make excellent grades at inferior schools while top students could struggle at outstanding schools, but the SAT would be able to even the playing field.

Except it hasn't exactly worked that way. A study by Saul Geiser and Roger Studley from the University of California seems to show that the SATs contributed little to predicting a student's eventual success in college, whereas achievement tests and high school grades were more reliable - or at the least conveyed the same results. Those looking to junk the SATs also point to the stress associated with the SATs and the pressure kids face with the test.

But as much as kids hate the three-hour laborious exercise that the SATs have become, there are some numbers that prove its validity.

According to columnist Mona Charen, without the SATs, boys could be getting the shaft. For the past 30 years, girls have outperformed boys at every level of education. The average high school GPA for girls is 3.09. For boys, the average is 2.86. About one quarter more boys than girls drop out of high school and boys are three times as likely to be expelled. Females now earn 58 percent of the bachelor's degrees and 60 percent of the master's degrees in the U.S.

For whatever reason, those are the numbers. But when it comes to the SATs, it is the boys that rule. According to Charen, in 2010, a total of 382 students scored a perfect 2400 on the test. Of these, 206 were boys. Among those who scored a 2350, 341 were boys and 266 girls. And the ratio continues down the line.

Perhaps boys are late bloomers or there are too many distractions in schools. But it is obvious the SATs provide them their best avenue to higher education. That in itself is a reason to keep the test around.