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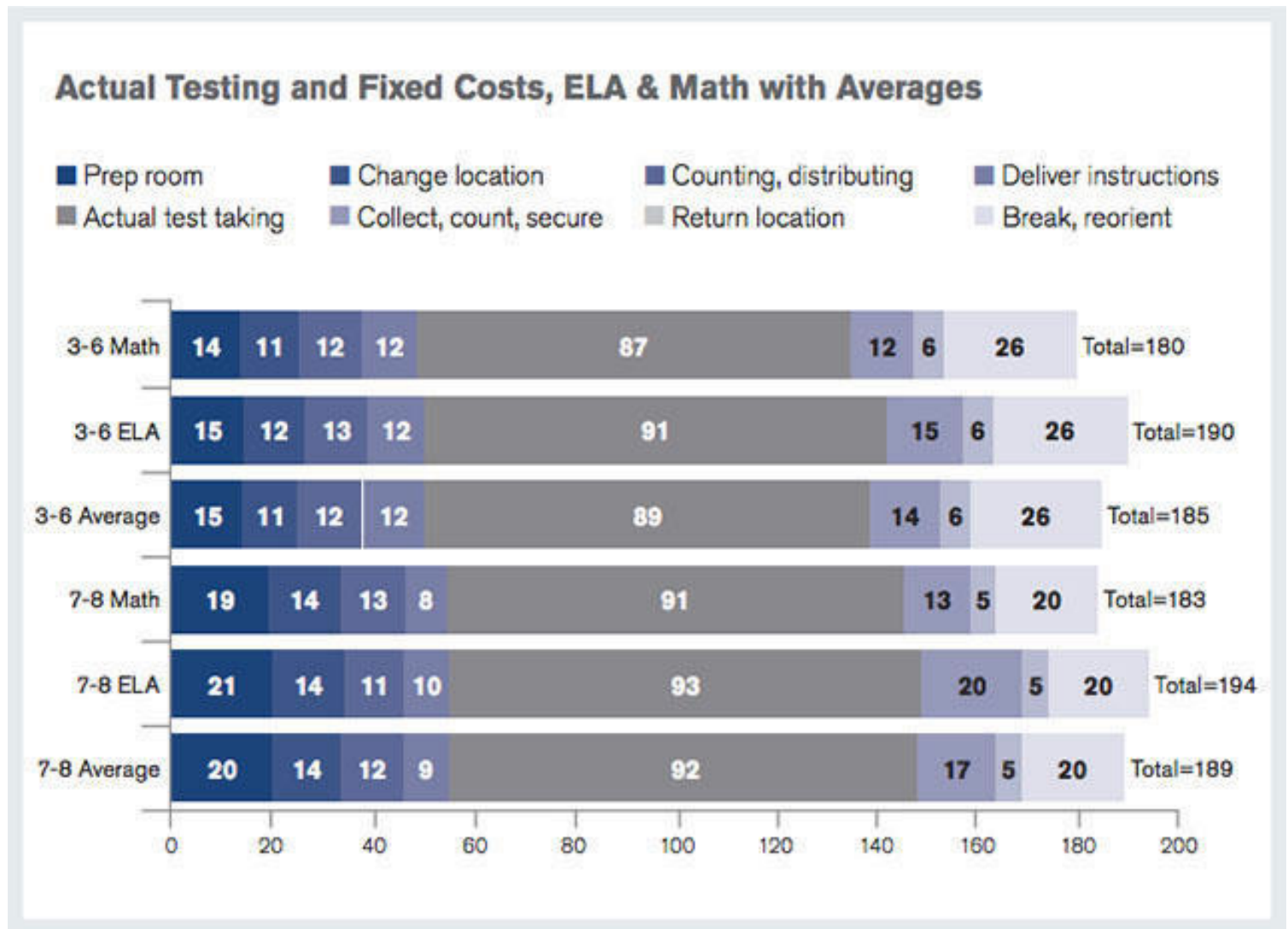
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'Fixed costs' double time spent on standardized tests

By [SOLVEJG WASTVEDT \(/PEOPLE/SOLVEJG-WASTVEDT\)](#) • DEC 3, 2015

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(http://wrvo.org/sites/wrvo.org/files/styles/x_large/public/201512/test-chart.jpg)

The new study "Time on Test" estimates the fixed costs of New York standardized testing.

"TIME ON TEST" THE BENJAMIN CENTER AT SUNY NEW PALTZ



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Changes to New York standardized testing are in the air. Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Common Core Task Force

finished its public sessions last month examining the state's standards and testing program, and Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia has already pledged to shorten math and English Language Arts (ELA) exams.

According to the New York Times, Cuomo may be ready to de-link tests and evaluations (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/nyregion/cuomo-in-shift-is-said-to-back-reducing-test-scores-role-in-teacher-reviews.html?_r=0) entirely. In the midst of it all, though, a new study from SUNY New Paltz (<http://www.newpaltz.edu/media/the-benjamin-center/Time%20on%20Test%20-%20The%20Fixed%20Costs%20of%203-8%20Standardized%20Testing%20in%20>) urges the state to re-think how it calculates time spent on tests.

Study co-author Robin Jacobowitz says testing takes more time in schools than we realize. The report estimates the “fixed costs” of testing: extra chunks of time used to prepare and get students back on track after the exam.

“They’re little increments. You know, you have just 14 minutes to prep the room and 12 minutes to deliver instructions, but they add up,” Jacobowitz says. “Things add up.”

It adds up to about an hour-and-a-half extra on an average test day for teachers in grades three through eight. According to the study, that’s more time than is used for the tests themselves. Jacobowitz says one of the teachers she surveyed reported more subtle effects, too.

“She was like, ‘My second graders can’t walk past the third grade wing on the way to lunch because we might disrupt them, so we have to go all the way around,’” Jacobowitz recalls, “And, ok, fine, so you walk all the way around the school, but it sends the message that the testing is the most important thing that is happening on these six days.”

The recent state efforts to trim tests for third through eighth graders wouldn’t shrink those fixed costs because they happen every day a test is given, regardless of its length. Jacobowitz wants the state to look at other ways to re-work the testing program.

“I’m not sure it needs to be three days ELA, three days math in every single grade, every single year,” she says. “I think we can be smarter about that.”

Elia is currently looking for further revisions to testing and state standards with a taskforce of her own. Cuomo plans to release results from his Common Core Task Force in his January budget address.

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