

Unity and Diversity
Student panel: **On the Elections**

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Not too long ago there was a poll in the Argus Leader showing on what issues South Dakotan voters placed the most emphasis in the elections. At the top of the list, with something like 50-60%, was the economy and unemployment, followed by the war in Iraq. The third "issue" that seemed to drive voters was so-called "morality issues": primarily abortion and gay marriage. This was followed by the war on terror(ism). And then, at the very bottom of this poll's listing, with 2% and 1% respectively, was education and the environment. After my initial shock it made perfect sense to me: neither of the candidates ever really confronted these issues. I'd like to focus specifically on education, namely the No Child Left Behind program. I never really heard Bush say much about it, and if my memory serves me correctly, Kerry's only blast was that it was an underfunded mess - that is, Bush got the ball rolling but didn't support it with enough money. That seems fair enough, but wait! The No Child Left Behind program is an absolute disaster, with little to no alliance from the educators and administrators whose jobs and districts are being threatened by the supposedly proactive "Plan of Assistance." When schools' test scores - yes, students are being commodified by their ability to score well on a test - are below the national expectation, this school is placed on a Plan of Assistance. If the infraction happens again, jobs can be lost, funding can be pulled, and takeovers can occur. Is the United States prepared to hand over the education of its youth to the federal government? Furthermore, why was there no dissent heard in these elections, really from any of the candidates? It seems to me that the lack of diversity with respect to this issue is a haunting declaration of uniformity and the inattention that is being paid to children in this nation.