

## Why Can Some Kids Handle Pressure While Others Fall Apart

Friday, February 8, 2013 | Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman, The New York Times

Never before has the pressure to perform on high-stakes tests been so intense or meant so much for a child's academic future. As more school districts strive for accountability, standardized tests have proliferated. The pressure to do well on achievement tests for college is filtering its way down to lower grades, so that even third graders feel as if they are on trial. argue that all this test-taking is churning out sleep-deprived, overworked, miserable children. Understanding their propensity to become stressed and how to deal with it can help children compete. Stress turns out to be far more complicated than we've assumed, and far more under our control than we imagine. Unlike long-term stress, short-term stress can actually help people perform, and viewing it that way changes its effect. Even for those genetically predisposed to anxiety, the antidote isn't necessarily less competition — it's *healthy* competition.



In lab experiments, people have been given a variety of cognitive tasks — computerized puzzles and games, portions of I.Q. tests — and researchers have consistently found that, under normal conditions, those with slow-acting enzymes have a cognitive advantage. They have superior executive function and all it entails: they can reason, solve problems, orchestrate complex thought and better foresee consequences. They can concentrate better. This advantage appears to increase with the number of years of education. Other research has found that those with the slow-acting enzymes have higher I.Q.'s, on average. it was unclear if the cognitive advantages they had would stay with them when they were under stress outside the security of the lab environment. Some scholars have suggested that we are all Warriors or Worriers. Those with fast-acting dopamine clearers are the Warriors, ready for threatening environments where maximum performance is required. Those with slow-acting dopamine clearers are the Worriers, capable of more complex planning. Over the course of evolution, both Warriors and Worriers were necessary for human tribes to survive. While the studies are ongoing, the early results show those with Worrier-genes can still handle incredible stress — as long as they are well trained. Even some Navy SEALs have the Worrier genes, so you can literally be a Worrier-gene Warrior.

1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the pros and cons synonymous with high-stakes standardized testing in the traditional education system. Do you personally believe this isolated means of assessment is a valid method in determining subject matter conceptual understanding? Thoroughly explain your reasoning and provide specific artifacts and evidence limited solely to passage above to support your response. Create and illustrate Venn Diagrams to effectively explore relationships and patterns and to make arguments about relationships between sets. **(LA.910.3.2.2; LA.910.1.6.2; MA.912.D.7.2; MA.912.A.10.1)**
2. In mathematics, an inequality is a statement how the relative size or order of two objects, *or* about whether they are the same or not. Define a variable and write an inequality to model the following: More than 1.2 million students drop out of school every year or more than 6,000 students every school day and one every 26 seconds; The national high school graduation rate is only 70 percent, with states ranging from a high of 84 percent in Utah to a low of 54 percent in South Carolina; Over a lifetime, dropouts earn \$260,000 less than high school graduates; The health of an 18-year-old high school dropout is similar to that of a more educated person over two decades older. Explain your mathematical reasoning in selecting either an open or closed dot as you graph your inequality. Explain how one might interpret phrases like "at least" and "at most" in an inequality in a real-world situation. Combine your responses into two unique compound inequalities and graph the solutions. **(MA.912.A.3.1.2; MA.912.A.3.4; MA.912.A.3.5)**
3. As more school districts strive for accountability, standardized tests have proliferated. As an alternative assessment, Joe Lunchmeat was assigned an overarching culminating performance task. He elected to design an industrial strength geometry disseminating tactical urban assault robot. Each reinforced steel leg is constructed with pair of parallel bars coupled with a iron foot. As the robot proceeds forward, the leg bars remain parallel whereas the foot glides across the plane. Illustrate the diagram. As the legs progress, are there pairs of angles that remain congruent? If so, which angles? Explain how possessing parallel leg bars enables the robot's foot to remain flat on the surface as it moves. Use the applicable theorems and/or postulates to support your reasoning. Determine whether your solution is reasonable in the context of the original situation. **(MA.912.G.1.3; MA.912.G.8.3; MA.912.G.8.3)**
4. Using contextual clues only, define the following italicized terms: *evolution*, *cognitive*, *antidote*, *propensity*, *churning*, and *proliferated* as obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(LA.910.1.6.3; LA.910.1.6.1)**
5. **SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY WORD-OF-THE-WEEK** Create a concluding paragraph aligned with the passage above using the following italicized word: *Edification* (ED ih fih kay shun) (n.) Enlighten or instruct. **(LA.910.1.6.1; LA.910.1.6.5)**

**Next Generation Sunshine State Standards** adapted from [floridastandards.org](http://floridastandards.org). Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with state standards and annotated adjacent to the respective inquiry.

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