[**Underfunded Schools Forced To Cut Past Tense From Language Programs**](https://www.theonion.com/underfunded-schools-forced-to-cut-past-tense-from-langu-1819569506)

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WASHINGTON—Faced with ongoing budget crises, underfunded schools nationwide are increasingly left with no option but to cut the past tense—a grammatical construction traditionally used to relate all actions, and states that have transpired at an earlier point in time—from their standard English and language arts programs.

A part of American school curricula for more than 200 years, the past tense was deemed by school administrators to be too expensive to keep in primary and secondary education.

“This was by no means an easy decision, but teaching our students how to conjugate verbs in a way that would allow them to describe events that have already occurred is a luxury that we can no longer afford,” Phoenix-area high-school principal Sam Pennock said. “With our current budget, the past tense must unfortunately become a thing of the past.”

In the most dramatic display of the new trend yet, the Tennessee Department of Education decided Monday to remove “-ed” endings from all of the state’s English classrooms, saving struggling schools an estimated $3 million each year. Officials say they plan to slowly phase out the tense by first eliminating the past perfect; once students have adjusted to the change, the past progressive, the past continuous, the past perfect progressive, and the simple past will be cut. Hundreds of school districts across the country are expected to follow suit.

“This is the end of an era,” said Alicia Reynolds, a school district director in Tuscaloosa, AL. “For some, reading and writing about things not immediately taking place was almost as much a part of school as history class and social studies.”

“That is, until we were forced to drop history class and social studies a couple of months ago,” Reynolds added.

Nevertheless, a number of educators are coming out against the cuts, claiming that the embattled verb tense, while outmoded, still plays an important role in the development of today’s youth.

“Much like art and music, the past tense provides students with a unique and consistent outlet for self-expression,” South Boston English teacher David Floen said. “Without it I fear many of our students will lack a number of important creative skills. Like being able to describe anything that happened earlier in the day.”

Despite concerns that cutting the past-tense will prevent graduates from communicating effectively in the workplace, the home, the grocery store, church, and various other public spaces, a number of lawmakers, such as Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch, have welcomed the cuts as proof that the American school system is taking a more forward-thinking approach to education.

“Our tax dollars should be spent preparing our children for the future, not for what has already happened,” Hatch said at a recent press conference. “It’s about time we stopped wasting everyone’s time with who ‘did’ what or ‘went’ where. The past tense is, by definition, outdated.”

Said Hatch, “I can’t even remember the last time I had to use it.”

Past-tense instruction is only the latest school program to face the chopping block. School districts in California have been forced to cut addition and subtraction from their math departments, while nearly all high schools have reduced foreign language courses to only the most basic phrases, including “May I please use the bathroom?” and “No, I do not want to go to the beach with Maria and Juan.” Some legislators are even calling for an end to teaching grammar itself, saying that in many inner-city school districts, where funding is most lacking, students rarely use grammar at all.

Regardless of the recent upheaval, students throughout the country are learning to accept, and even embrace, the change to their curriculum.

“At first I think the decision to drop the past tense from class is ridiculous, and I feel very upset by it,” said David Keller, a seventh-grade student at Hampstead School in Fort Meyers, FL. “But now, it’s almost like it never happens.”

**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DEMAND WARS IN EASIER-TO-FIND COUNTRIES**  
"How Come No One Fights in Big Famous Nations Anymore?" They Ask

**Washington, D.C. (SatireWire.com)** — A delegation of American high school students today demanded the United States stop waging war in obscure nations such as Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and instead attack places they've actually heard of, such as France, Australia, and Austria, unless, they said, those last two are the same country.

"People claim we don't know as much geography as our parents and grandparents, but it's so not our fault," Josh Beldoni, a senior at Fischer High School in Los Angeles, told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "Back then they only had wars in, like, Germany and England, but we're supposed to know about places like Somalia and Massachusetts."

"Macedonia," corrected committee Chairman Carl Levin of Michigan.

"See?" said Beldoni.

Beldoni's frustration was shared by nearly three dozen students at the hearing, who blamed the U.S. military for making them look bad.

"I totally support our soldiers and all that, but I am seriously failing both geography and social studies because I keep getting asked to find Croatia or Yemvrekia, or whatever bizarre-o country we send troops to," said Amelia Nash, a junior at Clark High School in Orlando, Fla. "Can't we fight in, like, Italy? It's boot-shaped."

Chairman Levin however, explained that Italy was a U.S. ally, and that intervention is usually in response to a specific threat.

"OK, what about Arulco?" interrupted Tyler Boone, a senior at Bellevue High School in Wisconsin. "That's a country in *Jagged Alliance 2* run by the evil Queen Deidranna. I'm totally familiar with that place. She's a major threat."

"Jagged...?" said Levin.

"Alliance. It's a computer game."

"Well, no," Levin answered. "We can't attack a fictional country."

"Yeah right," Boone mumbled. "Like Grenada was real."

The students' testimony was supported by a cross-section of high school geography teachers, who urged the committee to help lay a solid foundation for America's young people by curtailing any intervention abroad.

"Since the anti-terror war began, most of my students can now point to Afghanistan on a map, which is fine, but those same kids still don't know the capitals of Nevada and Ohio," said Richard Gerber, who teaches at Rhymony High School in Atlanta. "I think we need to cut back on our activities overseas and take care of business at home, and if that means invading Tallahassee (Fla.) or Trenton (N.J.) so that students learn where they are, so be it."

"I've always wanted to stick it to Hartford (Conn.)," said Sen. Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island. "Oh [expletive deleted], is my microphone on?"

The hearing adjourned after six hours. An estimated 2,000 more students were expected to hold a march in the nation's capital, but forgot which city it was in.

# Image result for the onion logo['How Bad For The Environment Can Throwing Away One Plastic Bottle Be?' 30 Million People Wonder](https://www.theonion.com/how-bad-for-the-environment-can-throwing-away-one-plast-1819571260)

[1/19/10 5:00pm](https://www.theonion.com/how-bad-for-the-environment-can-throwing-away-one-plast-1819571260)

[SEE MORE: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY](https://www.theonion.com/tag/science-technology)WASHINGTON—Wishing to dispose of the empty plastic container, and failing to spot a recycling bin nearby, an estimated 30 million Americans asked themselves Monday how bad throwing away a single bottle of water could really be.

"It's fine, it's fine," thought Maine native Sheila Hodge, echoing the exact sentiments of Chicago-area resident Phillip Ragowski, recent Florida transplant Margaret Lowery, and Kansas City business owner Brian McMillan, as they tossed the polyethylene terephthalate object into an awaiting trash can. "It's just one bottle. And I'm usually pretty good about this sort of thing."

"Not a big deal," continued roughly one-tenth of the nation's population.

According to the inner monologue of millions upon millions of citizens, while not necessarily ideal, throwing away one empty bottle probably wouldn't make that much of a difference, and could even be forgiven, considering how long they had been carrying it around with them, the time that could be saved by just tossing it out right here, and the fact that they had bicycled to work once last July.

In addition, pretty much the entire states of Missouri and New Mexico calmly reassured themselves Monday that they definitely knew better than to do something like this, but admitted that hey, nobody is perfect, and at least they weren't still using those horrible aerosol cans, or just throwing garbage directly on the ground.

All agreed that disposing of what would eventually amount to 50 tons of thermoplastic polymer resin wasn't the end of the world.

"It's not like I don't care, because I do, and most of the time I don't even buy bottled water," thought Missouri school teacher Heather Delamere, the 450,000th caring and progressive individual to have done so that morning, and the 850,000th to have purchased the environmentally damaging vessel due to being thirsty, in a huge rush, and away from home. "It's really not worth beating myself up over."

"What's one little bottle in the grand scheme of things, you know?" added each and every single one of them.

Monday's plastic-bottle-related dilemma wasn't the only environmental quandary facing millions of citizens across the country. An estimated 20 million men and women wondered how wasteful leaving a single lightbulb on all night really was, while more than 40 million Americans asked themselves if anyone would actually notice if they just turned up the heat a few degrees instead of walking all the way downstairs and getting another blanket.

Likewise, had they not been so tired, and busy, and stressed, citizens making up the equivalent of three major metropolitan areas told reporters that they probably wouldn't have driven their minivans down to the corner store.

"Relax," thousands upon thousands of Americans quietly whispered to themselves as they tossed two articles of clothing into an empty washing machine and turned it on. "What are you so worried about?"

# Image result for the onion logo[School 'Fine,' U.S. Teens Report](https://www.theonion.com/school-fine-u-s-teens-report-1819565806) [10/25/00 3:00pm](https://www.theonion.com/school-fine-u-s-teens-report-1819565806)[SEE MORE: EDUCATION](https://www.theonion.com/tag/education)

WASHINGTON, DC–According to results of a survey released Monday by the Department Of Education, most U.S. teenagers characterize their education as "fine."

The survey, conducted by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), polled more than 2,000 public-school attendees between the ages of 14 and 18. The students were asked a wide variety of questions about their educational experience, ranging from the subjects they were studying to their feelings about homework, to what they had for lunch that day.

To the question, "How was school today?" 68 percent of participants responded "fine," while 18 percent answered "good" and 10 percent "okay." The remaining 4 percent replied with a shrug.

"This is the highest 'fine' response we've ever gotten since these surveys were first conducted in the 1960s," said Jeanette Franks, an OERI researcher who supervised the survey. "By comparison, in last year's survey, just 44 percent said school was 'fine' today, while 41 percent said, 'ehh,' and 15 percent said, 'I 'unno.' This year, the 'I 'unnos' didn't even rank."

"The findings of this survey should be heartening to parents and educators nationwide," Education Secretary Richard Riley said. "Children are our greatest natural resource, and for a majority of them to feel that they are receiving a fine education is wonderful news."

U.S. students also expressed optimism about their ability to succeed in school. Asked if they expect to do well on upcoming algebra tests, 87 percent said, "Sure." Asked if they were prepared for English exams, 51 percent responded "Yeah" and 40 percent "I guess."

Students were even more enthusiastic about America's hard-working educators, with 71 percent characterizing their social-studies teachers as "incredibly fascinating" and earth-science teachers as "not at all boring." A full 82 percent said that their civics class is "so important, I don't want to miss a second of it."

According to Franks, America's teens have an unusually strong sense of the importance of their education and the vital role it plays in becoming productive members of society.

"We asked our survey participants if what they were learning in school was helping them become better people and giving them a sense of values and concern for the community," Franks said. "A whopping 89 percent answered, 'Sure,' with the remaining 11 percent split among 'Yeah, sure,' 'Sure, I guess,' and, 'Sure. Whatever.'"

Despite the welcome results, the Department Of Education is refusing to rest on its laurels.

"Yes, my department is extremely pleased by the poll's results, but we still have a long way to go," Riley said. "I, for one, will not rest until every child in America feels that school is 'fine.' In this, the richest and most powerful nation on the planet, no child should receive an education that is merely 'ehh.' Our kids deserve better."

# [Gap Between Rich And Poor Named 8th Wonder Of The World](https://www.theonion.com/gap-between-rich-and-poor-named-8th-wonder-of-the-world-1819572093)

[1/24/11 8:00am](https://www.theonion.com/gap-between-rich-and-poor-named-8th-wonder-of-the-world-1819572093)

SEE MORE: WORLDPARIS—At a press conference Tuesday, the World Heritage Committee officially recognized the Gap Between Rich and Poor as the "Eighth Wonder of the World," describing the global wealth divide as the "most colossal and enduring of mankind's creations."

"Of all the epic structures the human race has devised, none is more staggering or imposing than the Gap Between Rich and Poor," committee chairman Henri Jean-Baptiste said. "It is a tremendous, millennia-old expanse that fills us with both wonder and humility."

"And thanks to careful maintenance through the ages, this massive relic survives intact, instilling in each new generation a sense of awe," Jean- Baptiste added.

The vast chasm of wealth, which stretches across most of the inhabited world, attracts millions of stunned observers each year, many of whom have found its immensity too overwhelming even to contemplate. By far the largest man-made structure on Earth, it is readily visible from locations as far-flung as Eastern Europe, China, Africa, and Brazil, as well as all 50 U.S. states.

"The original Seven Wonders of the World pale in comparison to this," said World Heritage Committee member Edwin MacAlister, standing in front of a striking photograph of the Gap Between Rich and Poor taken from above Mexico City. "It is an astounding feat of human engineering that eclipses the Great Wall of China, the Pyramids of Giza, and perhaps even the Great Racial Divide."

According to anthropologists, untold millions of slaves and serfs toiled their whole lives to complete the gap. Records indicate the work likely began around 10,000 years ago, when the world's first landed elites convinced their subjects that construction of such a monument was the will of a divine authority, a belief still widely held today.

Though historians ha8378ve repeatedly disproved such claims, theories still persist among many that the Gap Between Rich and Poor was built by the Jews.

"When I stare out across its astounding breadth, I'm often moved to tears," said Johannesburg resident Grace Ngubane, 31, whose home is situated on one of the widest sections of the gap. "The scale is staggering—it makes you feel really, really small."

"Insignificant, even," she continued.

While numerous individuals have tried to cross the Gap Between Rich and Poor, evidence suggests that only a small fraction have ever succeeded and many have died in the attempt.

Its official recognition as the Eighth Wonder of the World marks the culmination of a dramatic turnaround from just 50 years ago, when popular movements called for the gap's closure. However, due to a small group of dedicated politicians and industry leaders, vigorous preservation efforts were begun around 1980 to restore—and greatly expand—the age-old structure.

"It's breathtaking," said Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein, a longtime champion and benefactor of the rift's conservation. "After all we've been through in recent years, there's no greater privilege than watching it grow bigger and bigger each day. There may be a few naysayers who worry that if it gets any wider, the whole thing will collapse upon itself and take millions of people down with it, but I for one am willing to take that chance."

Added Blankfein, "Besides, something tells me I'd probably make it out okay."