



# Ohio

## Testing Report and Recommendations

JANUARY 2015



**John R. Kasich**, Governor  
**Dr. Richard A. Ross**, Superintendent of Public Instruction

January 15, 2015

The Honorable John Kasich  
Office of the Governor  
77 South High Street, 30th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor Kasich and members of the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly:

My vision for preK-12 education in Ohio is to ensure that every girl and boy receives a high-quality education, can read at grade level and graduates college or job ready. To achieve these goals, we must prioritize policies and initiatives that are best for students. I believe testing serves an important purpose for monitoring and improving student learning. Each test a student takes should contribute to instructional improvement or school and teacher accountability. I am committed to improving testing efficiency and reducing the testing burden on students while maintaining accountability in our schools. As you will see, we have an opportunity to reduce the amount of time students spend testing by almost 20 percent.

Please find enclosed my Testing Report and Recommendations. In preparing the report, the Ohio Department of Education spent significant time evaluating the comprehensive testing landscape in our state and focused on the amount of time students spend taking tests. The department surveyed districts and community schools; had conversations with teachers, administrators and education stakeholders; and analyzed teacher evaluation data and state testing times. It is worth noting that the survey results and our analysis show that the average student spends approximately 19.8 hours taking tests each year. This is only 1-3 percent of the school year, depending on grade level. The survey results also indicated that students spend approximately 15 additional hours practicing for tests each year.

I am recommending the following legislative changes based on data collected and conversations with stakeholders:

- Limit the amount of time a student takes state and district tests to 2 percent of the school year, and limit the amount of time spent practicing for tests to 1 percent of the school year.
- Eliminate the use of student learning objectives as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers in grades preK-3 and for teachers teaching in non-core subject areas in grades 4-12.
- Eliminate the fall third grade reading test, but provide a summer administration of the test for students who need it.
- Eliminate the state's requirement that districts give math and writing diagnostic tests to students in grades 1-3.

In addition to the recommendations, the Ohio Department of Education is:

- Working with the federal government to advocate for flexibility for Ohio's testing system.
- Closely monitoring the first-year administration of Ohio's new state tests, including PARCC (English and math) and AIR (science and social studies) tests. We will make any changes necessary to ensure that Ohio's testing system provides accurate data on student performance in a reasonable way.
- Creating models for local schools to increase the efficiency of local testing by finding ways schools may use a single test for multiple purposes.
- Making changes to the new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment in response to teacher concerns about the disruption the current test causes to classroom instruction.

- Exploring whether the new state tests can be used for gifted student identification.
- Implementing the new innovative school district waiver pilot program to develop new and creative ways of testing students

The department's actions will streamline testing, which will lead to a reduction in testing time for students. The recommended legislative changes can reduce the time students spend taking tests by nearly 20 percent. Finally, the limit on state and district testing time will provide a structure for policymakers to work within as we continue to refine our public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard A. Ross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'R'.

Dr. Richard A. Ross  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Gov. Kasich and the General Assembly<sup>1</sup> directed the superintendent of public instruction to submit a report regarding testing in Ohio schools. This report includes a review of the number of tests administered to students as well as the superintendent's recommendations for decreasing the testing burden to ensure that the amount of testing students undergo is reasonable. In preparing this report, the Ohio Department of Education conducted a study of the time students spend taking tests by grade level. This report describes the current testing landscape in Ohio and recommends how federal, state and local policymakers can ensure that students spend the right amount of classroom time learning, not just testing.

## Types of Testing in Ohio

Tests that students take each year serve a variety of purposes. Parents, teachers, schools, districts and the state use them to design instruction, understand student knowledge growth, measure teacher effectiveness and capture overall state and district performance. In sum, testing is a fundamental part of effectively educating Ohio's children.

Ohio's complex testing landscape cannot be understood without first understanding the types of tests and why they are administered. This report discusses four categories of tests: (1) teacher tests; (2) district tests; (3) district tests to meet state requirements; and (4) state tests.

**Teacher tests** are those created by educators for use in their classrooms. Teachers identify this way of assessing their students' knowledge as critical to teaching and learning because they use the results to drive daily instruction and provide parents and students feedback on student progress and performance. These tests are typically shorter than other types of assessments and are directly linked to a classroom lesson like a chapter test, quiz or final exam.

**District tests** are locally selected to fulfill a district goal, not to meet state requirements. Districts administer these to monitor or benchmark student achievement across their school buildings, grade levels or particular classrooms. Common examples of the district tests include the STAR Assessments and NWEA MAP tests.

**District tests for state requirements** are assessments locally selected and administered to meet a state requirement. State initiatives and programs such as teacher evaluation and gifted-student identification require testing. Many of these district tests also can be used to meet a state requirement.

**State tests** are selected by the state and administered to all public school students statewide to meet federal requirements. **The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as No**

### Federal Testing Requirements

- The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as *No Child Left Behind*, requires each state to annually test students in:
  - Reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and once in high school;
  - Science in one grade of the elementary grades, middle grades and high school.
- State tests are designed to meet all federal testing requirements.
- Federal requirements account for 72 percent of the time students spend on state tests.

<sup>1</sup>Section 8, Am. Sub. H.B. 487 (effective 9/17/2014)

## **Child Left Behind, requires each state to test students in reading, mathematics and science.**

These ways of measuring student performance have historically included the Ohio Achievement Assessments and the Ohio Graduation Tests. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, Ohio transitioned to a new generation of assessments – the new Ohio Achievement Assessments and end-of-course tests. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) created the math and reading tests. Ohio developed its own tests in science and social studies.

Find a complete list of state tests in Appendix 1.

## **Why Do Students Take Tests?**

With the many types of tests given in Ohio schools come many reasons for administering them. Many students take tests at the beginning of the school year to give their teachers a baseline from which to design instruction. They take exams intermittently throughout the year to show their progress in mastering a subject. Students take tests at the end of a course or grade level to show what they have retained and are able to apply long term. All of these reasons are helpful and valid, making testing a key component of the teaching and learning process.

At its core, testing shows evidence of student progress. This provides much needed information to classroom teachers and others so they can monitor and improve student learning.

Educators use the evidence provided by teacher tests to guide their teaching each day. If students are able to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge presented, teachers know that those pupils are ready to move on. If students show lack of understanding, teachers can address areas of concern before proceeding. Results of end-of-year tests also are useful for teachers. Results of these assessments provide teachers perspective on what their students were able to retain and apply long term, allowing for reflection and correction in future school years.

District, state and federal officials also use test results to monitor and improve student learning. Historically, certain populations of students, including minority students, children living in poverty, students with disabilities, and pupils who are not native English speakers, often have not received the same quality of education as their peers across Ohio. To address these equity challenges, Ohio began standardized testing two decades ago — long before No Child Left Behind — to hold all teachers, schools and districts accountable for every student's learning.

Ohio sets a level of expectations for districts, schools, teachers and students that reflects the state's educational priorities. The state's goals for preK-12 education are that:

- All students attend quality schools;
- All students can read at grade level; and
- All students graduate and are college and job ready.

Standardized testing has proved critical to measuring student learning and ensuring that all of Ohio's students receive a high-quality education. This type of testing provides a snapshot of how students are performing based on a standard set of expectations. While it does not yield the most personalized view of student performance, standardized testing allows for a direct comparison across classrooms, schools, and districts and provides the public with much-needed information about how all students are performing. These test results are the foundation of Ohio's A-F school and district report cards, which

are designed to show parents, taxpayers and school leaders how well students are performing, as well as identify schools and districts that require additional support and intervention.

Results of standardized tests also hold teachers accountable for their contributions to their students' learning. Studies have repeatedly shown that among school-based influencers of student achievement, teacher quality is important<sup>2</sup>. Studies also have found that when a student has *an ineffective* teacher, his or her achievement suffers dramatically<sup>3</sup>. As part of the teacher evaluation system, teachers who are not effective receive training or professional development so that they can better serve their students in the future.

Students who fall behind in school often never catch up. Students who drop out of school and never earn a high school diploma quickly find themselves at a disadvantage and are far more likely to live in poverty. To lessen the risk of students falling behind and graduating without being college and job ready, Ohio uses testing at two critical academic checkpoints: third grade and approaching graduation.

Students who cannot read at grade level by the end of the third grade are four times more likely to eventually drop out of school<sup>4</sup>. This is why Ohio has implemented the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The guarantee uses annual tests to monitor whether a student will be reading at the third-grade level by the time he or she completes third grade, so that the student can learn on pace in higher grades. Students whose reading is not on track by the end of grade 3 receive extra support until they catch up and are ready for the fourth grade.

As another checkpoint to ensure that all students are prepared, testing is part of Ohio's graduation requirements. Students can use several testing options, such as their performance on end-of-course tests or a college admission test, to show that they are ready for college or a career. Giving a diploma to a student who isn't ready only hurts the student in the long run. By creating these checkpoints, students, parents, teachers and schools are making sure that every student is prepared to succeed.

No matter the type of test, audience or results yielded, testing is intended to monitor and improve both student learning and teacher, school and district effectiveness. Ideally, a test can consistently and reliably serve the needs of teachers and others. In reality, this is difficult to achieve. Many teachers are concerned that adding accountability to a test designed only for instructional improvement can change teacher and student behavior and reduce instructional benefit. On the other hand, adding accountability to a teacher-designed test created solely for instructional improvement does not allow for accurate comparison of teachers, schools or districts.

It's difficult to find a test that serves every purpose well. The primary purpose of teacher tests is instructional improvement, while the primary purpose of state and federal testing is accountability. Despite their shared goal of monitoring and improving student learning, the natural tension between the needs of teachers, the state and the federal government can lead to increased testing. The state must strike a balance of testing and instruction time in the classroom.

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<sup>2</sup>Sanders, W.L. and Rivers, J.C. 1996. *Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement. Research Progress Report*. Knoxville, TN.

<sup>3</sup>Rivkin, Stephen G., Hanushek, Eric A. and Kain, John F. 2004. *Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement*. University of Texas at Dallas Texas Schools Project.

<sup>4</sup>Hernandez, Donald J. 2011. *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

## How Much Student Testing Is There In Ohio?

It's important to understand several factors when attempting to measure the amount of testing in Ohio.

First, there is no common definition of a "test." The department's survey of districts regarding testing time revealed that many school- and district-level tests designed by commercial vendors must be given multiple times throughout the school year, such as monthly or quarterly; or in the fall and spring. There is no common view of whether this is considered one test or multiple tests. Some districts may consider a single administration as a "test" while others define "test" as the multiple administrations given over the course of studying a particular unit or topic.

Also, tests vary considerably in administration time. Fifteen minutes is enough time to complete some standardized tests, while others can take several hours. Two students in different school districts may both take five tests in a year, but the time they spend away from classroom instruction can differ by hours.

A seemingly reasonable way to analyze the amount of testing in Ohio would be to look at days spent testing. Districts have provided the department with many examples of school calendars showing "testing days," but this can be misleading. Most standardized tests have a "testing window," or set number of days during which they may test students. Generally speaking, a larger testing window is desirable because it provides more flexibility for teachers and schools to schedule tests when they will least disrupt classroom instruction. A testing window may be four weeks long, but that doesn't mean a student is taking a test for four weeks.

Understanding these challenges, the goal of this report is to seek a balance of testing time and student learning time. This report, therefore, will analyze testing in Ohio by looking at the actual hours that students spend taking tests.

## How Is Testing Time Measured?

To understand the amount of time students spend taking tests, the Ohio Department of Education surveyed the state's nearly 1,000 school districts and community schools in November 2014. Nearly 400 districts and schools responded with information on the tests they elect to use and the reasons they use them.

Student learning objective tests. The survey did not request information on tests of student learning objectives, a part of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System. These learning objectives are measurable, long-term academic growth targets that a teacher sets at the beginning of the year for all students in the class. Teachers or schools create and administer student learning objective tests to measure each student's progress on each growth target. Teachers who do not receive student growth data from state tests or vendor tests must use locally created measures of growth for their evaluation, which are most often student learning objective tests. Using data submitted separately by schools for 2013-2014

**Total Testing Time for the Average Student in a School Year, in Hours**

<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>11.3</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>11.6</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>13.6</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>28.0</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>24.0</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>22.6</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>22.3</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>21.1</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>23.0</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>20.4</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>28.4</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>18.9</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>12.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>257.4</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>19.8</b>

teacher evaluations, the department created a chart of the amount of time, per grade, for student learning objective testing in the 2015-2016 school year. The model is based on the amount of time the average student in each grade spent taking student learning objective tests.

State tests. To measure the time spent on state-developed and administered tests, the department used its already scheduled testing times for the 2015-2016 school year.

Teacher tests. The time spent on teacher tests is not included in this analysis for two reasons. First, the length and frequency of these tests vary significantly between teachers and between schools. It, therefore, would be difficult to make conclusions or recommendations based on the analysis. Second, small tests, such as quizzes or chapter tests, are a foundational part of teaching and learning. Since these tests are critical for instructional improvement, this report does not recommend specific policies to limit or reduce these tests. Still, teachers and administrators should consider the frequency and value of these tests as they assess opportunities for reducing testing at the local level.

## How Much Time Does The Average Student Spend Testing?

The average student in the average school will spend approximately 19.8 hours on testing in a school year, starting in the 2015-2016 school year. This average varies by grade level. Kindergarten students spend the least amount of time on testing (11.3 hours on average), while grade 10 students spend the most (28.4 hours on average).

In most grades, the testing time is driven by state requirements, either through state tests or district tests given to meet a state requirement. The amount of time for student learning objective tests alone, whose results are used for teacher evaluation, averages 5.1 hours in each grade. However, federal requirements drive the majority of testing time in the middle grades.

These findings are consistent with other research on testing times in Ohio<sup>5</sup>. Find a full breakdown of testing time by grade level, test type and requirement source in Appendix 2.

## Full Impact of Testing

There is growing public concern over the amount of time students spend taking tests. However, survey data reveals that testing time represents a fairly limited portion of a student's academic experience. According to recent analysis, testing constitutes only 1-3 percent of a typical student's time in school, depending on the grade level. Still, the time a student spends taking tests does not reveal the full impact those tests have on a classroom, school or school year.

Test Type	Average Time (Hours)
District Tests	3.3
District Tests for State Requirements	7.8
State Tests	8.7
All Test Types	19.8

<sup>5</sup>Lazarín, Melissa. 2014. *Testing Overload in America's Schools*. Center for American Progress; Teoh, Mark et al. 2014. *The Student & the Stopwatch: How much time do American students spend on testing?* Teach Plus.

Most schools and teachers spend a significant amount of time preparing for standardized tests, especially state tests. Preparation may include time spent taking practice tests, taking local tests to prepare for state tests, teaching test-taking skills and reviewing content for the tests.

Teachers and administrators cite the increased accountability tied to test results as their key motivation for increasing preparation time. They want to ensure that their students are comfortable with the content and possess the test-taking skills they need to succeed. Increased teacher and school accountability tied to testing in recent years has likely resulted in schools increasing the amount of time they spend on test preparation.

The department also surveyed Ohio's school districts and community schools on practice time, but the survey results offered only a glimpse into actual time dedicated to practicing for tests. The majority of respondents indicated they spend at least 15 hours a year practicing for tests, which is roughly 1.4 percent of the average school year. As stated earlier, the average time a student spends taking actual district or state tests is approximately 19.8 hours.

Beside the time spent preparing for tests, actual test administration can make it challenging for teachers to manage classroom instruction. Some tests are administered to all students at the same time, while others require one-to-one interaction with students. Tests administered online may require a computer lab or devices that normally are used for teaching. It's difficult to measure these types of disruptions because each school and teacher approaches testing differently. With planning, schools and teachers can minimize these disruptions. Yet factors like these can increase the impact of student testing perceived by stakeholders.

## Legislative Recommendations for Testing Reduction

This report includes a comprehensive package of legislative recommendations to shorten the amount of time students spend taking tests. These recommendations place limits on the overall time students spend taking tests each year, eliminate unnecessary tests and modify the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System. The following recommendations are contingent on each other and would require implementation as a comprehensive set of reforms. If this package of recommendations is adopted, the state can reduce the amount of time students are taking tests by nearly 20 percent.

### TESTING LIMIT

As stated earlier, student testing time has increased in recent years. The expansion of testing at the state and district level has occurred piecemeal, without consideration of the overall amount of testing. Each new policy or initiative is well intentioned and by itself may not disrupt instruction time. Yet taken as a whole, the amount of testing can leave students, parents and teachers overwhelmed. While strong accountability and other policy initiatives are important to ensure each student receives a quality education, there should be a continuous check on the amount of time students spend testing.

Recommendation 1: Limit the amount of time a student takes tests at the state and district levels to 2 percent of the school year, and limit the amount of time spent practicing for tests to 1 percent of the school year. These limits will encourage the state and districts to prioritize testing and guarantee to students and parents that the vast majority of time in the classroom will focus on instruction, not testing.

These percentage limits take into consideration all state and district tests. Because the number and length of tests vary by grade level, a percentage limit on testing time is more comprehensive and

effective than a time limit on an individual test. A percentage limit also allows for the variation in school schedules because it is based on the school district's calendar.

These limits do not include the time students spend taking teacher tests, required tests for only special populations or samples of the general population. Exceptions to these limits also will include accommodations for special populations. Finally, some students may choose to take more than three courses with a corresponding end-of-course exam all in one year. For example, a 10th-grade student might take the English II, geometry, biology and American history end-of-course exams in one year to fulfill graduation requirements. In a case like this, time spent testing beyond three end-of-course exams will not count against the school's limit. However, districts should still consider the total testing burden on these students and make any appropriate adjustments needed, especially in grade 10.

The recommendations in this report will reduce the amount of testing time overall. The testing limits will sustain testing time at this reduced level. Appendix 3 shows the impact of the report's recommendation on the testing limits.

### **FALL THIRD GRADE READING TEST**

The Third Grade Reading Guarantee has successfully focused attention on early literacy by ensuring that students are given ongoing reading diagnostic tests starting in kindergarten. If a third-grade student is at risk of not reaching the fourth-grade promotion score, the law allows the student to demonstrate his or her reading ability on an alternative to the state's test.

Ohio has administered the third grade reading test twice a year for the past decade. As the state transitions to the new, more rigorous state tests, fewer students may pass the fall third grade reading test. The new tests also have two parts instead of one, making it impractical to administer the tests in the first two months of the school year.

Recommendation 2: Eliminate the fall third-grade reading test and administer the test in the spring. Students who do not reach the required promotion score on the spring test will have a second opportunity to take the test in the summer. Administration of the summer test will be optional and outside school classroom time. Districts will continue to have the option of using a state-approved alternative test throughout the year as a way for their students to show they are reading at grade level. This recommendation would eliminate one state test and reduce the amount of testing time for a third-grade student by 4.75 hours each year.

### **WRITING AND MATHEMATICS DIAGNOSTICS**

The state currently requires districts to give a diagnostic test to students in first through third grades. Depending on the grade, the diagnostic testing can include mathematics and writing. Unless the department considers their school districts "high performing," schools must administer diagnostic tests created by the department. As a result, some districts give the department's diagnostic test to comply with the law, and then give a second, preferred diagnostic test to inform instruction.

Recommendation 3: Eliminate the state's requirement that districts give mathematics and writing diagnostic tests to students in first grade through third grades. This recommendation does not affect the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, which requires schools to give an approved reading diagnostic test to K-3 students each year.

This recommendation gives districts the option of deciding which diagnostic testing in writing and math, if any, is appropriate for their students in these grades. Because diagnostic testing is an important part of instruction, teachers and administrators will have local flexibility to customize a diagnostic process that works for their students, and that process may or may not include testing. The department still will make the state writing and math diagnostic tests available for schools to use at no cost if they choose.

## Teacher Evaluation

### BACKGROUND ON THE OHIO TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM

In 2011, the General Assembly enacted new laws creating Ohio’s Teacher Evaluation System and charged the State Board of Education with developing a statewide, “standards-based” framework for the evaluation of teachers. In adopting the framework, the board recognized the importance of evaluating teachers to reward excellence, improving the quality of student instruction, bettering student learning, strengthening professional proficiency, including identifying and correcting deficiencies, and informing employment decisions.

Since the enactment of Ohio’s Teacher Evaluation System in 2011, the General Assembly has tweaked the teacher evaluation laws three times. The majority of Ohio schools fully implemented Ohio’s Teacher Evaluation System for the first time during the 2013-2014 school year. With limited exceptions, the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System has two basic parts: (1) teacher performance; and (2) student growth measures.

The teacher performance part is based on each evaluator’s observations of a teacher with his or her students. The student growth measures part is based on how much a teacher’s students learn throughout the year. Generally, each part of the evaluation attributes 50 percent to the overall evaluation rating a teacher receives. However, beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, districts have an option of using an alternative framework that allows 15 percent of the overall rating to be based on one of these alternative components: student surveys, peer reviews, student portfolios or self-evaluations.

Student growth measures are a method for determining how much academic progress a student makes by measuring growth between two points in time. The tests used to generate student growth fall into three categories: (1) state tests using Value-Added data; (2) approved vendor assessments; and (3) locally determined measures.

State-level student growth data, known as Value-Added, is created using student results from state tests. State-level Value-Added data is generated in grades 4-8. Value-Added data will be generated in high school subjects, with an end-of-course exam, beginning with the 2015-2016 school year. For evaluation purposes, teachers providing instruction in Value-Added subjects receive a student growth score based entirely on the Value-Added data. These teachers are referred to as category “A1” teachers. In the 2013-2014 school year, they accounted for approximately 6 percent of teachers subject to Ohio’s Teacher Evaluation System.

Teachers providing instruction in some, but not all, subjects with Value-Added data are referred to as category “A2” teachers. During the 2013-2014 school year, they accounted for roughly 14 percent of teachers. An A2 teacher could be one that teaches English language arts most of the day and a fine arts class for one class period. A2 teachers’ student growth scores are based on a combination of Value-Added data proportionate to the teacher’s schedule, as well as other locally determined measures.

The second category of tests is approved vendor tests. For subjects where no Value-Added data exists, districts and schools can use other tests that are provided by national testing vendors and approved in Ohio to measure student growth. Many of the common tests used for benchmarking student performance are included in the department-approved vendor test list. In 2013-2014, approximately 14 percent of teachers received teacher-level data from an approved vendor test, together with locally determined measures, to demonstrate student growth. These are referred to as category “B” teachers.

The third category of tests is locally determined measures. If there is no Value-Added data or approved vendor test available, districts and schools evaluate student growth using local measures. Educators who fall into this category are referred to as category “C” teachers. Locally determined measures include: (1) locally created tests aligned to student learning objectives; and (2) shared attribution, defined as a student growth measure that can be attributed to a group. Approximately 66 percent of teachers were category “C” teachers during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SHARED ATTRIBUTION**

Again, the majority of teachers in Ohio used locally determined measures to determine all or part of student growth for evaluation purposes in 2013-2014. While some of these teachers did use shared attribution as a component of student growth, the use of student learning objectives prevailed.

As noted above, student learning objectives are measurable, long-term academic growth targets that a teacher sets at the beginning of the year for all students. The teacher or school creates and administers student learning objective tests to measure each student’s progress on each growth target. Generally, these tests are given twice a year; once at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year. Although the tests vary in length and time, the department’s model for measuring test-taking time for student learning objectives identified these tests to be one of the largest drivers of testing time of all tests. Approximately 26 percent of total student test-taking time is spent taking student learning objective tests.

In addition to student learning objective tests largely contributing to the time students spend taking tests, the department has heard many criticisms from teachers and administrators that student learning objectives are too time-consuming and create equity issues between categories of teachers. Because teachers create and grade their own student learning objective tests, some claim there is an opportunity to manipulate student performance.

Recommendation 4: Eliminate the use of student learning objective tests as part of the teacher evaluation system for grades pre-K to 3 and for teachers teaching in non-core subject areas in grades 4-12. The core areas are English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Teachers teaching in grades and subject areas in which student learning objectives are no longer permitted will demonstrate student growth through the expanded use of shared attribution, although at a reduced level overall. In cases where shared attribution isn’t possible, the department will provide guidance on alternative ways of measuring growth. Based on the model created using 2013-2014 teacher evaluation data, eliminating student learning objectives would reduce the average amount of time students spend taking tests by 3.1 hours per grade level.

While this recommendation does not affect tests aligned to student learning objects for teachers teaching in core content areas in grades 4-12, when no Value-Added or approved vendor assessment data is available, the department gives teachers and administrators the following advice.

First, educators should not test solely to collect evidence for a student learning objective. The purpose of all tests, including tests administered for purposes of complying with teacher evaluation requirements, should be to measure what the educator is teaching and what students are learning. Second, to the extent possible, eliminate the use of student learning objective pre-tests. When other, pre-existing data points are available, teachers and schools should use those instead of giving a pre-test.

## Action Steps for the Department of Education

The department is committed to reducing the testing burden on students, improving testing efficiency and maintaining accountability systems that ensure all students receive a high-quality education. As this report describes, testing is a foundational part of learning. At the same time, any testing that does not contribute to instructional improvement or school or teacher accountability should be eliminated. Over the past several months, the department has identified a number of system improvements that will greatly impact student testing.

### Ohio's ESEA Waiver

On Nov. 18, 2014, the U.S. Department of Education approved Ohio's amendment to its Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Waiver. The amendment grants relief to Ohio school districts from double testing in cases where a middle school student is taking a high school course for high school credit. For example, an advanced eighth-grade student taking Algebra I for high school credit will take only the Algebra I end-of-course exam that corresponds to the course. The student will not have to take the eighth-grade math test as well.

It also is worth noting that in recent weeks, Congress has considered reauthorization of No Child Left Behind a priority. Criticisms of federal testing requirements have been shared nationwide and have prompted lawmakers to consider removing the annual federal testing requirements.

Action Step 1: The department will take part in this national conversation regarding federal testing requirements. Any change would potentially create an opportunity to transform Ohio's testing system, reducing the amount of time students spend taking tests. Until federal law is changed, Ohio has very little flexibility; it must administer state tests to comply with federal testing requirements.

## TRANSITION TO OHIO'S NEW STATE TESTS

The department and the State Board of Education are responsible for selecting and developing high-quality state tests. Ohio's previous tests were criticized as providing only a one-day snapshot of a student's learning, and the mostly multiple choice question tests did not allow students to truly show what they knew and were able to do. The department listened to teachers and administrators and now has high-quality tests to better meet student, teacher and school needs.

Ohio's new state tests are provided through Ohio Department of Education collaboration with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) using Pearson as the test vendor for mathematics and English language arts. Ohio also uses American Institutes of Research (AIR) as its provider for science and social studies tests. Ohio schools field-tested the new state tests in spring 2014 and will administer the tests this school year.

These tests are given in two parts, and the mathematics and English language arts tests can be spread over multiple days. This will give schools the flexibility and a chance to assess student performance over more than one day. The tests also have a section focused on uncovering what students can do, in

addition to what they know. The tests will be administered online, which for the first time allows for dynamic, interactive questions and answers. These are ambitious changes, so each test vendor must be able to deliver on Ohio's vision for state testing at every stage.

Action Step 2: The department will monitor the implementation of the new state tests and evaluate the performance of the test vendors. The department also will continuously track the implementation of the new online and paper tests to ensure that they are being used as intended. Any needed adjustments will be applied immediately.

The department will review the tests each year, working with the standards and assessments review committees recently established by the General Assembly and the leading testing experts on Ohio's technical advisory committee. The review committees will evaluate whether the state tests are appropriate to meet Ohio's New Learning Standards. Following three years of implementing these new state tests, the department and State Board of Education will conduct a formal review of the testing vendors. The review will be completed no later than Dec. 31, 2017.

## TESTING COORDINATION

Ohio law includes an increasing number of policies or initiatives that require the state to develop lists of tests to fulfill a state requirement or replace a state test. This includes gifted identification, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, teacher evaluation, end-of-course exam alternates, college admissions tests for graduation and others. In the past, these lists were created in an ad hoc fashion, and they often are not well-coordinated at the state and district levels. For example, a district testing coordinator may be aware of the required state tests but not know about testing that stems from other state policies or initiatives. An unintended consequence is potential over-testing because of the failure to realize a single test can serve multiple purposes.

Beside the issues of testing coordination, there is not a good understanding of the full impact of testing at the district level. This includes teacher time spent away from instruction to practice for tests or time scheduled outside the classroom or computer lab to administer a test. Again, the full impact of testing varies by classroom and school, but overall it contributes to perceptions that students are undergoing too much testing.

Action Step 3: Streamline the many approved lists, testing alternatives and substitute exams at the state level to focus on how a single test can be used for multiple purposes when feasible. The department will have new models and testing lists for schools and districts to use by May 1, 2015.

Action Step 4: The department plans in spring 2015 to coordinate professional development for teachers and administrators on how to make testing more efficient and less disruptive to instructional time, how to explain the purpose of each test to parents and students and how to ensure test results are being used to improve instruction. The impact of this on the time students spend taking tests is unknown, but training teachers should reduce some of the disruptions associated with testing.

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT

In fall 2014, the state expanded to a comprehensive Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) that includes academic, social, emotional and physical areas of learning and development. This test allows a teacher to individualize instruction for every child. The test is designed to be given as part of regular

classroom instruction. Studies have shown that kindergarten students are more comfortable testing in a classroom setting, and this generally produces more reliable and useful results for teachers<sup>6</sup>.

The most efficient method for administering the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is one where students respond to questions using technology. This allows teachers to document student responses using a tablet or computer. When kindergarten teachers use this technology they dramatically shorten data entry time and improve accuracy. In the first year of the KRA, only 12 percent of tested students used technology.

The KRA, given through small increments over the course of the testing window, is designed to take approximately one hour per student. Teachers have shared that they struggled with the time it took to administer the assessment in fall 2014.

Action Step 5: Reduce the number of questions on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and administer a concise, representative set of items that are the best predictors of later academic success. The department has begun reviewing the test questions and is currently seeking feedback from kindergarten teachers. It will reduce the length of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment by May 1, 2015, for the 2015-2016 school year.

Action Step 6: Streamline the method of collecting student results, including converting more existing questions so a student's answer given on a notebook or computer automatically uploads results for the teacher to see. The department also will provide more technical assistance and professional development to teachers and schools to help them best use technology and shorten reporting time. The department will have this streamlined method in place by Aug. 1, 2015, for the 2015-2016 school year.

## **GIFTED STUDENT IDENTIFICATION**

Local boards of education are required to adopt policies on how their districts will screen and identify students as being "gifted." Ohio law requires districts to screen students to identify them as gifted if the students are self-referred through academic performance or referred by a parent or teacher. Some school districts screen all students in the early grades to help identify gifted students.

The department has created a list of approved tests that can be used to properly screen and identify a student as gifted. Districts use many of these tests for other purposes such as benchmarking student achievement. In addition to the approved tests, many districts choose to use specialized screening and identification tests that can take students a few hours to complete.

Action Step 7: The department will study how districts can reduce the need for additional tests by developing a way to use the new state tests to identify gifted students in certain tested areas. The new state tests are designed to have a higher upper limit that may allow for the proper identification of gifted students. Using state tests for this purpose could save a notable amount of testing time in the early grades. These tests will include components for screening all students, including student groups that are sometimes underrepresented. The department will release its study findings by Jan. 31, 2016.

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<sup>6</sup>National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. 2003. *Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth through Age 8.*

## INNOVATIVE SCHOOL WAIVER PILOT PROGRAM

For several years, school districts have sought flexibility from state testing requirements to implement new, innovative education programs. Until recent legislative action, state and federal law did not allow the department to offer this flexibility. In June 2014, the General Assembly passed a law that created an innovative school waiver pilot program. The pilot gives up to 10 school districts and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) schools the chance to apply for a temporary exemption from state testing and other requirements so they can try alternative methods of assessing their students' learning. The Ohio Department of Education will collaborate with these districts and schools to seek U.S. Department of Education approval for using alternative, state-approved assessment systems.

Action Step 8: Implement and expand the innovative school waiver pilot program to allow districts and schools to develop new, innovative alternative assessment systems that could be expanded statewide. The department is finalizing the application guidance for the pilot program and will grant waivers to eligible districts and schools this spring. The department will closely monitor and evaluate these districts and schools to identify ways to scale up their initiatives and alternative testing methods. This can potentially reduce student testing time in the near future.

In summary, testing serves an important purpose for monitoring and improving student learning. However, there are opportunities for improved efficiency in Ohio's testing system. The action steps to be taken by the department will streamline testing, which will lead to a reduction in testing time for students. The proposed legislative recommendations potentially could reduce student testing time by nearly 20 percent annually, as shown in Appendix 4. An overall limit on state and district testing time provides a structure for policy makers to work within as Ohio continues to refine its public education system.

## Appendix 1

### 2015-2016 State Tests

Grade Level	Test Name
Kindergarten	Kindergarten Readiness Test
3	State Test, Fall – English Language Arts
	State Test – Math
	State Test, Spring – English Language Arts
4	State Test – Social Studies Test
	State Test – Math
	State Test – English Language Arts
5	State Test – Science
	State Test – Math
	State Test – English Language Arts
6	State Test – Social Studies
	State Test – Math
	State Test – English Language Arts
7	State Test – Math
	State Test – English Language Arts
8	State Test – Science
	State Test – Math
	State Test – English Language Arts
Varies, 9-12	English I End-of-Course Test
	Algebra I End-of-Course Test
	American History End-of-Course Test or Substitute
	Biology/Physical Science End-of-Course Test or Substitute
	English II End-of-Course Test
	Geometry End-of-Course Test
	American Government End-of-Course Test or Substitute
11	College Admissions Test

## Appendix 2

### Projected Testing Time in Ohio for 2015-2016 with No Changes, by Grade Level

Grade Level	District Testing Time (Hours)			State Testing Time (Hours)			Total Time Taking Tests (Hours)
	Total Time	District Tests & District Tests for a State Requirement*	Student Learning Objective Tests**	Total Time	State Tests	State Tests for a Federal Requirement	
K	10.3	4.1	6.2	1.0	1.0	0.0	11.3
1	11.6	5.4	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.6
2	13.6	7.5	6.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.6
3	13.5	7.4	6.2	14.5	4.8	9.8	28.0
4	11.5	6.6	4.9	12.5	2.5	10.0	24.0
5	10.1	6.4	3.7	12.5	0.0	12.5	22.6
6	9.0	5.7	3.3	13.3	2.5	10.8	22.3
7	10.2	5.3	4.9	10.8	0.0	10.8	21.1
8	9.7	6.0	3.7	13.3	0.0	13.3	23.0
9	9.3	5.6	3.7	11.1	11.1	0.0	20.4
10	11.3	7.6	3.7	17.1	3.0	14.1	28.4
11	12.3	6.4	5.9	6.6	6.6	0.0	18.9
12	12.2	4.8	7.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>144.6</i>	<i>78.5</i>	<i>66.1</i>	<i>112.8</i>	<i>31.4</i>	<i>81.3</i>	<i>257.4</i>
<i>Average</i>	<i>11.1</i>	<i>6.0</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>6.3</i>	<i>19.8</i>

\* Data from survey of districts, precise calculations for separating discretionary district tests and district tests to meet a state requirement are not possible on a grade level basis with existing survey data and the use of a single district test for multiple purposes.

\*\*The estimated SLO testing time is based on summary teacher evaluation data reported to the state and apportioned through a grade level distribution model.

## Appendix 3

### Testing Time as a Percent of the Average School Year, Before and After Report Recommendations

Grade Level	Before Report Recommendations			After Report Recommendations			Average School Year, 2013-2014 (Hours)
	Local Testing	State Testing	Total Testing	Local Testing	State Testing	Total Testing	
K	0.97%	0.09%	<b>1.06%</b>	0.38%	0.09%	<b>0.48%</b>	1,061
1	1.06%	0.00%	<b>1.06%</b>	0.41%	0.00%	<b>0.41%</b>	1,087
2	1.25%	0.00%	<b>1.25%</b>	0.61%	0.00%	<b>0.61%</b>	1,087
3	1.25%	1.33%	<b>2.58%</b>	0.62%	0.90%	<b>1.52%</b>	1,088
4	1.06%	1.15%	<b>2.21%</b>	0.83%	1.15%	<b>1.98%</b>	1,088
5	0.92%	1.14%	<b>2.07%</b>	0.70%	1.14%	<b>1.84%</b>	1,092
6	0.82%	1.21%	<b>2.02%</b>	0.67%	1.21%	<b>1.87%</b>	1,103
7	0.92%	0.98%	<b>1.90%</b>	0.70%	0.98%	<b>1.68%</b>	1,109
8	0.87%	1.20%	<b>2.07%</b>	0.65%	1.20%	<b>1.85%</b>	1,110
9	0.84%	0.99%	<b>1.83%</b>	0.84%	0.99%	<b>1.83%</b>	1,115
10	1.01%	1.53%	<b>2.54%</b>	1.01%	1.53%	<b>2.54%</b>	1,115
11	1.11%	0.59%	<b>1.70%</b>	0.97%	0.59%	<b>1.56%</b>	1,114
12	1.10%	0.00%	<b>1.10%</b>	0.88%	0.00%	<b>0.88%</b>	1,102

*Note: Table uses projections for the 2015-2016 school year and does not include practice time.*

## Appendix 4

### Testing Time in Ohio for 2015-2016 Based on Report Recommendations (In Yellow), by Grade Level

Grade Level	District Testing Time (Hours)			State Testing Time (Hours)			Total Time Taking Tests (Hours)
	Total Time	District Tests & District Tests for a State Requirement*	Student Learning Objective Tests**	Total Time	State Tests	State Tests for a Federal Requirement	
K	4.1	4.1	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	5.1
1	4.5	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.5
2	6.6	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.6
3	6.8	6.8	0.0	9.8	0.0	9.8	16.5
4	9.0	6.6	2.5	12.5	2.5	10.0	21.5
5	7.6	6.4	1.2	12.5	0.0	12.5	20.1
6	7.3	5.7	1.6	13.3	2.5	10.8	20.7
7	7.8	5.3	2.5	10.8	0.0	10.8	18.6
8	7.2	6.0	1.2	13.3	0.0	13.3	20.5
9	9.3	5.6	3.7	11.1	11.1	0.0	20.4
10	11.3	7.6	3.7	17.1	3.0	14.1	28.4
11	10.8	6.4	4.5	6.6	6.6	0.0	17.4
12	9.7	4.8	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.7
Total	102.1	76.2	25.9	108.0	26.7	81.3	210.1
Average	7.9	5.9	2.0	8.3	2.1	6.3	16.2

\* Data from survey of districts, precise calculations for separating discretionary district tests and district tests to meet a state requirement are not possible on a grade level basis with existing survey data and the use of a single district test for multiple purposes.

\*\*The estimated SLO testing time is based on summary teacher evaluation data reported to the state and apportioned through a grade level distribution model.