

*Battling the Undead: The Perpetual Mythology of Education and Learning*

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The history of education is rife with intuitively appealing ideas that have not withstood scientific scrutiny, but which nonetheless persist in the popular mindset and dramatically affect educational policies and pedagogical practices. New ideas often hit the market in advance of adequate supporting evidence, and remain entrenched and influential long after anticipated evidence fails to materialize or produces a more nuanced picture. For years, researchers and instructors have been debunking inaccurate beliefs about teaching and learning, but these efforts often have little practical impact. Based primarily on common sense and powerful anecdotes, instructors and policy makers often express certainty regarding the supposed inferiority of lecturing and multiple-choice tests, the validity of independent intelligences and right-brained learning, and the uselessness of standardized tests especially in light of the presumed prevalence of students who are inherently bad test-takers. An examination of the relevant scientific evidence on such topics reveals a nuanced picture that is not reducible to simplistic sound bites. In this talk I will summarize the research on several myths pertaining to education and learning, and I will address some of the psychological mechanisms that make the beliefs so resilient despite contradictory evidence.