

Study: Students spent 19 hours on 2 Common Core tests



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(Photo: Getty Images/Fuse)

Students in grades 3-8 spent double the time they're supposed to on state math and English Language Arts exams this year, according to a local study.

When factoring in testing-related "costs" such as time spent setting up the classroom, reading directions and more, about 2 percent of a student's required annual instructional hours were spent on New York state math and ELA tests, according to a study by the Benjamin Center at [SUNY New Paltz](#).

On average, nearly 19 hours over six days were dedicated to the two tests, the study found. This is despite the fact that the state legislature set a 1-percent cap on the hours that can be dedicated to state tests, in comparison to students' required number of instructional hours each year.

"We need to be concerned about the amount of instructional time that is lost, and resources diverted, in this process," [researchers said](#) (<http://www.newpaltz.edu/media/the-benjamin-center/Time%20on%20Test%20-%20The%20Fixed%20Costs%20of%203-8%20Standardized%20Testing%20in%20New%20York%20State.pdf>). "When students are engaged in this testing process, they are not engaged in learning. And when teachers are engaged in this testing process, they are not engaged in teaching."

Jonathan Burman, a [New York State Education Department](#) spokesman, said testing must be limited to "the minimum needed for good decision-making.

"The Department has already shortened the tests, and the Commissioner is committed to further reductions going forward," Burman added via email. "We will continue to develop assessments that challenge students and provide their teachers and parents with important feedback — and do so within the parameters set by state and federal law."



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(<http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/story/news/local/new-york/2015/08/23/penalty-school-districts-opt-outs/32234319/>)

Many local parents are already concerned about tests, which have been aligned to the controversial Common Core since 2013. This year, nearly 6,500 [Dutchess County](#) public school students refused state math tests, while more than 5,600 refused ELA tests, according to school officials and state reports. Across the state, nearly 20 percent of students "opted-out" of the two tests, including 35 percent of Dutchess County's eligible students.

According to [state education law](#) (https://stateaid.nysed.gov/attendance/attendance_memo.htm), students in grades 3-6 are required to have at least five instructional hours each day, or 900 hours a year; 7-8 graders are expected to have 5.5 hours-a-day, or 990 hours a year. School districts must be in session for at least 180 days each year. A cap enacted by the legislature in 2014 limits the amount of annual instructional hours that can be dedicated to state tests to 1 percent, with another 1 percent limit for other standardized assessments.

The [math and ELA tests](#) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/sam/ei/eisam15rev.pdf>) are administered over six days. Grades 3-4 are given 70 minutes a day for testing; grades 5-8 have 90 minutes a day.

But the entire "testing process" took about three hours a day, according to the study. Teachers were asked to report on how much time they spent on testing-related activities. Some examples included 20 minutes to prep the room, 14 minutes to change locations for some students, 12 minutes to count and distribute tests, nine minutes to deliver instructions, and 17 minutes to collect, count and secure exams.

During the 2014-15 school year, students in grades 3-6 actually spent about 185 minutes a day on the exams, while 7-8 students spent about 189 minutes a day on exams. Over six days, that's an average of 1,122 minutes.

And these numbers are an "underestimation" of the amount of time really spent on state tests since it doesn't include science exams for grades 4-8, practice tests or test prep, researchers said.

Even students who don't take the exams are affected, the study found: Teachers reported that "testing permeated the entire school during testing weeks" and classrooms, gyms and libraries were used as assessment sites.

"Elected leaders and appointed policy makers have been talking about shortening the exams," researchers said. "We agree it is a good idea to reduce the time given to these tests. But ... reducing the duration of each test will have minimal effect; less time will be spent on each exam, but the fixed costs remain and will still detract from instruction on those days."

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