



Episode 97: The LSAT: Changes and Statistics with Nathan Fox of Fox LSAT

Alison Monahan: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking with Nathan Fox, founder of Fox LSAT, about the future of, wait for it, the LSAT. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and normally I'm here with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#) and the Catapult Career Conference. I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#).

If you enjoyed this show, please leave a review [on iTunes](#) and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form on lawschooltoolbox.com](#) and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today, we're talking with Nathan Fox, founder of Fox LSAT about the future of the LSAT. Nathan, I got to say, when you first suggested this topic, I'll admit I was a little confused. I mean, hasn't the LSAT pretty much been the same forever, since the stone age? Are there actual changes that are really coming on the horizon?

Nathan Fox: We think there's changes. There's some competition now so I think the LSAT might be forced to change.

Alison Monahan: Competition from what?

Nathan Fox: There's competition from the GRE. The latest news is that Harvard Law School, in this next application cycle, is going to start accepting the GRE for law school admissions.

Alison Monahan: Which is very interesting. I remember taking GRE back in the day. I think I was actually one of the first people to take it when they transitioned to computerized, which I think we'll touch on that regarding the LSAT later. That was ages ago. Why do you think the schools are doing this? What's the benefit of allowing people to submit a GRE score and not have to do the LSAT?

Nathan Fox: The law school application numbers have been in decline for the past, what, 10 years now almost, right?

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Nathan Fox: When I started law school 2008, we had peak applications around that time. I think we're still looking at about 50% as many applications as we're going in at that time. Law schools have had to shrink their class sizes in a lot of cases. Admission standards have been falling. Law school is just out of favor for probably a lot of very good reasons. We probably talked about that last time I was on the show.

Alison Monahan: I think we've discussed that. I'm sitting here thinking like, "Was it really the worst...?" I mean, actually what I was just thinking when you were talking was, say I am someone who can't decide what I want to do with my life, so I take the GRE because I'm like, "Well, then I could apply to a lot of different grad schools." Then suddenly this option pops up to apply to law school. I mean, is this really a good idea for anyone?

Nathan Fox: No. I mean, you should really only go to law school if you know what lawyers do and actually want to do that.

Alison Monahan: I kind of feel like if you can't be bothered to take the LSAT, maybe you shouldn't be going to law school.

Nathan Fox: Yeah. Here's what I think about the Harvard thing. Harvard is only going to admit people that already have elite GRE scores, so I don't think it makes much of a difference for people, except for people who are only going to apply to Harvard. Now, Yale has followed suit. Now, it's Harvard and Yale for this next application cycle that are going to be accepting the GRE.

Maybe other schools will follow soon. For now, it really only affects people who basically already have an elite GRE score. Let say, you had thought you were going to do a master's in public policy or you were going to do a PhD in history or something like that and then you realize, "Well, I'm never going to make any money at all as a PhD in history so maybe ... "You might be on a path that is somewhat tangentially related to law and you might actually be a reasonable candidate for law school.

You've already got this elite GRE score and now you want to go to Harvard Law and Harvard Law would love to admit you based on your awesome grades, your awesome GRE score and your otherwise amazing candidacy, but now Harvard is having to say, "Oh, go take this super obnoxious test."

Alison Monahan: "Go jump through this hoop, go spend some money, go spend some time and then we'll look at your application."

Nathan Fox: I think that the problem here is that the LSAT is such a dinosaur. The LSAT is only offered four times a year. The LSAT is only offered on pencil and paper. It's only offered at their own special testing sites and it's just 20 years behind all the other major tests. You can register for the GRE and take the GRE three weeks from now at any local testing center.

Alison Monahan: I remember that. I was one of the first people to do it on the computer and that was part of the reason I did it was just like, "Well, I can get this out of the way. You know, this just seems like so much easier than having to wait and go to some place and deal with all of that." I think at the time, I was nomadic. I was like, "I don't even know where I'm going to be in four months. How can I possibly sign up for a testing site?"

Nathan Fox: I mean, in three weeks you can sign up and take the GRE and get your score immediately.

Alison Monahan: I remember that because I thought I had done really horribly on it.

Nathan Fox: It takes three weeks just to get your score back for the LSAT even after you wait four months to take the test and this still takes three weeks. In between the time where you sit for the LSAT and then you're waiting for your score to come back, you can also register for and take the GRE and get your score in that time.

Alison Monahan: If somebody is making a snap decision, they want to go to law school, they don't have time to wait for the LSAT. Maybe this is a way to go to Yale.

Nathan Fox: Let's say, I'm Harvard or Yale right now and, wow, I don't have as many qualified applicants as I would like and I have a choice. I've got this really otherwise premium applicant over here. They just haven't yet taken the LSAT. I can either wait for them to take the LSAT in June or ... Actually, at this point, would be in the entire next cycle.

Alison Monahan: Right, exactly.

Nathan Fox: They'd be taking it in June or September for the 2018 admission cycle and instead they could say, "Hey, you've already got this awesome GRE score. You've already got this really great grades. We're not worried that you're not going to be successful in law school. Harvard and Yale don't really admit people that aren't going to be successful in law school, so why would we make you take this stupid test and jump through all these hoops?"

Alison Monahan: It's a fair point. I mean, I'm pretty sure I got basically the same score on the GRE, percentage wise, pretty much the same score on the GRE that I got on the LSAT. I don't think there's a drastic difference in my ability level. You could have looked at either one of them and be like, "Yeah. You're good at standardized tests."

Nathan Fox: For people who are really good at standardized tests ... I mean, I've always been really good at standardized tests. I crushed the GMAT, I crushed the GRE, I crushed the LSAT. For me, there's no difference. I'm going to score a 99 percentile on any of those tests, anytime. I don't think for the Harvards and Yales of the world, I don't think there's really any difference between the GRE

and the LSAT. Frankly, they could accept the GMAT or they could accept the SAT. I don't know why they wouldn't, actually.

Alison Monahan: That's true. We all have the same SAT scores basically that we got on the LSAT. I've been good at standardized testing since the seventh grade when they had us take the pre-SAT and did something like talent identification program and they were like, "Wow. You did really well on this."

Nathan Fox: That's a common thread for elite scorers. That's common. I mean, that's how it is for people who scored really high. They can score really high on any of these tests.

Alison Monahan: I never suffered through the GMAT. I'm sure I could do it if I had to.

Nathan Fox: You could do the GMAT in your sleep. I mean, the GMAT has basically easier verbal than the LSAT. Way easier verbal than the LSAT and then it also has high school geometry, maybe, like the *easy* parts of high school geometry.

Alison Monahan: I went to a high school for science and math so I'm sure that I could probably handle it if I needed to.

Nathan Fox: I'm sure you can handle it.

Alison Monahan: All right. If people are listening to this, they're trying to decide, should I take the LSAT? Should I take the GRE? Realistically, you basically still have to take the LSAT, right?

Nathan Fox: You do. You might always have to take the LSAT, because we don't know whether all other law schools are going to follow suit. Harvard is allegedly citing some study that shows that the GRE is just as good of predicting your law school performance as the LSAT, but I guess they're, for whatever reason, not releasing the details of that study. They're calling this a pilot program and it's going to take them than a couple years to demonstrate that these people were actually successful in law school.

Alison Monahan: I have no doubt they'll be successful at Harvard or Yale. I think the bigger question is that every other school starts doing this. Is the LSAT possibly identifying some sort of characteristics and the GRE isn't? I don't know if that's true or not. The studies I've seen, there's not a whole lot of correlation between the LSAT score and first year grades anyway.

Nathan Fox: There is some.

Alison Monahan: There's a little.

Nathan Fox: It also correlates with bar passage rates. The big difference I think between the GRE and the LSAT is that the GRE has math on it.

Alison Monahan: Right. Most people who apply to law school are going to do worse on the GRE even though the math is pretty easy.

Nathan Fox: Right. When I've mentioned this in my LSAT classes, I mentioned the GRE and people are really interested like, "Oh, man. Maybe I get to avoid taking the LSAT. I could just take the GRE instead." Then I mention-

Alison Monahan: It has a reputation, at least, for being easier.

Nathan Fox: The GRE does?

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Nathan Fox: I mention then that the GRE has math on it and then everyone in the room is like, "Oh, never mind."

Alison Monahan: "Never mind. I'd rather do logic games. Thanks."

Nathan Fox: A lot of them have a better chance on the LSAT than they do on the GRE because the GRE is going to require you to dust off some of that high school or junior high algebra and for a lot of people that ship has just sailed. I mean, they were never that great at it to begin with and they have blocked it out and they just do not want to be relearning exponent rules and how to do factoring of polynomials and all that stuff. For a lot of people that's easy but for a lot of people, it's really, really difficult.

Alison Monahan: I can definitely see how most people. It's been a long time since I did that. I don't know. I guess I'd probably rather study again for the GRE.

Nathan Fox: I worry a bit about this if all schools follow suit, which they very well might, especially if the LSAT doesn't adapt, and we should talk about that in a minute. If all schools followed suit and started accepting GRE, I would worry because lower ranked schools are going to be accepting mediocre scores. A mediocre score on the GRE can be heavily weighted toward a solid math score. It could be like a terrible verbal score but a solid math score. I'm thinking specifically about international students now. English as a second language and international students.

Alison Monahan: That's a great point.

Nathan Fox: I got a post on my website, the "Thinking LSAT" website. That's my podcast, by the way, the "Thinking LSAT Podcast." I got a post from someone who was saying, "Oh, hey. Well, you know, this is good for students who struggle with the verbal stuff and this is going to benefit for students who struggle with the verbal stuff," and I'm like, "On the one hand, if getting into law school is actually good for you then, yes, this is good for you, but is law school actually good for you if you struggle with the English language?"

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's like if you're struggling with the GRE level reading comprehension and things like that, you are going to sink in law school. It's going to be a very expensive, very time consuming mistake.

Nathan Fox: Law students and lawyers are gladiators who do battle using the English language. I'm sorry. I'm not trying to be elitist or anything but you want to be very strong in reading and writing in English or else you're going to have a hard time competing in law school and you're going to have a hard time passing the bar exam and you're going to have a hard time being a lawyer. I mean you need to be a verbal person or else I don't know that a lawyer is really the best route for you.

Alison Monahan: You need to be not just verbal but very comfortable reading and writing. I mean that's what lawyers do.

Nathan Fox: I know. It's shocking.

Alison Monahan: FYI. If you think that you're going to do a lot of math and then do prepared speeches, that's not what lawyers do.

Nathan Fox: Furthermore, if you're better at math and sciences, there's a whole realm of much more interesting careers out there that are available to you.

Alison Monahan: That probably you succeed based on something other than how many hours you bill.

Nathan Fox: Go learn a scripting language.

Alison Monahan: Oh god, please. I had someone come to me once and she was a 2L and she had done horribly her first year. She was like, "[Should I drop out of law school?](#)" I went and met her. I was like, "Yes."

Basically, I asked her, "Well, what would you do? Is there anything you're thinking of possibly doing?" She says, "Well, I have been accepted to this coding program and I'm really interested in that. I'm a real introvert so I think maybe that would be a good job." I'm like, "Yes, drop out of law school. Nothing you're telling me makes sense for you to keep doing this." I mean she kept doing it. She passed the bar, whatever. It's fine. I was just like, "Yes. You are a person who probably should drop out of law school and go become a programmer. Please you live in San Francisco. Do this."

Nathan Fox: Just unlimited opportunity for people with any kind of math and technical logic abilities like that. If that's your strength, I mean you got to go with your strengths. If you're struggling with the LSAT and I just don't know why you then think you want to be a lawyer. It just doesn't make any sense to me.

Alison Monahan: I could say the occasional person who's highly motivated by some particular thing they want to do. I really want to do fighting for immigrants' rights or whatever, but you still have to get through law school and you have to pass the bar. If that's not realistic, you've got to be reasonable here.

Nathan Fox: You could help that cause by coding. I mean, for real.

Alison Monahan: It's true.

Nathan Fox: Skills are so hard to come by and they're so expensive to purchase. You could make a great career for yourself with that skill and then also donate that skill in a lot of ways to make big differences. I don't know. I just think there's too many people idealistically going to law school thinking they're going to change the world for immigrants. It's noble.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. It's very a noble-

Nathan Fox: I don't know how realistic it is.

Alison Monahan: It's a very noble cause but talk to me when you've got \$200,000 in debt and you can't pass the bar about whether this is a really good idea.

Nathan Fox: Now, what position are you in to change the world? I mean, you can't pay your rent.

Alison Monahan: It's not pretty. It's really not. The other thing I was thinking in terms of the GRE, I mean so many more people take that, that even average GRE score probably shows, frankly, less ability than an average LSAT score.

Nathan Fox: I would say so because of the math component. I haven't really looked at the GRE verbal recently. My son says that it's going to be ... Basically, the verbal stuff is going to be easier than the LSAT verbal.

Alison Monahan: It's mostly that anyone who wants to apply to any type of graduate school basically has to take this unless they're applying to law, or business, or medicine. I went to architecture school and did a master's and so all of those people had to take the GRE. Did most of them do very well on it? No, because they're not math people and they're not verbal people, they're designers.

Basically, Berkeley admitted me because I had really high GRE scores even though I was essentially totally unqualified and incapable of design. A lot of people bringing down the average on the GRE. Let's put it that way.

Nathan Fox: I mean there's people bringing down the average on the LSAT too.

Alison Monahan: I don't think there's many of them. I mean think about all the different graduate schools you could be applying to and all those people are taking the GRE.

Nathan Fox: A valid point.

Alison Monahan: Lots of people are going to really not so high profile graduate schools.

Nathan Fox: True.

Alison Monahan: Anyway, so basically the schools, it seems, are really just doing this to get more applicants, maybe more interesting applicants. Maybe people who are on the cusp of going to philosophy graduate school but decided really rather be a legal academic instead. Do you see the harm or benefit to the students over the year?

Nathan Fox: I see this as a benefit—surely as a benefit to the elite students who aren't going to be able to take advantage of this at Harvard and Yale. This is just Harvard and Yale opening up the doors, making it a little bit easier to go to Harvard Law or go to Yale law and not have to take six months to jump through the LSAT hurdle.

Alison Monahan: Isn't there some other school that did this first? I feel like I heard about this six months or a year ago. A not super elite school.

Nathan Fox: I'm not sure either. I think there have been lower profile schools that have tried this on a pilot basis, but I'm not sure what the results of that are. I would be really worried about schools admitting people who are not that serious about law school. That is one thing about the LSAT is that it limits the applicants to people who have ... You have to be a minimum level of serious about law school specifically, because you took this law school specific exam.

Alison Monahan: Right. And you studied for it.

Nathan Fox: It is a hoop. It's a big hoop. It takes a long time to jump through the hoop. It's expensive and takes a long time to jump through it. People, they just don't understand when I say this but it protects you from getting ripped off.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. Also, I feel like it's a signal. I mean if you put in serious time and effort and you take the LSAT potentially more than once and you're still doing really poorly, that's a signal that law school is probably not a great choice for you.

Nathan Fox: 100%. If you've given it a good solid effort for three months or six months, if you tried to get some help, if you've gotten [some good resources](#), some good advice, you really worked at it for a while and you just can't achieve a score that's going to get you into a decent school and or at a decent price, then that's a very good signal that you should just not be on this path and there's probably a million other things that you could excel at and generally, I would encourage people to pursue things that they're going to be good at.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely.

Nathan Fox: Why not?

Alison Monahan: We work with a lot of students doing tutoring in school and also people who fail the bar exam and one of the things we ask them about was, "Well, how was the LSAT for you?" A lot of people are like, "Oh, I really, really, really struggled with the LSAT. I took it three times. I had private tutoring. I could just never really like get a decent score." It's like, "Okay. Well, what are you doing?" Of course, you're failing the bar. You know what I mean?

Nathan Fox: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: There's not quite that direct relationship, but I'm not shocked to hear that you're struggling on the California bar exam. This was not a great fit for you to start with.

Nathan Fox: I always have to put the caveat in there. If you score 145 on your first practice LSAT, I'm not worried about you because you can very easily improve that to a 160 or a 165. Now, you're talking about a score that pretty solidly indicates that you've got a fighting chance on the bar exam. I am really worried about the people who prep, and prep, and prep for six months and the best LSAT score that they're able to achieve is a 145 or a 150 even. At that point, I'm pretty strongly in favor of you not going to law school because I'm worried how well you're going to compete against all these other people who scored 160 or 165 and work on how you're going to compete on the bar exam. That is probably a pretty good sign that you should drop out.

Alison Monahan: At least some of those people sat down and the first time they took it scored a 160, and the first time they take a law school exam, they're like, "Ah, it wasn't that bad."

Nathan Fox: Right.

Alison Monahan: There are correlations here. I'm not saying they're perfect but there definitely are correlations. I completely agree with your point. You got to play to your strength. It's like why struggle through something as difficult, time consuming, expensive as law school when there's something else that you're actually better suited for that you're probably the up and running in a lot faster in a lot less cost, why not do that?

Nathan Fox: If you really do think that being a lawyer is the career for you, then it might be worth struggling through LSAT prep but listen to that. Pay attention to the progress you're making, and if three months later, six months later, you haven't made progress or you're not anywhere close to a score that's going to get you into the right school, at the right price, then maybe you need to reevaluate and think about other opportunities out there.

Alison Monahan: Sure. If someone comes to you and they worked with you one on one and you basically can't get them any closer to their goals, you're pretty good at what you do. It might not be you.

Nathan Fox: I will do my best to try to talk people out of it. That's for sure.

Alison Monahan: Don't we all. We do our best but generally people don't listen. Let's switch gears a little bit from that depressing conversations. Sorry, if anyone is sitting out there with a terrible LSAT score and they want to kill us right now, maybe sit with that feeling for a little while.

Nathan Fox: There's lots of more terrible feelings to come when you struggle in law school. When you're failing the law school exams or when you're failing the bar. Those are worse feelings.

Alison Monahan: You don't want to be a person thinking back to like, "Man, I heard that podcast. I really should have listened to those guys." All right, what do I know about this new and upcoming digital LSAT? They're doing this pilot project. Tell me about this.

Nathan Fox: I mean, shocker that this was announced immediately following Harvard's announcement that they were going to start accepting the GRE. Harvard and Yale started accepting the GRE and then immediately the LSAC starts tweeting about this new tablet pilot program.

Alison Monahan: Which, I've never really been able to find much information. I mean, do we have any idea? Are they just giving the same questions in the same order on an iPad or is it more like the GRE where it's actually individualized depending on what you're getting right and wrong.

Nathan Fox: No. We don't know. They are typically being very cagey. They do not like to release any information. I don't know why, but they just never tell anybody what they're really planning or what they're doing.

Alison Monahan: If there even is a plan.

Nathan Fox: That's possible. They are recruiting a thousand LSAT students or LSAT hopefuls to sit for a tablet based—which is strange that it's a tablet based-

Alison Monahan: That's actually pretty weird.

Nathan Fox: -LSAT. It's super weird and to me, I don't know. They've had a monopoly for so long on law school admissions that the law school admissions test has been the LSAT for forever and they're used to printing money and they really do. They just print money, because test prep providers like me, I have a license to reprint LSAT questions and I have to pay them. I write these gigantic checks every year to the LSAC to use their license test questions.

You also have to pay. As a student, you pay \$180 to take the LSAT. You pay \$180 to take the LSAT again if you need to, and \$180 again if you need to. You just pay and pay and pay to the LSAC. They've been printing money for decades now. I understand why they're reluctant to modernize. I understand why they're reluctant to make any changes, but now that they have this competition from the GRE, it seems as if they might get a little bit of a fire lit under them to-

Alison Monahan: 20 years later.

Nathan Fox: Actually, we talked about this on my podcast, too, that they have actually been rumored and been slowly piloting and doing these... There has been a digital LSAT, they've been researching, apparently, a digital LSAT for at least 10 years.

Alison Monahan: Oh, wow.

Nathan Fox: Now, they've gotten to the point where they're going to pilot it. It seems to me that it would be in the benefit of students to do just what the GRE and the GMAT and every other modern test has done and make the test available at all of these local testing centers, because they're in your neighborhood and you can easily schedule an exam anytime you want and you just go sit down at the terminal and then the terminal will just light up and say, "GRE." Bang, here you go. Here's your GRE and you immediately get your score. That seems like that's not what the LSAC is doing. The LSAC is piloting, now, a version of the test that's going to be administered on tablets. I don't know if these are iPads or Surfaces.

Alison Monahan: Probably whatever is cheaper.

Nathan Fox: Maybe the LSAC is going to start selling tablets for \$1,000. I mean that's also possible.

Alison Monahan: They might have to make you bring your own.

Nathan Fox: We don't know. But is happening in May. There are 20 test centers around the country. Unfortunately, there's none in good places, so there's none in California, there's none in DC. They are all sorts of weird places like Norman, Oklahoma, where they're offering this pilot, but this is all on the website.

Alison Monahan: I think the deadline has already passed actually too sign up for this, too.

Nathan Fox: Oh, bummer. They extended that deadline once so it's possible to extend it again.

Alison Monahan: Maybe. I was there yesterday and it said that it was already over.

Nathan Fox: That passed. That's too bad. They're going to have a thousand students sit for this thing at 20 testing centers across the country so it's a pretty serious pilot. They're paying each of the people. They're going to give them \$100 gift card so

they're talking about close to \$100,000 probably that it's going to cost them at least plus the tablet, plus the proctors. It seems as if they're pretty serious about moving in this direction.

Alison Monahan: It seems like it has to be inevitable.

Nathan Fox: It's got to-

Alison Monahan: I mean it's just too ridiculous that you have to-

Nathan Fox: It's way past the time for this to happen.

Alison Monahan: I remember when I took the LSAT, it was in this building where they were doing construction right outside with jackhammers. It's not even like it was a great experience that we have to protect the integrity of our experience in some pencil and paper. It's like that was a horrible test taking experience.

Nathan Fox: I think they are super cautious about people cheating on the test. Probably even more so, they're super cautious about protecting their intellectual property. They don't like these questions getting distributed because they want to be able to sell access to these questions. I think that's why they're going to be in-house weird to tablet route because it's got to be something about security and licensing and what not.

Alison Monahan: I'm just wondering if it's literally the same questions or if they're going to get more fancy. It's super weird to have people going through on a tablet instead of pencil and paper in the room.

Nathan Fox: It is going to be real LSAT questions on this pilot. It's going to be actual LSAT questions. I don't know if it's from previous tests or what but it's not going to be a changed to the substance of the test. It's going to be real LSAT questions. They're going to give scratch paper which will be necessary because for the logic games, you just really can't solve those games without drawing a picture. On a tablet, you're not going to be able to make any pictures so they're going to handout scratch paper, which you're not allowed to have on the LSAT. The regular LSAT, they don't give you scratch paper, but you can write on the test itself.

Here, they're going to give you a scratch paper so that you can draw pictures for the logic games and then they say they're going to give feedback on your performance if you're signed up for this pilot but it's not an official LSAT score. I don't even know that they're going to give you a 120 to 180 pseudo LSAT score or if they're just going to give you some report that shows which ones you got right or which ones you got wrong. We don't know yet what's going to come out of it.

Ideally, they would modernize the scoring so you talked a little bit about the adaptive thing. We call that computer adaptive testing. The GMAT and the GRE are both computer adaptive, which means that they start you off with an average difficulty question and then based on your performance on that question ... Basically, whether you get it right or wrong, if you get it right, they ask you a little bit harder question and if you get it wrong, they ask you a little bit easier question.

They've found that by this method, this can ask you less questions and more quickly determine your true level. If you get one through five right, then they've already started asking you some very difficult questions and if you get those ones right too then they're like, "Oh, we know that you're at least a whatever score." Flip side, if you miss one through five, now they're going to be asking you some of the easiest questions on the test and if you're missing those too, then they have already a pretty good sense of what your score is. The GMAT and the GRE have been like that forever, for a decade at least.

Alison Monahan: More than that. The GRE is like that when I took one of the first versions. I think it's probably gotten a little more sophisticated, but it was actually really disconcerting, because I never practiced on the computer. I had just done pencil and paper and then I showed up for it. And you could literally at that point tell if you've just gotten a question wrong because they gave you a much easier question after that.

As you do better, you're getting harder and harder questions and so you feel like you're doing worse. Actually, had I not gotten my scores immediately, I would definitely have canceled it. I was like, "That was horrible. I did awful." Then I got them, and I'm like, "Oh, I did really well. How is that possible?" Then I realized, "Oh, I was getting hard questions because I was getting them right."

Nathan Fox: There's different strategy involved on a computer adaptive test. Basically, you have to slow down even more and focus on getting all the questions in the beginning right, because if you just get one through 10 in a row right in one of those computer adaptive tests, even if you miss everything else for the rest of the test, there's a floor that's been built to your score at that point. We don't know whether the LSAT is going to actually become computer adaptive. I do think it's better for students because it makes the test shorter.

Overall, this thing, if they do really modernize... I mean, the way that the test needs to be modernized is it needs to be, for one, it has to be offered more than four times a year. Offering it four times a year is just so uncivilized.

I'm talking to a woman the other day who, she's not sure she's going to be ready to take it in June. She really wants to go to law school next year. She's not sure if she's going to be ready to take it in June because that's [only less than two months to prep](#), but she could take it in September, except her best friend is getting married on *the* day, and there's only four days a year that the LSAT is

offered, and so now, she's going to not have the September 2107 test as an option to her, and she's going to have to take it in December instead, which now puts her late in the application cycle. It's just this whole dramatic stressful mess because the test is only offered four times a year. When the GMAT and the GRE are both offered continuously, that's obviously better students.

Alison Monahan: For sure, which just gives people much more flexibility. I mean if somebody say you had a stomach flu on the day that you took it and you know you did poorly, you can just immediately reschedule another one and take it again. You're prepped, you're ready to go. You just need to not be throwing up.

Nathan Fox: For the LSAT, let's say, you were taking the February test, you get sick one week before the February test, "Sorry about that. Your next chance to take it is in the middle of June."

Alison Monahan: Exactly. It's completely crazy.

Nathan Fox: No, big deal. Just wait, four, five more months and then you can have another crack at it. "Sorry, you're going to have to continue studying for four or five more months."

Alison Monahan: Right. And you may have to postpone your entire life for another year because you can't get this done.

Nathan Fox: It happens all the time. That happens all the time. I think this pressure, now, from the GRE is hopefully—I really do dearly hope that we'll get some modernization. But the test has moved in the past. The test has changed extremely slowly. I mean the tests from 2003 are just so similar to the tests from 2017. It's still pencil and paper, still Scantron, still offered four times a year, still takes three weeks to get your score back. Nothing has changed.

Alison Monahan: I feel like it's a little bit like the bar exam. We're starting to see some changes there, but again, you can look at bar questions in most of these places from 15 years ago and they're pretty much the same.

Nathan Fox: A bunch of lawyers. They don't really do anything quickly.

Alison Monahan: No, definitely not. All right. We're almost out of time, Nathan. Before we wrap up, let's just talk a little bit ... Are you seeing any trends among your students in terms of people taking the test more times? fewer times? Are they getting better or worse scores? Do you see high scoring students getting extra money, like even more than before? What's going on, on the ground with the LSAT?

Nathan Fox: Just admission standards have dropped at almost every school. I'm seeing students getting into schools that would have been impossible 10 years ago and now they're getting in even sometimes with scholarships. It's definitely a buyer's market right now for a JD. The unfortunate side of that is that I think law

schools are admitting more and more people who are going to struggle mightily with the California Bar Exam. That's the part that just--

Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, we see now the MBE scores for this year are horrific. The bar passage rates at a lot of schools are horrific. Not even just in California which you expect. I mean I think it was-

Nathan Fox: You hear these deans. The whole Hastings Alumni community got a letter from the dean apologizing for UC Hastings abysmal bar passage rate-

Alison Monahan: Which is terrible right now.

Nathan Fox: -just last year. It was 10 points lower than the state average.

Alison Monahan: Which is not good.

Nathan Fox: That's just garbage.

Alison Monahan: Hastings should not be that bad a school. They're not a school that should be 10 points under the state average.

Nathan Fox: It's not supposed to be. The letter goes on and on. It's making two arguments at once, which these two arguments are really not that compatible with each other, but it's making an argument that "We've already implemented all of these changes to our curriculum and we're going to make continuing changes to our curriculum and our academic support program and we're going to identify people who are struggling and we're going to do a better job preparing people for the bar." That's one argument. Then the other argument at the same time was ranting against the California bar association for making their exam ... One, which is it? Two-

Alison Monahan: I love it. It just shouldn't be as hard as it is. It's like okay.

Nathan Fox: It was a crazy non-apology, because it was an apology but then it was also just blaming the bar association. Then the one thing that was conspicuously missing from this 5,000-word email was no mention of being stricter with admission standards.

Alison Monahan: Right. Exactly.

Nathan Fox: That's the big problem. That's the elephant in the room here is, "Hey, guess what. You have been admitting candidates who are not as strong as they were 10 years ago and now shocker, your bar passage rate has plummeted.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think the MBE stuff is definitely indicative of that. It's one thing to say, "Oh, these essays were extra hard this year or whatever," but it's like the MBE really ... I mean, okay, they added Civ Pro, but that's basically it. I don't think

that really changed anything. Not as much as the changes we're seeing, but it's the same thing. If you do well in the LSAT, you're probably going to do pretty well in the MBE. If you do poorly on the LSAT, you're probably going to do poorly on the MBE. This is not rocket science.

Nathan Fox: No. It really shouldn't be. When we're facing 50% decline in applicants, 50% decline in the number of LSATs administered and a 50% haircut on applicants, but the schools have either admitted the same number of students or maybe slightly decreased the number of people that they're admitting every year. Of course, the admission standards have gone down, and you can look at the LSAT ranges and the GPA ranges at all of these different schools and you can see where they were 10 years ago, and you can see where they are now. Of course, the lower quality of admitted student is going to lead to a lower bar passage rate. I mean, duh. It's like a shocker but of course the schools aren't really excited to talk about that because they want to keep printing money as well.

Alison Monahan: Clearly. They're not really talking about what they're not doing either to prepare people, but that's a whole other conversation. All right, Nathan. People, even after listening to this, some of them presumably have decided they're still going to sign up, they're going to take the paper LSAT, they're going to make it happen. How can they get in touch with you or find out more about what you do?

Nathan Fox: That's my deal. If I can't talk you out of going to law school, then I will help you get into the best school you can at the best price you can. There's lot of ways you can get in touch with me. My website is foxlsat.com. It has information about my classes in San Francisco and Los Angeles and online. I do one-on-one private tutoring there as well. You can just go ahead and book a session directly through my website. You can call me anytime. I've always just used my phone number. It's in all my books and everything. It's 415-5518-0630. If you just want to reach out to me directly, you can even send me a text message. Let's see.

Alison Monahan: Wow, that's brave.

Nathan Fox: I can change the number someday. I start getting bombarded but 10 years in the business and I love hearing from people so please reach out. What else? [Thinking LSAT Podcast](#) for sure. You can follow me on [Twitter @NFox](#). I think that's probably enough.

Alison Monahan: I think that's great.

Nathan Fox: If they can't find me that way, then ...

Alison Monahan: You also have books. Your books are on Amazon, I assume?

Nathan Fox: Tons of books on Amazon. I have a logic games playbook. I have a logical reasoning encyclopedia. If you look for Nathan Fox LSAT on Amazon, you'll find all that stuff. There's links on my website.

Alison Monahan: Pretty much you're just a giant LSAT dork is what it comes down to.

Nathan Fox: I am a huge LSAT nerd. No one ever grows up wanting to be what I am, but as it turns out, it is the perfect fit for me.

Alison Monahan: Making it work. All right. Thanks, Nathan. Unfortunately, we are out of time but it's been awesome having you on again.

Nathan Fox: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox Podcast, please take a second to leave a review or rating [on iTunes](#) or your favorite app, because we'd really appreciate it, and be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. We typically release new episodes on Monday morning. If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to reach out to me, alison@lawschooltoolbox.com or you can always contact us via our [website contact forum at lawschooltoolbox.com](#). We'll put all the links to Nathan's info and the show notes. Thanks for listening and we'll talk soon and good luck if you decide to take the LSAT.

Resources:

- [Fox LSAT](#)
- [Thinking LSAT Podcast](#)
- [Nathan Fox on Twitter](#)
- [Should You Quit Law School?](#)
- [Everything You Think You Know About Law School - The LSAT](#)
- [Maximize Your Final Month of LSAT Prep](#)
- [How to Avoid an LSAT Test Day Disaster](#)
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