First, I would like to say that this committee should have had more current teachers from all levels on it. We just went through this and can bring current evidence.

I teach 12th grade English. I taught English II for 7 years. Testing affects the entire school. In many cases, instruction stops. The 180 days of instruction is a farce. Testing does not just affect teachers who teach a tested subject. Everyone has to proctor. Students only work long enough to take the state test. After that, school, in their minds, is over. Watching young folks squirm, doze, stare for two hours is unfair. Adults do not like to sit quietly for two hours. Solution: if testing has to be, it should be done in a regular 45 or 90 minute timespan. This is all the time they get on a teacher made test. Remember, we create testing. Now, that depends on which schedule the school is on. Yes, make two tests is what I am saying. Students stamina is not that long. We pay enough. We can assess student with fewer questions. We dont have to ask them multiple times to see if they understand one standard.

I read where MDE made a statement that they dont require all this testing. They are correct. But, because school accountability is tied to it, then schools have to have a way to see if students are ready. So students have to take teacher created test after each unit, students have to take mid-term testing, students have to take benchmark test or 9 weeks, students have to take semester exams. Basically, they take a test for the test for test for the real test. So no MDE does not require all that testing, but because of the state test, students have to endure all those tests. Solution: if we have to have a test, let it be a grade band test. Once in elementary, once in Middle, and once in high. In my day, we took the FLE in 11th grade. Many of us turned out fine. I dont remember going to class one day and a teacher saying lets test prep. TEACHERS JUST TAUGHT. We have to get back to this. Back to the 180 days, aside from a month of that is testing, another three months is test prep. After Christmas, many teachers stop teaching and begin test prep. It is every day until the test. Students are now doing daily test prep, school wide tutorial and before or after school tutorial. In some cases, by the time test comes they are brain dead.

We are already on our way with doing away with testing. Students who do not pass the test now have multiple options. This is the thing, if none of those work, student do not graduate. So to say there is not an end of the year test or it does not stop graduation is untrue. Solution: If we must give a test, let it be used for data purposes only. It should not be used to stop a student from graduating. All students aren't good test takers. Some of those who are making them do it weren't good test takers either. Let the test count for a portion of their grade. I wont talk about the computer issue with testing. We are asking students who have never had keyboarding to type a response. Unrealistic!!!!

While I have tried to give real life scenarios and solution. My real ask is to cut state testing because it is a money maker for testing company. If our students are already required to take the ACT and it is a part of accountability, let them take it. Use it to measure schools. Not one college ask a child for their state test results. Not one job ask students for their test score. NOT ONE!!!!!!

I think MDE staff, USDOE, chairs of ed communities, legislators, Tate and Gunn should be made to come proctor. It is sad and will make you cry.
If I think of anything else, I will come back.

"He who had a WHY to live for can bear almost any HOW." Nietzsche
As we just finished Day 16 of State testing, I have plenty of comments about the subject. Forcing students to pass a State test in order to graduate is definitely an "exit exam". I have Seniors as of this week that will not know until May 11th, if they can even Graduate. One week prior to Graduation, they are awaiting the results of State tests that they have taken numerous times over several years. These students have been in school a minimum of 13 years and a State test controls their ability to graduate. The hardest part of my job is telling a student "I'm sorry, but you didn't pass your State test so you can't graduate".

I firmly believe that the Legislature & MDE would have a different outlook on State testing if they were forced to participate in those tests for 16 consecutive days or if they had to tell parents/students that they can't graduate after 13 years of school.

The first day of testing this year was a complete nightmare. We had a Senior taking the English II State test in hopes of graduating. The Questar system shut down for an extended period of time in the middle of the test. We waited almost 2 hours to finish the first session of the testing. We were very upset knowing that graduation depended upon how we did. Sadly, it was a very bad experience for [redacted] which I'm sure will be reflected in [redacted] test scores. A testing "glitch" to [redacted] may mean the difference in [redacted] chances of graduating.

I've been in education for more than 20 years and testing has become the "elephant in the room". Many schools shut down completely during the testing window. My own child is at a different school where [redacted] has sat in classrooms all day long doing nothing because testing was taking place elsewhere in the building. It's very difficult to get a child to go to school when they know they will not do anything for several weeks.

The students in Mississippi are tested excessively from Kindergarten through High School. I'm not opposed to some type of College & Career Readiness test such as ACT Workkeys but please do not make it contingent upon Graduation. It's great information to have but not to use against the student.

Someone also needs to address the test score counting 25% of their grade which is about to take place. While that sounds great in theory, we'll never have those scores back in time for the next semester schedules or for Fall scheduling. The Questar score reports from December arrived in our building today. There was no way to use the data to help students who failed the test in December. They had to retake their test in the past few weeks not knowing what their weaknesses were. For students who fail a December test, we would have to have test scores back prior to the first day of January to know if a student failed the course.

If the committee has any difficulties understanding the chaos that is involved with State testing, please spend about 4 weeks at the end of each Semester with any High School. If you want to see what it does to our students, be there around May 11th when Seniors learn they can't
graduate. Testing has become larger than anything in school. Please put a stop to the endless testing.

Thanks for listening! I could write so much more but I know there will be plenty of other educators/parents with just as many concerns.
I don’t care if the kid who wants to be a mechanic scores advanced, proficient, basic, or minimal on a standardized test; I care that he can take an engine apart, fix the problem, and put it back together correctly. How about we actually test skills realistically? Can kids produce a product that demonstrates their proficiency in the skills that are going to be relevant to their chosen careers, regardless of how much money testing companies may not make. I have never asked my doctor what his ACT, SAT, or any other score was, nor do I care. He demonstrates his medical knowledge and proficiency through the care he provides, or he would not be my doctor. There is an egregious disconnect between the world of education and the real world.

Thank you for allowing teachers the opportunity to voice an opinion on the absurdity that we refer to as state testing.

20 1/2 year veteran teacher

Sent from my iPhone
The state of Mississippi should stop kids from taking state test in order for kids to graduate!!!
I tell parents regularly that I do not think common core is evil, and that it is actually a GOOD thing to have standards to follow. The problem that I have run into is with the FOCUS on the assessment of the standards. I DO think it is possible to teach the standards without focusing on assessing them and killing our students with test prep. In other words, if we teach the standards but keep the focus on giving students an excellent education and encouraging them to love reading and learning, I think they would do well on the tests. However, many schools and school districts have become ultra competitive, and the only thing that seems to matter anymore are the final test scores. As a result, the focus has gotten off a rigorous education and placed on test prep. Each grade is consumed with their own test scores that things are being said like, "We don't have time to read books anymore. We have to focus on test prep."

Because teachers are being told that the school boards are only looking at one thing: their test scores, they are losing sight of the big picture and being forced to cram students with excerpts and passages. Bad teachers are being pushed to non-tested subjects like chemistry, physics, and foreign languages, which effectively punishes the higher achieving students. Instead of raising the performance of all students, the focus on assessment in many districts is propagating mediocrity. It seems that overall, Questar and the testing companies are the ones who are winning, not the students.
To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to have a voice regarding state-based assessments from a classroom teacher perspective. I have two issues to address. First – the state test is a loaded deck, economically speaking. It favors the “Haves” over the “Have Nots.” Students in my classroom do not all come from homes with laptops, computers, and smart phones. Many children have limited – or no – access to PCs with keyboards. Additionally, my school district has limited resources for computers. There is one teacher computer in my classroom ... period. And I teach sixth-grade writing. While resources are lean, expectations and demands of state-test scores are not filtered or factored in a way to accommodate districts with less money, serving families with lower incomes. Some schools in the state of Mississippi have tablets for each student as part of their budget. That is only a fanciful notion in our area, and the children suffer in day-to-day learning limitations and in state test results with unfair parameters of measurement.

Also, as a writing teacher, I am forced to shoot blind. I teach writing standards consistently and with conviction to my students throughout the year. However, the state test that measures my students’ performance and my teaching ability is issued and scored covertly – in my opinion. I do not have access to the prompt during or after the test, or my students’ answers (which is scandalous if anyone making these regulations took a Measurements and Assessments course as required in all collegiate teaching curriculum.) Therefore, I have no way of knowing what the successes or failures are collectively as a teacher or within my students. There is no frame of reference on which to calibrate teaching in the classroom which – in my opinion again – nullifies the urgency, integrity, and usefulness of the state test all together. If we are not to learn and improve from our strengths and shortcomings, then why do the test? How can a crippled test begin to scale the quality of education in our schools or be used to equip our children? Simply put, a hollow test should not have the power to determine our children’s educational options or achievements.

Although I have several other opinions about our present state educational system, I remain hopeful that good leadership and necessary changes can happen to reshape our schools and assessments. I hope the time and effort that I lavished on this email - instead of my lunch - will somehow create a small ripple of concern or awareness. Thank you for doing your part.
*** This Email was sent by an educator at Wesson Attendance Center in Copiah County School District.
After students finished the state testing this year, [redacted] of them came to me crying and said it was very difficult and stressful. The 4 state tests that they must take as a 5th grader (Reading, Lang Arts, Science, & Math) is just too much testing for our 11-yr olds. The fun of teaching has been drained by the testing monster that has overtaken our state leaders.
Hello. I am a special education teacher in a small, rural, predominantly black district. I know the value of standardized testing; however, I do not understand why the state of Mississippi produces such lengthy, frustrating assessments. My students have deficits that greatly affect their progress and involvement in the general education curriculum. We struggle throughout the year to master the standards. We provide accommodations and extra instruction each day. I often feel as though I have fallen short because my students do not show the growth I expect. The MAAP causes so much unnecessary stress for teachers and students. The stress is multiplied for students with disabilities. Please consider the impact assessments have on the student's confidence. When we exit the testing site, we are exhausted.
Thank you for your time.

6th grade Inclusion
Philippians 4:8 "Think on these things."
To Whom It May Concern:

I serve as a science bowl coach. Our NWRMS science bowl team competed in the 2018 National Science Bowl competition in Washington, D.C. The coach of the number one team in the country from the state of Washington said they stopped using MAAP tests three years ago because they not very effective measuring tools.

Respectfully submitted,

Northwest Rankin Middle School
Science Teacher

Rankin County School District

Mission: Bring Everyone's Strengths Together! We will all intentionally focus on empowering our students to reach their maximum potential by embracing opportunities and challenges while cultivating a tradition of distinction in education.

Vision: Continue a tradition of excellence by providing a world-class education that empowers all to grow through curiosity, discovery, and learning.

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To Whom it May Concern,

As an educator, I highly feel that standardized testing is doing nothing more than dumbing down our children. We are literally telling them that if they don’t do well on a test that covers everything they have learned over the course of the year that they are stupid. We are putting stress and anxiety on these students and this is causing so much harm. This also puts undo stress on the teacher due to job security and beyond. I should not worry about my job being dependent on how well my fifth graders test.

I’ve been in education for the last 10 years and I tried to rack my brain and remember about my own state testing experiences. I cannot remember a single time in my entire school career (minus high school graduation exams and ACT) where my teachers made testing a priority. However, I also don’t remember a teachers scores being reflective of his or her ability as an effective teacher. Classes change year to year. One year I may have a bright class and the next they may not be as high. I have to deal with students from all walks of life from the severely profound, to the highly gifted, to the behavior problems and beyond. Putting this added stress on these kids only leads to frustration at all levels and does not leave room for me to truly teach.

When I decided to become a teacher I had one goal in mind and that was to make a difference. I wanted to teach kids, not tests! I want my students to have experiences they remember for the rest of their life, not a sore hand and a callus from over testing. Until we change things, these students will never get the educations they deserve. Until we hold students accountable for their learning and actions, they will never truly grow. Until teachers can close their doors and do what they are trained to do, then students aren't going to get to where they need to be.

Give me the curriculum, give me the standards, and let me do what my calling is to do. LET ME TEACH!

Sincerely,

5th Grade Science and Social Studies
Singing River Academy

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Dear Dr. Wright,

I am elated to see the formation of the Student Test Taking Task Force. However, I have some concerns regarding this matter and I would be thoroughly delighted if you would take a moment to consider these issues. First and Foremost, the task force's demographics are not a true representation of the students being served by the great state of Mississippi. In fact, the state’s largest two public school districts are not on the panel, I think that this is a major disservice to the scholars, parents, and educators that serve and depend on those districts. Each district has its unique position within the Mississippi department of education and all voices deserve to be heard concerning this matter.

Secondly, it would be awesome if the task force would address the practice of assessing students with an Individualized Education Plan. The current rules and regulations are somewhat unjust and are not favorable to the academic success of students with learning disabilities.

Finally, we should reconsider how we use data collected from standardized assessments. This data would be much more useful if it were used as a diagnostic piece to help build stronger schools rather than a punitive tool used to strip away the confidence of students and educators.

I love all children dearly, and it pains me to see how our current assessment procedures are effecting their confidence and academic success. I believe that education is an invaluable pillar in the structure of civilization. We should work expeditiously to resolve all issues regarding assessments, so that the children of this wonderful state will have a brighter future.

Highest Hopes,
May 29, 2018

Dear Testing Task Force:

Standardized tests have uses. We need to know how well students are progressing, however we also need to recognize the limitations of standardized testing. All too often standardized tests results are used as a proxy for educator performance without acknowledging that they are an imperfect proxy at best. Standardized tests assess the performance of students, and many conditions other than the work of teachers, principals, and superintendents contribute to student scores. To a large extent a student’s performance reflects the environment in which he or she lives. Student poverty probably more than any other marker predicts the accountability model letter grade that a school district will receive (Schimmel, 2016). Put another way, the current Mississippi Accountability Model is a better measure of the difference in test performance between more affluent students and less affluent students than it is an accurate assessment of the quality of instruction taking place in a district.

Nationwide, the difference between the collective test scores of middle- and upper-income students and the collective test scores of lower-income students reflects a difference in language and culture fluency. The cause
of the difference stems, for the most part, from the strong influence childhood poverty has on child development.

Poverty has been shown in numerous studies to result in smaller vocabularies and lower language skills in young children. A 1995 study by Betty Hart and Todd Risley showed that, by age 3, many children of low income families had heard 30 million fewer words than children of more affluent families. A smaller study in 2014 by Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek supported this finding.

Severe poverty can, in addition, cause neuroendocrine damage in children as a result of stress frequently associated with childhood poverty (Felitti and Anda, 1998; Evans and Shamberg, 2009; Burke Harris, 2011).

Poverty also presents day-to-day barriers such as a lack of backup transportation when a child misses a bus, difficulty finding someone in the household to help with a homework assignment, uncertainty about where one will sleep when a caregiver is unable to pay the rent, and an inability to afford basic school supplies such as paper and pencils. Poverty also increases the likelihood of low birth weight children and lead contamination in homes.

The question that arises is what can be done to lessen the impact of poverty. The data suggests that we should talk less about failing schools and more about implementing programs that prevent or reduce the damage frequently associated with childhood poverty. Florida has had encouraging gains from a requirement that its 100 lowest-performing elementary schools add an extra hour to their school day and use that time for reading instruction. Some charter schools (KIPP and Nashville Prep) add 400 to 500 hours to the school year with positive results. Attracting high performing teachers, academic coaches, and administrators to under-served areas as the Barksdale Institute has done helps. Intensive tutoring of students identified at high risk shows promise. The Harlem Children's Zone in New York sees benefit in academies for expectant mothers and in school based health care
facilities. The early childhood education program in 31 low-income New Jersey districts receives high marks.

These endeavors cost money, and in most high-poverty school districts their low tax base hobbles their ability to raise money. If our state wants to remain competitive in worldwide commerce, it will have to make a commitment to educate all of our children, not just those who are easier to teach. Mandatory kindergarten should be a top priority. Another priority should be an aggressive expansion of pre-K, especially in high poverty districts. Also, if our state is committed to reducing poverty and improving educational attainment, it should consider higher funding for childcare for all children under the age of three. Other efforts should be continued such as encouragement of our universities and colleges to graduate high-quality educators. We should lend support to efforts by high poverty school districts to attract and retain high-performing teachers and principals. We should provide adequate resources not only for basic courses in our schools but also for enrichment programs.

These reforms will not eliminate the achievement difference, but without their implementation a high poverty state such as Mississippi will be destined to remain at or near the bottom of most education and economic rankings. We should not let our demographics determine our future.

References:
Eric Jensen, “Teaching with Poverty in Mind” (2009). The first two chapters discuss the nature of poverty and how it affects the behavior and academic performance of children.
from Neurobiology and Epidemiology,” European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences 56 (2006).
Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, “The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood” (Cambridge, MA: Center on the Developing Child, 2010).
Betty Hart and Todd Risley, “Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children”

Sincerely,

Sent from my iPhone
Hello. I've never seen passages from an actual state test. All I know is what the MAAP samples provide. I'd like to suggest more literary and informational texts relevant to students as teenagers, students, sons and daughters. Almost every passage I have gone over (which are MAAP examples) concern adult themes, such as marriage, overworked mothers, fathers working hard to support their family, etc. My students don't understand a story about an overworked, stressed out mother of 5 children who longs to have no obligations and such (Gift from the Sea). In their words, "she just sounds crazy." I understand it all too well myself :)

Thanks for your consideration.

[Name]

English II Instructor
If the school districts would let the teachers teach subject and content knowledge of a particular subject such as history, science, etc. a good certified teacher, who enjoy teaching and have a passion for teaching, then the students would learn KNOWLEDGE and when it is test time the students would be prepared. We have to many teachers who are not certified teaching, the ones who are granted a temporary teaching certificate, who are only in it for the money, although not very much. They do not have a passion for teaching and are not trained to deal with students, not the content area or the behavior. A P.E. teacher should not be teaching math unless he or she has a minor degree in that area. That's one of the problems and one of the reasons the students are not prepared for testing. There is a teacher shortage but they should be prepared in the area they are teaching.
I am a bit nervous in my ability to sufficiently plan for the 2018 science framework implementation next year due to a lack of sample test items and a test blueprint. Some other Biology teachers I know are resisting making changes to how they teach the 2010 framework because they are under the impression that 2010 framework will still be assessed on the upcoming MAAP Biology end of year assessment. It would help to ease these concerns if we had a blueprint so we can adequately cover the material for the assessment at the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

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Biloxi High School
Science Instructor

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As an educator, I was taught that all students learn and test differently. How can we think that all this testing is helping our students? From test anxiety to the fact that testing does not hold a student or parent responsible, just the teacher, testing is just a procedure to stress out the teachers. I am a firm believer that we have the perfect test ready for all graduates, the ACT. All colleges accept a certain score to be admitted to their program. Why can we not use this test and get back to the basics instead of all this craziness that people who have not taught in several years or even step foot in a classroom expect educators to implement in their classroom. We know our children, let us teach them the way that is best for them to learn and demonstrate that they have achieved that concept.

To me, an educators biggest problem is that the student and parent are not held responsible for anything. We have students that miss 20 or more days and still pass because we do not want anyone to fail for fear of reprimand. We have to implement Tiers to help make them successful. But what do you do when this is a recurring process every 9 weeks? This is where the problem lies. Not teaching but the fact that parents are not promoting education but athletics and laziness. Solve that problem and it will help educators immensely!

Sincerely,

--

Hamilton Attendance Center
ICT II and F&CS Instructor
School Technology Coordinator

Our lives improve only when we take chances - and the first and most difficult risk we can take is to be honest with ourselves.
--Walter Anderson
Good afternoon,
I want to take this opportunity to address some concerns I have that were not addressed in the survey teachers were asked to answer.

- First and foremost, the survey should have only been sent to subject area teachers; they are directly impacted by the day to day effects of high stakes testing. The terminology is not common jargon for non tested subject teachers, which will skew the survey results because teachers are unsure of what they are answering.
- Also, the answers are too convoluted because they are essentially all outlining the same thing and are not differentiated enough for a proper response. There is confusion within the survey pertaining to the time state testing takes from instruction.
- The survey does not address or take into consideration the number of computers a school has and this will cause the answers on testing time to be skewed and varied. Some schools do not have enough computers or bandwidth, which results in the school having to disrupt and stop classes in order for students to test.
- Because of testing security, schools, essentially, have to shut down all operations. If a school has a limited amount of computers, this results in the loss of instructional time for weeks.
- Another key concern, pertaining to testing, is a full standard can not be measured by one to two questions, and the standards do not fully address college and career readiness. A major gap in these standards pertains to grammar, which is a major component on the ACT- college entrance exam.
- The survey did not ask what the teachers thought should be the main test; it simply dealt with questions relating to our current exit exam, which is not what is best for the children of Mississippi. The questions asked in the survey do not cover the true issues and concerns that need to be addressed.
I am glad teachers are finally being asked how we feel about state testing. I truly have mixed emotions.

I understand the need in some areas. (To make sure teachers are actually teaching, not just waiting for a monthly paycheck.) You know, holding teachers accountable and all. But isn't that a principals' job. To make sure their teachers are actually teaching. So I understand where there is a need of some type of accountability, but my word, enough is enough. Its to the point now, that even the students who are currently graduating notice the lack of common, everyday skills that are no longer taught, yet needed. One of our current graduates made this statement just a couple weeks ago, I have never been taught how to balance a checkbook. However, I can take the heck out of state test.

In my opinion we should use ACT. ACT is where it all is. Students who do well on the ACT are looking at scholarships in their future. By doing this we could most likely improve our college enrollment statuses. We are already requiring students to take the ACT in 11th grade anyway. We could offer an ACT prep class as an elective starting in 9th grade. (Most schools do this already, but it's not pushed until 11 grade and up.) The earlier we start exposing the students to these questions in the lower high school grades, the better the students would do. The students should be able to take an ACT prep class more than one year. Teachers have access to ACT prep questions that are already free. Each teacher could use these throughout the school year to help students and this would be kind of like prepping now for our state test, except the ACT really impacts a student.

If a students did not have to focus on "passing" a state test, kids might could find other areas of interests they could succeed in. Areas such as the Arts, Music, Dance, and Art are lost. There are so many children that are wonderful in those areas but they struggle with standardized testing. This would give those students hope. They can use the ACT to prepare for an Arts school and not feel like a failure because they can't pass a state test that does nothing for their future.

I'm sorry, there is nothing I see positive that comes from state testing..... I believe there is a time and place for everything. I believe we gave the testing world a try and that time now is gone. It is time to realize that we need to do what is best for our kids future and ultimately our future, because the kids in my room one day could be responsible for my life or yours.

Nanih Waiya Attendance Center
From: [Redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, May 23, 2018 1:55 PM
To: Testing Task Force
Subject: State testing

Good afternoon,

I would like to voice my opinion on statewide testing. Remove it. Ax it. Cancel it. Can we please stop it? Allow the ACT and US History test to be the measuring stick for depth of knowledge and gateway for college. Keep the 3rd grade reading test.

NO MORE STATE TESTS
NO MORE STATE TESTS
NO MORE STATE TESTS

Thank you.

[Redacted]
History Teacher, Mt. Olive High School
From:  
Sent:  Wednesday, May 23, 2018 1:12 PM  
To:  Testing Task Force  
Subject:  State Testing

Dear Task Force,

State testing at the high school level should be stopped. The ACT is sufficient to need of accountability that both teaching and learning are taking place. Currently, it is ridiculous how education is being faked. We are not teaching skills but rather teaching short term memory to so call "pass" the state test standards that are very low anyway. The passing score and scoring system changes to confuse the general public on what percentage of a test is passing. If your group is really looking for answers, the common sense approach previously mentioned would be suggested and implemented. But like most groups that research for the best, you all will probably snicker at my suggests and continue the money train of state testing company and decision makers getting lobbying money to keep state testing around and truly hurt the children of Mississippi.

If you are sincere in your job and responsibilities, I will hear from you.

Thanks,
Please help me understand why we don’t use the ACT for our graduation requirement instead of 4 different EOC exams.

Other states use the ACT, so it seems it must be acceptable to meet the Federal requirements.

ACT is needed for college and our accountability system. It would be significantly less money than what we are currently doing; it would be significantly more applicable to our purposes of post-secondary education and the workforce and accountability across the nation and state, and it would take significantly less time so we would not lose so much instructional time having to take so many state exams as we are currently doing.

Less time out of class, less money, more important and relevant, more equitable state and national data for more effective accountability. It’s a win-win for everyone. Why are we not doing this? Please help me understand?? It seems we could use the money saved for many other things that would be more effective and beneficial for our students and teachers!

Thank you!!
From: [Redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, May 23, 2018 10:50 AM
To: Testing Task Force
Subject: state test

I think the ACT would be a better option for your students. Most students take the ACT more seriously than state test because it determines if they get into college and scholarships, but they do not see the importance to state test and as a result do not always do their best. I also think it would cost less which means what is currently being sent on testing could go back into the classrooms for a better education for all of our students.
To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to provide some information regarding testing and test prep. Each semester, our school is “shut down” for 3 weeks in order to complete state testing. That is a huge amount of teaching time that is lost because teachers are being pulled to administer/proctor tests or cover classes of other teachers who are testing. The BIGGEST issue is all of the extra testing leading up to the state test. Our district requires teachers to administer CASE 21 district tests, NWEA, and Lexia in addition to our weekly and unit tests. Some schools can use CASE 21 as the 9 weeks exam and some cannot. Our kids are being “tested” to death! Some administrators view this as several opportunities for students to get test practice. Unfortunately it is having a negative effect as students are so exhausted from all the testing that when the actual state test comes around, they do not perform their best.

The stress that surrounds the state test is extremely high. Students are literally crying and having anxiety attacks on test day. We as teachers try to comfort and calm our students and do fun activities leading up to the test such as wearing green for good luck, making lucky bracelets (using embroidery thread), playing review games, etc. We also provide our students a healthy breakfast on test day at our expense because we know some of our students will not get this otherwise.

We do NOT have adequate resources for the MAAP test. It is left to the teacher to create lessons that align with this test. The problem comes in when trying to interpret some of the standards. Teachers may interpret them and teach them one way; however, the creators of the MAAP test may interpret and test them in a completely different manner. It is imperative that we ALL be on the same page when it comes to this.

With all that being said, wouldn’t it make more sense to use the ACT as the state test in high school? I know MDE says that the state tests are no long used as “exit” exams, but every year there are students who do not graduate because they did not score high enough on one or more state tests. That and the SAT are what colleges look at when accepting students. The ACT is what gets the students money to attend college. Colleges do NOT look at state test scores. The ACT is also a much less expensive test to administer. The savings could provide much needed resources for the classrooms.

Thank you for the opportunity to send my thoughts regarding testing and thank you for taking the time to read the feedback and provide us with the means necessary to teach the future!

Sincerely,

D’Iberville High School
If the state is going to insist on standardized testing and having certified staff, then the only students who should be required to be at school the days of state tests are those students testing. And, this should not be added to the days students have to attend.

Small schools are forced to send kids to the gym or other teachers classrooms during this time and it is crazy for students to come to school and sit in a gym because the school is small and needs teachers to administer a test. My child would learn more at home during these days. It is a complete waste of time.

Also, I have read comments about how the ACT does not accurately gage how prepared a student is for college. However, it is the ONLY score a college looks at. No college ever has asked a student how well he or she scored on a state test.
To Whom It May Concern:

I am a parent with [redacted] who attend public school in Mississippi. I have several concerns in regard to the excessive testing that the Mississippi Department of Education is placing on students. Seeing as how MDE has already entered into a contract with a testing company for next year without giving the “task force” an opportunity to collect information, I’m sure my concerns will fall on deaf ears. However, I felt compelled to share my concerns.

1. If the Mississippi Dept of Education is paying so much for these tests, why aren’t these companies administering the tests on company computers. Instead, schools are essentially put on lock down during testing with teachers being pulled from the classroom to either act as a test administrator, proctor, or hall monitor. Add to the fact that laptop carts / computer labs are unavailable to other students while testing is going on. If the state is paying millions of dollars, why not have the testing company come in with their own computers and administer the test themselves and leave the teachers in the classroom to TEACH !!! If you really think about it, the state of MS is spending millions upon millions of dollars each year to simply use a companies questions. My [redacted] has constantly told me about the program ELS that teachers use for testing during the year. Why not pay some retired teachers to write test questions and then upload them into a program such as ELS ? Oh wait, that makes too much sense.

2. Why does the state of Mississippi insist on testing U.S. History if it isn’t required? I’ve asked my representative this and have even called MDE to ask the very question and no one can answer it. I did speak to my [redacted] teacher and she said that she honestly felt like it was more to gauge a student’s reading ability. If that’s the case, why not give them an actual reading test instead of tying it to history. I for one love history, but it isn’t for everybody. Why the state of MS would hold a comprehensive history test over a junior’s head is beyond me. As I stated earlier, if it is intended to gauge reading, give them a reading test !! Oh, we already do that...its called the ACT.

3. As many states begin to shy away from state testing and adopt the ACT, as usual MS is doing the direct opposite. We are shying away from the ACT in order to put more and more money in the hands of these testing companies. Why ? Guess how many times a college asks how you scored on the state tests? 0 !! Guess how many times they request you have your state test scores sent in ? 0. The ACT on the other hand is direct opposite. The ACT is already paid for by the state for students to take their Junior year so why pay millions of dollars to testing companies when the ACT does the job ? Maybe it’s because MDE is SO loaded with money that they can afford to throw away millions on testing. Imagine what could be done with amount of money if it was put where it was need the most...in the classroom !!!

4. My [redacted] took the U.S. History test in Junior year of high school and was a nervous wreck until [redacted] received [redacted] scores towards the end of summer break. For a multiple choice test, what is the reasoning behind having to wait so long to get test scores back. Again, this is another question that I have contacted MDE in regard to and have yet to receive an answer. We pay these companies millions of dollars, yet it takes them months to score a multiple choice test ?? Something just isn’t adding up here. Last but not least, it’s not fair to the students or the teachers. Again, take U.S. History for example. My [redacted] history teacher. She was always trying to engage the students through various projects, posters, and short papers, however when I spoke with her one afternoon, she told me how disgusted she was with what is happening in U.S. History because of state testing. I had NO idea that she was required to cover from Post Reconstruction to the Present in the course of year then to only have 70 questions on the test. 70 questions that span from post-Reconstruction to the present. Are you kidding me ? I could write 70 questions on just Reconstruction !!! That in itself should tell you that the U.S. History test is not a fair assessment. Our students are tested entirely too much !!!
What ever happened to the days when the teacher made the test? If you passed the class, you passed, likewise if you failed, you failed.

As the school year comes to an end, students and teachers alike are exhausted. Exhausted from the normal school year, but also due to the fact that many schools are wrapping up the dreaded "testing season". When testing season rolls around next year, I would like to invite the employees of the Mississippi Dept. of Education to come into the schools and administer, proctor, and serve as hall monitors for these tests so that teachers can do the job that they are hired to do and that is teach!! I sincerely hope that some of this feedback will be used in such a manner that will help eliminate these unnecessary high stakes assessments that are plaguing our education system. Although a lot of the testing debate appears to have become political, I hope and pray that one day soon common sense will prevail.

Sincerely,
My opinion is that we should eliminate state tests and focus our efforts on students improving on the ACT because that is very important in them going to college (some can’t even get admitted) and receiving scholarship money. Passing an algebra, biology, english, or history test does nothing for them. We should be allowed to teach the students in different ways such as having projects, presentations, outside activities, etc. But instead we’re beating them over the head on how to pass a test, which does no good for them for their future. Shouldn’t we be all about preparing our kids for life? We’re not with our current system and that’s why we have a teacher shortage too. These kids know how to pass a test, but yet can’t change a tire, speak in front of a group, or know how to dress or interview for a job. Why can’t Mississippi lead the charge in actually preparing students for life? Forget these tests and let the teachers use their talents to teach kids to be prepared for life! We should put more money into having classes that teach accounting skills, job interview skills, maintenance, computer skills, etc. Currently, our school is struggling because we don’t have the resources to teach those type of classes, but yet we are a high performing school year in and year out because we have great teachers that do great jobs—even if that job requires us to get the students to pass a test. Listen to your teachers, MDE & legislators. We are the experts at this, with all due respect. Put money into the correct education because that is the key to success!
Preparation for life is the key!!!
I had almost completed the survey and there are questions that I do not know the answer to. There needs to be a "no knowledge of" or some type of option for some of these.

Also, this seems a bit like we are shooting ourselves in the foot. Teachers don't like state testing. The questions, however, are forcing answers that will align to what you want us to like and do, not what is actually truth.

I really don't have the time or the eloquent words to say all I want to say, so let me just be short.... WHYYYYY does it even make sense to use four different test that take an ENTIRE week out of normal school operations when we could use the ACT that takes 4 hours on a Saturday, or 4 hours in ONE day?

Oh, and that whole thing where we pay someone MILLIONS of dollars???? What are y'all thinking???

LISTEN to your teachers. We have SO many awesome teachers in Mississippi. And we are tired of someone else making decisions for us that will fill THEIR pocketbooks while leaving us overwhelmed and poor because we continue to pour our hearts and money into the kids that we absolutely love and want the best for. Because these kids are people to us, not just numbers.

Survey is trash. If you want real information that is not forced to be what you want to see, trash it and just tell teachers to email you.

Thanks.
Algebra I, Algebra II, Algebra III, AP Calculus Teacher
Math & Science Team Sponsor
Mu Alpha Theta Sponsor
Junior Class Sponsor
Prom Sponsor
STAR teacher
To whom it may concern:

I feel most of my time in the classroom is spent preparing for the state math assessment instead of being able to teach the students in the way I feel is most successful. In additions to teaching the curriculum in our textbook, I have to also find time every day to fit in state test prep. We spend so many hours throughout the school year having to take practice tests to prepare students for the rigor and the format of the state test. By the time the test arrives, the students are tired from all of the benchmarks and practice questions that have been done throughout the school year. I think more time should be allowed for both the reading and writing portion of the state test. Our students do not finish those assessments and often feel rushed and frustrated. This especially has occurred since the test has switched to computers instead of pencil and paper. I think if they are going to stay using computers for these tests you need to make timing accommodations for students whose typing skills are not adequate. Thank you for listening to my concerns.

The Copiah County School District hereby advises students, parents, employees and the general public that it offers employment and educational opportunities, without regard to race, national origin, sex, or handicap. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our district's Title IX and Section 504 coordinator. This office is located at the Copiah County School District's office in Hazlehurst, MS at 254 West Gallatin Street. Phone (601) 894-1341.

*** This Email was sent by an educator at Wesson Attendance Center in Copiah County School District.
To Whom it May Concern:

I just completed the testing survey sent to us by your department via our superintendent of education. Since most of the testing questions do not apply to me (I teach a non-tested subject), most of the questions were difficult for me to answer. However, in my opinion, too much time and emphasis is placed on state testing and testing preparation. If we would focus our energy on the instruction of the whole child, I truly believe we would see an increase in test scores statewide. Our students get tired of testing. They take so many screeners, benchmark assessments, and practice tests that the actual test loses its importance. The kids don’t care because they know this test does not benefit them (or hurt them) personally.

My students have missed a great deal of instruction during my class because they have to take practice assessments. I personally missed almost 3 weeks of teaching one of my classes because I was pulled to help with state testing. Academics and the general education and wellbeing of children are not the top priorities for the state of Mississippi; high-stakes testing is.

Your survey should’ve included a box for comments. Since I had to email you individually, you now know my name, my district, my school, and my personal feelings on the matter. So much for anonymity. However, my view of this is so important to me that I decided this was a risk worth taking.

Sent from my iPhone
My two comments regarding our current state tests:

* Our standards are supposed to be getting our students ready for college and careers. I've worked in several different jobs and have graduated college. I've never seen any questions in the workplace or in college phrased in the way that our practice test questions are phrased. One of the biggest issues that our students face is that they can't figure out what the questions are actually asking them for because of the wording of the questions. Any assessment that we have should be geared more to the understanding of the material and not how badly the students can be confused with the questions. They will never come across questions phrased like this in "the real world."

* If a student has been diagnosed with a reading disability, it doesn't make sense that they can get accommodations (such as having them read aloud) on state tests for science and math, yet they can't get the actual reading state test read aloud. I think that this is unfair and very stressful to these students.

--

Fifth Grade ELA Teacher
BUES
One ESSENTIAL improvement should be the date of testing. It should be at the end of the semester to maximize the opportunity for the best possible retention opportunity for students. This will especially help students that need more time, based on their learning level, for retention. I suggest using the last week of school before final exams and backing up from that point for establishing the window for testing.

Thanks,

United States History
Saltillo High School
From: 
Sent: Tuesday, May 22, 2018 4:07 PM
To: Testing Task Force
Subject: Suggestions for time

Please increase the time for ELA reading MAAP test to at least 2 1/2 hours for 3-5, preferably 3 hours. I had several excellent students who did not finish because they wanted their test to be perfect. Also, there are some slow readers as well. To accurately test the standards the time should be increased otherwise we’re really testing fluency/speed, not accuracy with MCCR standards. The times for the other tests are fine.

Also, please follow the testing blueprint. Some students complained that there were over 8 long passages which the blueprint said 5th grade would have 5 passages (2 non-fiction, 2 fiction, and 1 field test).

Thanks!

--
5th Grade ELA
Puckett Elementary School

Rankin County School District

Mission: Bring Everyone’s Strengths Together! We will all intentionally focus on empowering our students to reach their maximum potential by embracing opportunities and challenges while cultivating a tradition of distinction in education.

Vision: Continue a tradition of excellence by providing a world-class education that empowers all to grow through curiosity, discovery, and learning.

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Another important note for the Testing Task Force to consider is that testing should return to paper. It provides a greater opportunity for the students to be more careful in their answers. Also, the timeframe for returning scores are still late (June 29) considering it is a computer generated test.

Thanks,

United States History
Saltillo High School

On Thu, May 10, 2018 at 7:44 AM, Testing Task Force <testingtaskforce@mdek12.org> wrote:
Thank you for your input. Your comments will be made available to members of the Mississippi Student Testing Task Force and included in the monthly update of comments that will be posted on the Task Force web page.
I am not allowed to look at the test questions, so I do not know how effective it actually is. I also want to make a suggestion that the test results be sent back to us science teachers before school is out, that way the students can see their immediate feedback. When a child has to wait over the whole summer to see how they performed on a multiple choice test, it loses its importance. I understand that the school needs more time to get their score, but the children would benefit from seeing something more immediate.

5th Grade Science and Social Studies Teacher
Pearl Upper Elementary

The mission of Pearl Public School District is to prepare each student to become a lifelong learner, achieve individual goals, and positively impact a global society.
From:  
Sent:  Tuesday, May 22, 2018 11:07 AM  
To:  Testing Task Force  
Subject:  Additional Comments

An additional comment I would like to make for my third graders is that the assessment is too long. There were way too many passages to read for their age. I don’t feel like it’s developmentally appropriate. After so many, you’re only testing their endurance and attention span rather than their ability to find the main idea or sequence story events.

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The vision of NSPD is to be an "A" Rated District with all "A" Rated Schools.

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To whom it may concern:

My name is [REDACTED], I have been an educator for over ten (10) years. Through my ten years of teaching, I have always been leary of repetitive state testing. I always wondered what is the State’s biggest concern SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT or STUDENT IMPROVEMENT?

If school improvement is the biggest concern the excessive test is justified. The need to show the world how good we can be on paper. Although its justified doesn’t mean its the best option for improving Mississippi current state.

If student improvement is the biggest concern of the state, we’re failing tremendously. Data from State Testing shows there’s a large number of students who are ranked as minimum or basic and yet we are not crafting a curriculum that fits the student learning style as well as ensure the student will obtain and maintain success five years after graduation.

The state is in the midst of testing this week. On the middle school level, the students will test four consecutive days for 2 and half hours. That will come to total of the 9 hours of testing. If you were to add the 8th grade Science test (approx. 3hrs) from the prior week, the 8th grade students have tested for 12 hours. I can not recall any profession that requires this type of excessive testing.

Testing fatigue becomes a factor. This is just a few concerns I have regarding testing. Thank you for providing the opportunity to share my stance.
Since I teach second grade gifted, I was unable to complete the survey because I didn’t have first hand knowledge of how testing impacts the classroom. I started to fill it out based on what I’d observed or heard teachers talk about, but after the first question I realized I didn’t have enough information to accurately answer the questions.

What I do know is that a lot of time is spent testing three times a year. I have heard teachers mention that the NWEA test may show what an individual student knows because it is tailored to the responses of each child, but that it doesn’t really match up with the standards.

From my point of view, the testing window, which lasts for four weeks and occurs 3 times a year, takes a large chunk of time out. My morning classes miss class time in my gifted classroom and it is a challenge to get them caught up. Many of the students get stressed out during testing time.

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I disagree with the survey format. Assessments were listed, but the choices were too vague and did not allow appropriate selections. For example, my formative assessments are not the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd Most Helpful, but they are certainly not "used, but not helpful" or "not used". For this reason, teachers are likely to click in frustration resulting in inaccurate data.

Also, ELA students wrote two 75-minute essays which specified no break between prompts. ADULTS would be hard pressed to read, write, and stay still must less remain focused for that length of time. This is too much for for high school much less elementary students. Furthermore, the standards require cognitive tasks that exceed developmental readiness. Middle school students are just grasping the idea of theme and then they must struggle to explain "how the theme is conveyed" which further increases anxiety and writing aversion. I often wonder why these prompts are worded in ways that require two teachers to debate what the prompt is ASKING the student to do. The College Board Advanced Placement Literature essay selections require deeper analysis but are much easier for students to understand.

Sincerely,

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I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the testing program in our state.

I am a teacher of students in K-1 with special education rulings. Many are functioning below grade level so my focus is on making progress on IEP goals, not on the larger picture of hitting that magic number they should at the end of Kindergarten on MKAS. I had at least [number] students this year that it was an accomplishment for them to complete the MKAS, in addition to the district required benchmark assessments, **without having meltdowns**.

For 2017-18, our district required my first graders to do Dibels, STAR Reading and Math, and NWEA Reading and Math as benchmarks. In addition, we used a program called Mastery Connect 3 times this year as well. That was just the district tests. In each individual classroom, they were testing on units or weekly skills, I was progress monitoring them biweekly.

The only thing that differed for the kindergarteners was that they did MKAS/SELS instead of the STAR assessments.

Our campus appears to spend about 3 months having instruction interrupted trying to get all of the state and district required testing done.

Thanks for your time and attention.

Harrison County
I just completed the state testing survey, and I would like to make a few more comments. For the past 18 years, it has been my privilege to teach middle school special education. That position has afforded me the opportunity to observe some of the best teachers across the state as they learn to implement Common Core standards and teach their students to think with the depth of knowledge needed to be successful and productive citizens.

In my 18 years, it saddens me to see the major shift that we as educators have made and the harm it is doing to our children. I have watched our school systems move from teaching the whole child to pushing children into anxiety disorders, fear of testing, and fear of failure because of state testing. Teachers feel the pressure of data, which is passed directly on to children, who do not have the executive functioning skills to handle the adult pressure that we are putting on their adolescent minds. We are no longer teaching them that failure is part of life, a chance to try again and learn. We no longer teach them that other people matter, kindness is important, and they have an important place to fill in this world. What do we teach them? You must PASS. You will make our break our school. Your score will affect everyone around you. We teach them that if they don’t get it, they will FAIL not only themselves, but their classmates, their parents, their teachers, and their school. My students are 11, 12, and 13 years old. We are drowning them in adult data.

Is the data important? Do we need it? Do we use it? Yes, yes, and yes! Of course, teachers must be held accountable for what we teach and how we teach it. Students must learn to handle pressure (appropriately). Teacher monitoring is also extremely important. My principal is in my classroom all throughout the year inspecting everything I do. She has productive conversations with me about my teaching practices. She provides me with a community of learning where I am able to continually improve my teaching practices. What about my students? Formal and informal assessments are built into my lessons all throughout the week. Those are based on the standards. Sometimes, the kids do not even know they are being assessed, but I know. I know who gets it and who does not. I know why they get it or why they don’t.

There MUST be a better way than cramming testing and stress down their throats all year long. We are creating a society of children who HATE school, HATE learning, HATE reading, HATE math. We are destroying their futures. PLEASE do something to reduce the testing stress. I know state testing is necessary. The data is helpful. We do use it for planning and revising our teaching practices. The time spent in preparation, progress monitoring, and testing is out of control. Tame that beast.
Special Education teacher (18 years)
7th Grade Science teacher – starting 2018-2019
We have a years worth of material to teach in 3 nine weeks. The 4th nine weeks is prepping for the test and five weeks of testing for our school. Our building basically is on lockdown. Until we are a computer per child school we need to go back to paper pencil tests.

The students are done after the state assessment and it would be beneficial to move the state testing window to the end of May / beginning of June.
To whom it may concern:

I do agree that state assessments are used to determine and validate what students have obtained for the current academic year. However, not all test scores accurately represent student ability. There are some students that are not good test takers, and they tend to score low on standardized assessments. I do not agree with the two writing prompts that were on the assessment this year. I understand the need for field tests, but could those not be done at random throughout the school year? I feel that our students struggled when it came to sitting down, reading one long text, typing about it, and completing the same steps over in the time frame they were given. I do not feel that they should be given on the same day. Children's attention spans struggle on long test in which the time in extended to great lengths. I feel that the state should provide school districts with the appropriate typing program/funding so that we have an even leveled playing field throughout the state. Everyone should be utilizing the same program so teach their students, or the state should hold PDs so that teachers are knowledgeable on how to incorporate typing into their writing class effectively.
To Whom It May Concern:

I teach upper elementary language arts. There are several concerns that I have regarding the state assessments. There isn't enough time allowed for the reading and writing portions of the assessments. This year many of my students were unable to finish the writing and reading tests, and as a result they were distraught. They felt that if they were allowed enough time they could have been more successful on the assessment. A good portion of my students did not have the typing skills required to adequately type their essays in the amount of time that was allowed. My students informed me that some of the tools on the writing tests didn't work properly. They mentioned the tab spaced the entire paragraph instead of only the first line. When my students took the practice test available through the Mississippi Department of Education's website the tab key didn't function properly as well.

I understand that there must be accountability, but so much emphasis is placed on state testing that my students must spend a substantial amount of time to prepare for the format and technology skills required to be successful on the state assessments. Our time would be better spent engaging in meaningful activities that are still aligned to the standards, but there is more freedom take time away from test preparation.

Sincerely,
In 75 minutes, my 9-10 year-olds must read a selection, read a prompt, determine which mode they should write, and write an appropriate response using textual evidence. They are assessed on the development of ideas, organization of their writing, their grammar, and mechanics. They must also have the keyboarding skills necessary to type their response in this time frame. When they complete this task, they must immediately repeat the task.

As a fourth grade language arts teacher, these are my concerns about the writing portion of the statewide assessment:

1. Doing one of these tasks is an exhausting task for most adults, let alone 9-10 year-olds. Asking them to do two of them back to back with no break in between is unfair. If we MUST have a field test item, why not give them more time to process the information?

2. If one of the goals of statewide assessment is to help guide the classroom teacher in planning instruction for students based on the results of the assessment, then we have failed. For each incoming class, I receive a vague score for each student. It is not broken down into standards. I do not get any of their essays back or even notes on how they were assessed. As a teacher, this "1 or 2" in grammar is useless to me.

3. This year's assessment in my classroom, I believe, has very little validity. We took the test on the day that Questar had a statewide glitch. I had students who were kicked out of the test for up to 30 minutes that had to continually try to keep signing in until it worked. Some students would sign back in only to be repeatedly kicked out. People were in and out of my room trying to help fix the computer problems while we were testing. We were allowed to retake, but when students logged in, we waited an hour in front of a computer screen waiting on a code to log in. How frustrating would it be to you as a student to have an exhausting task become even more so because of these glitches? How long would it take for you to just throw your hands up and say, "I'm done!"? How heartbreaking would it be as a teacher to see your students this frustrated and not be able to do anything about it knowing that your evaluation was tied to their scores?

I am all for some form of state-wide testing, but what we have done this year is beyond frustrating and disappointing. We should be better than this.
Our students are tested too much. This testing business causes students to hate school and they are only getting what they need for the test. Students are humans and should not be judged by a test score. Too many factors to consider. One state test a year will be enough and let teachers' do their jobs during the year. That job is to TEACH not TEST.
Please consider the fact that state tests are only a snapshot of what children can do. Many children do not perform well on a timed test. Also, someone should consider the fact that many children have no help at home; therefore comparing districts and schools are the same as labeling children and teachers.
To Whom It May Concern:

Per my district, my fifth-grade students were tested THREE TIMES this year to determine how well they were progressing with fifth-grade skills. (They were tested THREE TIMES in addition to the state and universal screeners they also had to do THREE TIMES--more than 45 hours of instructional time given to TESTING! But that's an e-mail for another day.) I also was required to administer the practice math test offered online by Questar. On each of these assessments, my students performed extremely well. They showed tremendous growth from the previous year and had very high levels of proficiency. Needless to say, expectations for my students were high.

On session 1 of the MAAP math test, my students met with--not 46 questions as were on the official practice test--but 55 QUESTIONS. And they had only 2 hours and 7 minutes in which to answer them!!! I understand that nine of the questions on session 1 were field-test questions that won't count for or against their scores, but since my students have no way of knowing which questions counted and which questions didn't count, they approached all of them the same way. I HAVE SEEN ADULTS WHO COULD NOT READ A PARAGRAPH IN TWO MINUTES!!! And yet, my fifth graders, who have worked SO HARD this year to make good progress in math, had to read, understand, work, AND answer complicated math problems with an average of only 2 minutes per question. I was (and am) incensed! After all of my and their hard work, they still couldn't show what they have accomplished because of a ridiculous, unrealistic time limit! Having said that, session 2 of the MAAP math test offered an average of 6 minutes per question, which was completely doable. Why is there such a discrepancy? WHY are actual educators not included in these decisions?!?

I am extremely hopeful that the testing task force will address this issue.

Thank you for your time.

5th Grade Teacher
Dear Test Task Force,

This is just my opinion, but I feel that students are tested way too much. We have diagnostics three times a year, Standards Mastery three times a year, weekly quizzes, then growth monitoring four times a year, and finally, the State Assessments. It barely gives teachers time to teach. I feel like I am always just preparing for a test, rather than enjoying teaching. The pacing is way too fast for the lower achieving students, and doesn't allow teachers time for thorough remediation without them falling further behind on other skills.

I don't think that all the assessments correctly reflect all students achievements. I know of a couple of particularly bright students who did not do well, because of test anxiety, or whatever, and then some lower achievers who "guessed" their way to growth. I know that happens in every school district, but it just demonstrates my point of not actually reflecting students mastery of skills. I'm not sure if there is a solution. But, that is why on my survey I disagreed with the assessment being evidence of mastery.

Sincerely,

3rd Grade Math Teacher,
Roseland Park Elementary, Picayune School District.
Too many district assessments were given throughout the year. It was hard to pull students for related services at various times because "testing do not disturb" signs were often placed on doors. Also, I do not believe that each student received the same allowable accommodations on the district tests as they did on the state tests. If they are using the district test to show growth throughout the year or to be an indicator of the end of the year state test performance then the results would not be accurate. If they are going to be given district test on the chrome books throughout the year, then the student deserves the appropriate testing accommodations. If not, this is an injustice to the students and it produces invalid testing results, not to mention unnecessary stress and frustration for the students being tested. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.
The survey did not show page 2 of 3 then would not let you submit because those questions were not answered.
To Whom it May Concern:

I just wanted to make a quick comment on the survey that might help in the future.

There should definitely be an "N/A" or "Not Applicable" option for some of the questions. Not all of us teach state tested subjects. For instance, I teach STEM, so it was difficult for me to figure out how to answer the question "Do you feel you have enough time to cover the required materials for your state tests?" or "How many hours do you spend in your classroom preparing your students for the test?"

My answers to those questions may skew the results because it may come across as if I am a state tested teacher who is spending no time preparing my students for their state test.

That being said, because I teach many lessons that are cross-curricular, I am helping to prepare them in state tested areas in some way or another. I indicated that on my survey.

Thanks for your time!
I would also like to add that I was not a teacher when the MCT2 was used, and I am a math teacher. Therefore, I chose not to answer the survey questions about whether the MAAP effectively assessed a student's writing skills or a student's ability to comprehend complex literature and the question comparing the MAAP to the MCT2. However, I was forced to choose an answer before I could submit my survey. I wish there could have been an option for those of us who simply do not have an opinion on the matter, since it doesn't apply to all teachers.

Thank you!
I got the original email. Nowhere in that original email does it say that the survey is anonymous.

On May 23, 2018, at 10:53 AM, Testing Task Force <testingtaskforce@mdek12.org> wrote:

The survey is anonymous. Below is a copy of the email MDE sent to principals and superintendents with a link to the survey.

Superintendents and principals,

In an effort to collect as much information as possible from teachers in every school district, the Mississippi Department of Education is sending you this survey to forward to your teachers.

The Mississippi Student Testing Task Force will receive a complete report of the survey results during its first meeting on June 19. We hope you will encourage them to participate in this 14-question survey. The deadline to complete it is Thursday, June 7.

Please note that this survey should not be shared publicly to ensure that only educators and not the general public responds. However, survey results will be shared publicly.

Teachers are also encouraged to send any additional thoughts and suggestions to the following email: testingtaskforce@mdek12.org. All comments sent to the email will be released online monthly.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your help is greatly appreciated.


Is the survey that sent us anonymous? If it is, it doesn’t say so in her email nor on the first question when you open they survey. If you want honest answers from teachers the survey participants
need to be guaranteed anonymity. Teachers do not trust MDE. Marla referred me to this email when I asked her about whether or not the survey was anonymous.

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There should be a not applicable option for some of the choices. Not all grade levels deal with MAAP.
I took the survey and found some questions unable to answer because:

A). Teachers are not allowed to be in the room with the test, read it, or even know what was on it.

B). Results of the test do not come out until students have already failed or passed the grade. We do not see questions they missed or get valuable instant feedback to help them grow from taking the test. It is only used by top officials to rank a fish's ability to climb tree.
The survey about state testing asked specific questions about MAAP without an option to choose "N/A" for those of us who do not teach 3rd-8th grades.

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