

# Ohio Student Assessments

Standardized student assessments are a valuable tool for learning and measuring academic growth and achievement. While standardized testing has been a tool used by both LEAs and departments of education for more than a century, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 introduced national standards-based testing and mandated annual testing in third through eighth grade as well as once in high school. In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) modified national testing requirements with the goal of administering fewer tests of a higher quality. The federal acts include expectations of accountability, increased flexibility, and expanded federal aid for specific programs.

LEAs use assessments for a variety of purposes, beyond simply meeting federal requirements. These tests inform districts about student progress and, when needed, indicate when they should provide additional student support. The results of assessment also help guide and strengthen future teaching through additional training and changes to curriculum. Finally, they help the LEA communicate to citizens how their schools perform compared to others in the state.

## Background

In Ohio, the State Board of Education has adopted learning standards in several subject areas including mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies.<sup>1</sup> These standards outline knowledge and skills students should attain by grade level and subject matter with a focus on preparing school children for success beyond high school graduation. Standards are reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure they remain suitable and appropriate. Standardized student assessments are one way of tracking academic achievement of these learning standards, and the State Board of Education is required to establish a statewide assessment program,<sup>2</sup> which is implemented by ODE. In some cases, the General Assembly may also pass legislation on standardized student assessment to include or remove an assessment beyond those required by the federal government.



### NOTE TO REPORT USERS:

Due to the state of emergency resulting from COVID-19, Spring 2020 state assessments were cancelled. At the time of this report, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 state assessments are scheduled to be administered.

The federal government has identified minimum testing requirements based on subject area and grade levels. Ohio's statewide assessment program is approved by the United States Department of Education (US DoE) for compliance with federal regulations, and it also satisfies testing requirements as defined in Ohio Revised Code (ORC).<sup>3</sup> The ESSA and prior federal

<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to ORC §3301.079

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to ORC §3301.0710

<sup>3</sup> Ohio testing requirements are identified in ORC §3301.0710 and ORC §3301.0712 and Federal testing requirements are identified in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Public Law 114-95, 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, December 10, 2015.

requirements were promulgated to ensure that students in the United States received an appropriate quality of education in grades K-12.

The assessments, which are developed by ODE with significant input from Ohio instructional personnel and other stakeholders and experts, are administered by LEAs and are graded by ODE.<sup>4</sup> Developing and implementing statewide assessments is an evolving process. From changes in testing delivery due to technological advances to updating test questions to ensure fairness to all Ohio students, ODE is constantly reviewing how students are assessed in Ohio. Additionally, changes to federal or state requirements associated with education may necessitate large scale changes in testing procedures, such as the addition or removal of a particular test.

In order to meet the demands associated with statewide testing development and implementation, ODE contracts with a third party vendor which provides a variety of support services related to test development and implementation as well as the technological administration of assessments. These services include the following:

- **Testing Platform:** includes web-based testing systems and a test delivery system that is compatible with most operating systems, allowing districts to use existing infrastructure to access assessments;
- **Technical Support:** allows for testing information to be saved as a student progresses and troubleshooting and technical support is available during testing times from the vendor; and,
- **Test Development:** supports ODE in the development of testing structure and questions by creating potential questions based on Ohio learning standards, field testing sample questions, and scoring and reviewing field tested questions for inclusion in the State's assessment item bank.

## Why We Looked At This

The ability to measure student achievement can hold great value for ODE and the LEAs. Developing and implementing statewide tests is resource intensive and represents a significant investment and commitment in terms of public dollars and student and district time. Though there appears to be a shared understanding among stakeholders on the use of assessments to meet federal requirements, as well as the goals and desired outcomes of the student assessment program, there does not appear to be a shared understanding of the benefits of the assessment program among stakeholders.<sup>5</sup> In FY 2019 nearly \$46 million was spent on ODE's contract with their testing vendor. The vendor provided several key services including:

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<sup>4</sup> ORC §3301.0711

<sup>5</sup> Responses to the AOS survey of superintendents conducted as a component of this audit included a range of reactions and commentary on the student assessment process indicating a potential gap in shared understanding of the benefits of the assessment process. However, ODE noted that this may also reflect the natural tension between ODE and districts surrounding the assessment process as the results have a role in oversight and accountability. Therefore, some of the gap may represent disagreement on how assessment information is used by ODE in the report card process.

- **Test Administration:** Create test administration materials including development of manuals for administrators, operate an Ohio specific help desk for LEA troubleshooting, provide directions for setting up test sessions (\$17.6 million);
- **Scoring and Reporting:** Electronically score all state assessments and provide reports to ODE and LEAs to be used in assessing student progress (\$12.5 million); and
- **Test Development:** Generate potential test questions and other elements and manage field testing and review for inclusion in future statewide assessments (\$9.5 million).

The remaining funds were spent on project management, technology, and public engagement. We reviewed this functional area within ODE to ensure the process was efficient, effective, and economic due to the significant investment of state dollars in the process.

Additionally, local superintendents, both anecdotally and through our survey often complain that testing takes up too much of a student’s time and detracts from general classroom time. However, our data analysis showed this not to be the case based on federal and state requirements.

## What We looked At

We reviewed ODE’s process of developing and implementing statewide assessments compared to standards set by the US DoE. Because the overwhelming majority of students take their assessments electronically, ODE’s test delivery systems were an area of study as well. We also surveyed LEA officials, particularly those from traditional school districts, in order to understand what areas of concern existed for educators in relation to statewide assessments.

## What We Found

While we reviewed the differences in assessment requirements between states, we found that generally states elect to implement the minimum amount of testing outlined by the federal government. Because Ohio’s testing requirements were similar to other states based on federal requirements, we did not conduct a comprehensive state assessment peer comparison study. However, in the **Issue for Further Study**, there is a limited comparison to the six most comparable states based on total population.

We reviewed the development and implementation of student assessments in Ohio and found that ODE is presently meeting best practices for testing development and implementation as identified by US DoE. These practices include developing assessments that are fair, in-line with classroom teaching, and demonstrate ability. The implementation of assessments should ensure students have appropriate access to technology, are comfortable with necessary technology, and that test are administered in a controlled environment. (See **Appendix C** for full list of best practices and information on how ODE works to meet these standards).

Last, we found that, over time, ODE has trended from recommending national standardized tests, to using a consortia (a purchasing group) which may have reduce the costs of custom tests. However, several years ago, ODE left the consortia as ORC 3301.078, implemented in 2015 prohibited ODE from continuing its participation in the PARCC consortia. This prohibition was

the result of controversy surrounding the PARCC focus on Common Core standards and the General Assembly's interest in migration toward Ohio specific educational standards. Though Ohio has changed the type, number, and level of customization of its standardized tests over the last 10 years, the General Assembly, through ODE, has not analyzed the costs associated with the number and type of tests used or brokered a shared understanding among lawmakers and other stakeholders on the goals of the tests and how the results are applied. The cost/benefit of more refined, Ohio-educational standard specific tests has not been fully explored

## Development

ODE has an assessment development process that takes between two to three years. It begins with the identification of learning standards which are used to develop what skills or knowledge the assessment will measure. ODE's third party vendor drafts test items<sup>6</sup> to be used in the assessment based on development goals agreed upon by ODE and the vendor. These test items are reviewed and edited by ODE as needed during the process. ODE also seeks advice from a wide range of stakeholders, primarily educators and other individuals who are familiar with the Ohio Learning Standards, to support the development of test items. These stakeholders may serve on one of four committees:

- **Content Advisory:** to review and ensure each question is valid and an appropriate measure of learning standards for each subject area and grade level;
- **Standard Setting:** to produce recommended scoring levels to measure student performance on each assessment;
- **Fairness and Sensitivity:** to ensure each question is fair and unbiased for Ohio students and confirms that questions do not promote or require individual moral, social, or personal beliefs; and,
- **Range-Finding:** to review scoring guidelines for test questions that are open ended.

Once a test item has been reviewed and approved by each committee, it is field tested for quality and appropriateness by including it in a regular state assessment. Items that are in field testing are given to a sample of students in similar testing environments and are not counted towards a student's official test score, but responses are used to determine the appropriateness and fairness of a question. Items that are deemed appropriate after field testing are put into an item bank which contains all eligible test items that may be used to build future tests. The creation of individual test items is outlined in ODE's Item Development Sequence which is found on their website.<sup>7</sup>

## Implementation

More than 95.0 percent of all statewide assessments are taken online, which requires both hardware and software.<sup>8</sup> In Ohio, LEAs are responsible for providing the hardware, such as a

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<sup>6</sup> Test items are anything that is approved for use in assessments. While primarily test questions, items may also include visual elements used in science and mathematics tests as well as passages and excerpts used for English language arts tests.

<sup>7</sup> [education.ohio.gov/Topics/Testing/Assessment-Committees](http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Testing/Assessment-Committees)

<sup>8</sup> Districts have an option to use paper and pencil tests in third grade.

computer or tablet, for taking the exam while ODE's third party vendor maintains the software which is used to deliver the exam materials to the students.

The third party vendor provides a platform with three main systems: test distribution, test delivery, and test reporting. The three systems work together to provide a seamless transfer of information from the registration of a student, through the examination process, and ultimately resulting in a scoring report. While the platform requires software to administer the test to a student, this software is designed to be compatible with most devices and operating systems. Additionally, the other systems on the platform, test distribution and test reporting, are web-based, which allow administrators and test coordinators to access them through a secure log-in when needed.

Because the hardware required to administer online tests is provided by districts, ODE has worked with LEAs to identify issues that may arise due to lack of access to technology, such as limited bandwidth or lack of sufficient devices for administering assessments. ODE has indicated that 99 percent of statewide assessments are now completed online and our survey results indicated that more than 80.0 percent of district respondents felt that their district had sufficient technology to administer statewide assessments.<sup>9</sup>

While ODE meets the identified best practices for both assessment development and implementation, our analysis highlighted two areas of opportunity related to operational efficiency and effectiveness:

- **Recommendation 2.1:** ODE should more clearly convey the purpose and importance of specific standardized tests to stakeholders in an effort to improve shared understanding of testing benefits. Though natural tension exists because tests are used to ensure accountability, ODE could potentially enhance district buy in on the benefits of test data; and,
- **Recommendation 2.2:** ODE should identify and collect available data from the practice test website to use in future decision making.
- **Issue for Further Study:** The General Assembly, supported by ODE and the Governor's Office, should examine the cost of student assessment design, and implementation, scoring, and consider developing general agreement around the student assessment process and assessment results application. Though Ohio has changed the type, number, and level of customization of its standardized tests over the last 10 years, the General Assembly, through ODE, has not analyzed the costs associated with the number and type of tests used or brokered a shared understanding among lawmakers and other stakeholders on the goals of the tests and how the results are applied.

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<sup>9</sup> Responses indicated that some LEAs claim updating devices as the Test Delivery System was upgraded is cost prohibitive.

## Recommendation 2.1: Stakeholder Communication

ODE should more clearly convey the purpose and importance of specific standardized tests to stakeholders in an effort to improve shared understanding of testing goals. Both the federal and state government require student assessments in order to track the effectiveness of public education against specific achievement metrics. While ODE administers tests based on these requirements, we found that the majority of LEA officials felt that testing requirements were too time-consuming at all grade levels. By improving communication about student assessments, the federal and state requirements and the time investments expected of school districts, ODE might be able to improve LEA officials’ awareness about the benefits of and support of the assessment process. Though natural tension exists because tests are used to ensure accountability, ODE could potentially enhance district buy in on the benefits of test data.

### Background

Standardized testing is a requirement of both federal and state law. These tests are designed in such a way as to gauge student progress towards reaching identified learning standards. In Ohio, the content and format of assessments have changed over time in order to address updates to the Ohio Learning Standards. Currently, the ESSA addresses testing in grades 3-8 and 9-12. Ohio’s assessment schedule is shown below.

#### Grades 3-8

In compliance with the ESSA and ORC, public school students in Ohio begin taking statewide assessments in third grade. Elementary and middle school students take tests in English language arts and mathematics annually from third to eighth grade and take two science exams, one in fifth grade and one in eighth grade. The current assessment schedule for grades three through eight in Ohio include no additional tests beyond those which are federally required.

#### Grades 3-8 Assessment Schedule

	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science
Grade 3	✓	✓	
Grade 4	✓	✓	
Grade 5	✓	✓	✓
Grade 6	✓	✓	
Grade 7	✓	✓	
Grade 8	✓	✓	✓

Source: ODE

#### Grades 9-12

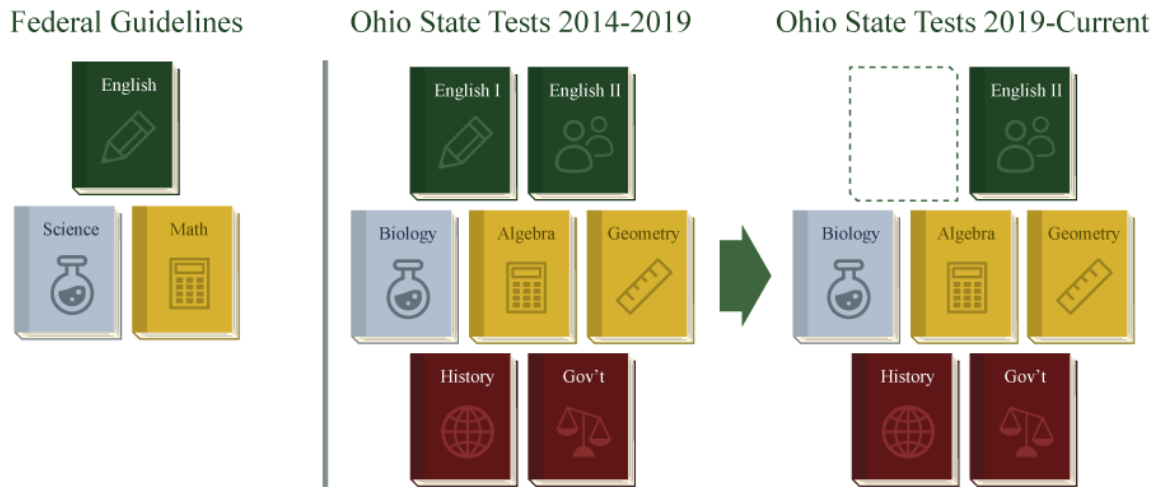
Students who began ninth grade after July 1, 2014 are required to take a series of tests known as the College and Work Ready Assessments (CWRA).<sup>10</sup> These assessments are defined in ORC and have been developed with input from both business leaders and representatives from State colleges and universities. The CWRA replace the Ohio Graduation Tests which were a graduation requirement for students who entered ninth grade prior to July 1, 2014.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> ORC §3301.0712

<sup>11</sup> The Ohio Graduation Tests were created under ORC §3301.0710 to replace the ninth grade proficiency tests. The first reading and math OGT were administered to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2004 and the first science, social studies, and writing tests were administered to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2005. The first exam that counted toward graduation was



## Testing Requirements Grades 9 through 12



Source: ORC and ESSA

The initial set of CWRA included seven end-of-course tests, including two in language arts, two in mathematics, two in social studies, and one in science. For students who enter ninth grade on or after July 1, 2019, one language arts exam has been eliminated.

While there are standard testing requirements under the CWRA, any student enrolled in an advanced course,<sup>12</sup> such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate may use scores from those classes in lieu of the CWRA testing requirement in science,<sup>13</sup> American history, and American government.

For students entering ninth grade after July 1, 2019, Ohio requires two tests beyond those which are federally required. However, by allowing for alternatives to the end-of-course exams for students in an advanced course, some students may only be required to take two statewide assessments, which would be fewer than the number required by the federal government.

In addition to changing the types and number of tests required for grades 9 through 12, Ohio has also worked to reduce the high-stakes nature of statewide assessments. Only two of the current assessments are considered graduation requirements, and ODE has identified alternative pathways to graduation for those individuals who may be unable to pass one or both of the assessments.

given in March 2005 effective for the class of 2007. “**State High School Exit Exams: A Move Toward End-of-Course Exams.**” *Center on Education Policy (The George Washington University)*, August 13, 2008, accessed September 30, 2020, [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

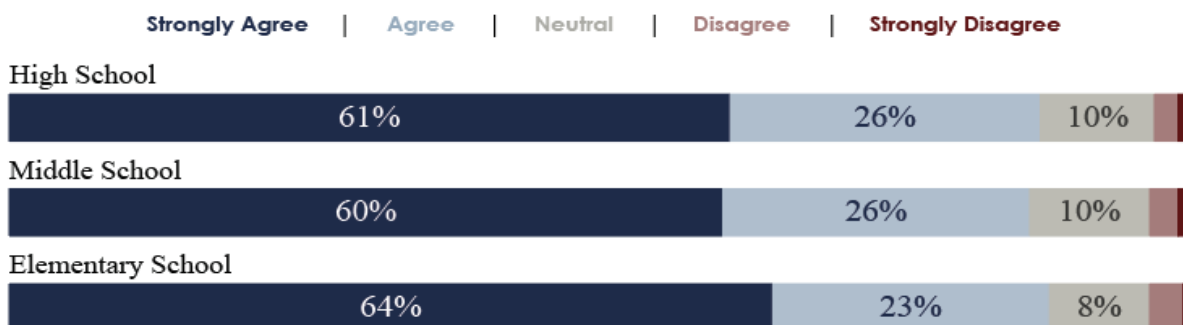
<sup>12</sup> ORC §3313.6013 defines advance standing programs for high school students.

<sup>13</sup> For graduation purposes, a student must take the Science end-of-course exam for federal accountability purposes.

## Methodology and Analysis

In addition to examining Ohio’s test schedule relative to the federal requirements, we developed and conducted a survey regarding student assessment that was sent to 599 traditional school administrators and received 251 total responses (41.9% response rate). The survey addressed three critical issues related to student assessments: Development, Implementation, and Technology. The survey also collected information regarding how testing was perceived to impact student achievement. Responses to these surveys were assessed using a Likert Scale which ranks question responses by preference. We found that the LEAs overwhelmingly felt that, not only were state assessments not the best indicator of student success, but that students spent too much time on assessments, as seen in the graphic below.

“Students are being tested too much.”



Source: AOS

### Testing Time Limits

US DoE states that it is up to states and districts to determine how to balance instructional time with the need for high-quality assessments and recommends that states place a cap on the percentage of time students spend taking required statewide assessments to less than 2.0 percent of instructional time to ensure that students do not spend time testing at the expense of regular education. Ohio has acknowledged this recommendation and has set a cap of 2.0 percent of total instructional time for the amount of time that may be spent on statewide assessments as well as district-wide assessments as identified in ORC §3301.0729. In order to assist LEAs, ODE issued guidance in December 2017 which outlined legislative requirements relating to testing time limits and provided a workbook to help calculate testing time for students.<sup>14</sup>

We calculated the amount of time spent on statewide assessments at each grade level where testing was required. This analysis was conducted based on the minimum required instructional hours at each grade level and those tests which are administered by ODE. While ODE cannot control standardized assessments that a district may choose to implement beyond the statewide assessments, we found that students at all grade levels spend less than 1.0 percent of the available instruction time on tests administered by ODE.

LEAs have local control and may choose to provide additional instructional hours in which case, the percentage of time spent on standardized testing would decrease. LEAs may also choose to

<sup>14</sup> Guidance on 2 percent limit for time spent on state or district testing, found here: [ODE Guidance Document](#).



administer additional testing which would increase the amount of time students spend on testing.<sup>15</sup> However, the decision making authority rests with the local Board of Education and not with ODE.

## Testing Time vs Classroom Time

	<b>Total Hours of Test Time</b>	<b>Total Minimum Instructional Hours Required Per Year</b>	<b>Percentage of Classroom Time Being Spent Taking Standardized Tests</b>
Grade 3	8.5	910	<b>0.93%</b>
Grade 4	5.5	910	<b>0.60%</b>
Grade 5	8	910	<b>0.88%</b>
Grade 6	6.5	910	<b>0.71%</b>
Grade 7	6.5	1001	<b>0.65%</b>
Grade 8	9	1001	<b>0.90%</b>
Grades 9-12	28	4004	<b>0.70%</b>

Source: ODE

Note: Because high school assessments can be taken in various years, we combined the required assessments for all grade levels.

Because high school assessments may be taken in various years, we also calculated the hours a high school student taking a math, English language arts, science, and history/government assessment in the same year would spend on testing as a percentage of the total minimum instructional time in that year. That percentage would be 1.25 percent. This analysis is based on both the minimum instructional hours required by ODE as well as only the tests required by ODE.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

Districts representatives responded to the survey that they are testing each age group too much, however the amount of time spent on state administered assessments is below 2.0 percent of classroom time as recommended by ED and required by ORC §3301.0729. Additionally, superintendents did not view the student assessments as the best measure of achievement. ODE should continue to communicate the reasoning and requirements for student assessments to LEA representatives as well as parents and students. Feedback from LEAs should be taken into account when determining if assessments beyond those which are federally required is proper and adequate.

<sup>15</sup> ORC §3301.0729(C) allows LEAs to administer standardized assessments in addition to those administered by ODE.

<sup>16</sup> ORC §3313.48 identifies the minimum instructional hours for each grade level.

## Recommendation 2.2: Practice Assessment Data

ODE should identify key metrics related to the practice assessment website such as user log-in data, amount of time spent on the website, and the types of assessments accessed. Data related to these metrics should be collected and analyzed for use in future decision making.

Specific user data, including individual log-ins and the amount of time spent on the website, can be used to provide guidance to LEAs in order to ensure compliance with relevant state law regarding standardized assessments. ODE should explore what additional data is available from the test site vendor and how it might be applied to future decision-making.

### Background

Practice assessments are available through ODE's website that mimic the State's official testing system. The intention of the site is to allow students to build confidence and develop a comfort level with the login process and general online testing environment. This website is available to the general public and does not require a unique log-in to access information. Samples of Ohio's State Tests, the Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities, and the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment are all available on this practice site. The practice test site allows test administrators and students to become familiar with both the navigation and content of state assessments prior to assessments being administered. While the website has helped students and faculty to become familiar with the software used by the state, ODE does not regularly track the website's traffic.

### Methodology and Analysis

During the course of our interviews with ODE administrators, the existence of the practice test site was brought to our attention.<sup>17</sup> In addition to setting a cap of how much time students can spend testing, there is also a cap on the amount of time students may spend taking practice or diagnostic exams. ORC §3301.0729 limits the amount of time spent taking practice or diagnostic exams to prepare for standardized assessments to 1.0 percent of annual instruction time. We requested additional information regarding this website to better understand how it was being maintained and used by ODE, LEAs, and the general public.

ODE has historically been able to track how many students log onto the system using user IDs. Between September 1, 2019 and June 18, 2020, the Department indicated that there were approximately 18,000 log-ins using IDs. However, the system also allows for guest log-ins, which are not currently tracked.

Meaningful and accurate data is a critical component to strategic business decisions. While ODE has historically refrained from tracking significant user data, this information is available and could be used to assist LEAs and to guide future Departmental decision making related to assessments. Some of the data that could be collected for further analysis includes:

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<sup>17</sup> During the course of the audit, ODE launched a new practice test site with additional data collection capabilities.

- District level data regarding the number of users logging into the practice website;
- The amount of time spent on the practice site by individual users; and,
- The specific tests accessed by users.

This data could be used for a variety of purposes, including identifying opportunities to improve the Ohio student assessment platform to ensure it remains equitable in its accessibility and high-quality. Additionally, monitoring the use of the practice website would allow ODE to help ensure LEAs remain in compliance with ORC requirements regarding practice and diagnostic exams. ODE could also use this information to identify what LEAs are and are not accessing practice assessments in order to determine any trends related to usage of the website.

## Conclusion

There are multiple benefits that could come from regularly tracking key metrics, such as log-in data, amount of time spent on the website, and which practice exams are accessed, on ODE's practice test website. Identifying who is logging into the practice website would allow ODE to assist LEAs in complying with ORC §3301.0729 and tracking this information would allow ODE to better understand the usefulness of the practice test website for LEAs. Further, this information could be used to identify potential areas for future enhancements within the test delivery system. These efforts could lead to improved stakeholder perception about the utility and importance of the student assessment system.

## Issue for Further Study

Our audit also identified an area for additional study that should be undertaken by the General Assembly, with support from the Department and Governor's Office. This issue concerns the cost of student assessment design, implementation, scoring, and assessment results application. The General Assembly and ODE should work to achieve general agreement on the benefits and desired outcomes of the student assessment process. In ORC 3301.078, ODE is prohibited by the General Assembly from continuing its participation in the PARCC consortia or ceding control of the development of state standards to any third-party. This prohibition was the result of controversy surrounding the PARCC focus on Common Core standards and the General Assembly's interest in migration toward Ohio specific educational standards and had the potential to increase the cost of assessment development, delivery and scoring.

Though Ohio has changed the type, number, and level of customization of its standardized tests over the last 10 years, the General Assembly, through ODE, has not analyzed the costs associated with the number and type of tests used or brokered a shared understanding among lawmakers and other stakeholders on the goals of the tests and how the results are applied. The cost/benefit of more refined, Ohio-educational standard specific tests has not been fully explored and, therefore, the General Assembly and ODE should pursue additional analysis on this topic to demonstrate if the higher cost investment reflects the desired benefits. Additionally, ODE should continually evaluate its student assessment expenditures in relation to the services it receives from vendors and evaluate options for assessment development. This information should be routinely shared with members of the General Assembly and other stakeholders (as appropriate). Last, the General Assembly should ensure it is clear in its expectations of ODE, in standards adoption, test development, administration and outcomes; and LEAs in student preparation and application of test results.

As presented in **R2.1**, Ohio's assessment schedule for grades 3-8 is consistent with federal requirements. However, the assessment schedule for high schools exceeds federal requirements but complies with state standards outlined in ORC. We compared Ohio's assessments schedules to those of six peer states<sup>18</sup> to determine if Ohio's assessment schedule was consistent with other states. We found the following:

- **In Grades 3-8:**
  - Four states have the same assessment schedule as Ohio.<sup>19</sup>
  - Two states require additional social studies assessments, Georgia in eighth grade and Michigan in fifth and eighth grades.
- **In Grades 9-12:**
  - Ohio requires seven assessments, including the ACT or SAT, at the high school level.
  - The peer average is six.
  - Two states (New York and Pennsylvania) require additional assessments at the high school level beyond what is required in Ohio.

<sup>18</sup> Peer states include Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

<sup>19</sup> Ohio recently eliminated the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade social studies assessments and the English I exam.

- Four states (Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, and North Carolina) require fewer assessments than Ohio.
- Ohio requires eleventh graders to take either the ACT or SAT exam, as well as English and math assessments. North Carolina does the same.
- Illinois and Michigan require ACT or SAT exams in lieu of English and math assessments.

The Assessment Solutions Group 2018 State Assessment Survey<sup>20</sup> found that Ohio's student assessment costs, in comparison to national averages and other states, ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in cost for math, ELA and writing, and 21<sup>st</sup> in total costs on a per student basis. These costs were \$24.02 and \$54.82 respectively. These costs reflect favorable on ODE's efforts to conduct aggressive cost negotiations with its vendors and focus on controlling cost inflation as much as possible. Compared to cost data reported in *Strength in Numbers State Spending on State Assessments* (Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings, 2012), which reported that Ohio spent \$42 per pupil on student assessments in 2012. At that time, this was significantly higher the peer average of \$17 per pupil.

Between 2012 and 2018, the student assessment landscape has changed since significantly. Federal and state expectations have changed; states have migrated to custom testing to better align with state-specific curriculum; and consortia (a multi-state purchasing group) have declined in size and number due to states leaving PARCC and other multi-state purchasing groups. Overall, most states using standardized tests in 2012 have adopted more bespoke assessment tools in the last 8 years in order to align with specific state-level educational standards. In 2015, like Ohio, many other states left the PARCC consortia and developed strategies of state-specific educational standards and corresponding tests so the recreation of a consortia would require time investment and political agreement on educational standards among participating states.

Student assessments are used in a variety of ways by ODE and LEAs. The results may be used as follows:

- Monitor student progress and, when needed, provide additional student support. For example, if a student performs below average on a reading test, additional reading support and intervention might be provided to that student.
- Guide and strengthen future teaching through additional training and changes to curriculum. Areas of low performance within a district (across a grade band) might lead the district to examine its curricula and training to ensure alignment with state curriculum standards and best practices in teacher training.

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<sup>20</sup> ASG put all states on common footing in reporting the state assessment cost numbers. It used ESSA mandated grades (3-8, plus one year of high school) and domains (math, reading, writing). Assessments that are also used for accountability purposes are factored into the cost calculations for the appropriate grade(s). Extra grades tested in math/reading, writing and science were excluded from cost figures except in calculating the total assessment spending per student number. ASG cost figures are therefore, potentially lower than what others report as spending on consortia equivalent assessments

- Communicate to citizens how their schools perform compared to others in the state. By explaining to stakeholders the multiple purposes of the student assessment program, additional buy-in for the process may be generated.
- Serve as a component of holistic district and school level assessments that include both formative and summative components.<sup>21</sup>

Although LEAs commonly use assessment results, the application of these results might be enhanced through more formal guidance from ODE. In the case of districts that struggle academically, this process could be used to guide assessment data application to enhance student performance over time.<sup>22</sup> This additional support from ODE might enhance district appreciation for and understanding of the student assessment process.

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<sup>21</sup> Formative assessments *monitor student learning* to provide ongoing feedback and can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. Summative assessments *evaluate student learning* at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.

<sup>22</sup> ODE indicated that its Regional Data Leads are currently performing some of this work.



# Appendix C: Ohio Student Assessments

Below are best practices associated with both the implementation and development of standardized assessments. ODE has provided information regarding each practice in regards to how the Department works to meet the stated criteria.

## Implementation Best Practices

US DoE Best Practices	US DoE Language	ODE Evidence
<i>Build technological capacity to ensure secure administration of Computer Based Testing (CBT).</i>	Some schools lack sufficient computers, electrical hookups or other capacities needed to administer CBT assessments to all of their students simultaneously.	If districts are unable to deliver tests online due to technological inaccessibility, the Department does work individually with those districts to assist them. Currently, approximately 99.5% of assessments are able to be taken online in Ohio.
<i>Develop standard policies and procedures for test administration.</i>	Panelists advised that states and school districts should prepare administrators with simulated CBT, and provide clear protocols and help-desk support.	A practice test site is available for districts that mimics the operational testing site. This provides test administrators and students the ability to become familiar with both the navigation and content on the state tests well before any student takes the test.
<i>Ensure students are comfortable with a CBT format.</i>	Once the format becomes routine, it will provide numerous advantages over traditional paper-and-pencil testing, especially in terms of improved test security measures.	Based on the survey responses, it is in wide agreement that the school districts believe the majority of students are comfortable with the current CBT format
<i>Train and certify principals and teachers in administering and interpreting academic assessments.</i>	Proper training and professional development at all levels is crucial in creating a healthy testing culture.	Based on the survey responses, it is in wide agreement that the school districts believe that assessment proctors are adequately trained to administer the assessments.
<i>Develop standard policies and procedures for test administration.</i>	Clear policies, procedures, and protocols regarding test administration are essential to prevent misconduct.	The Ohio Department of Education releases a Test Administration Manual every year in accordance to this best practice. It includes the policies and procedures necessary for proper test administration.

*Keep testing windows short.*

All students should be taking the test at the same time or close to the same time as possible

The Ohio Department of Education sets forth a testing window in which each test must be given. It is a relatively short time frame for each grade level to complete their tests.

*Administer tests in controlled environments.*

Tests should be administered in controlled and secure environments that limit access to curricular materials, resources, and other visuals that could aid students.

The Ohio Department of Education's Assessment Administration document offers guidelines on administering state tests in a controlled environment.

*Remove testing materials from the testing location immediately and score them off-site.*

School officials should remove testing materials from the testing location immediately following test administration and score tests off-site to prevent tampering with answer sheets.

ODE currently conducts 95.5% of their assessments online. Online assessments are immediately uploaded to be scored off-site by Cambium and ODE as per the Request for Proposal.

Source: US DoE and ODE

## Assessment Development Best Practices

<b>US DoE Best Practices</b>	<b>US DoE Language</b>	<b>ODE Evidence</b>
<i>In-Line with Classroom Instruction</i>	Testing should be a part of good instruction, not a departure from it. A good assessment is aligned to the content and skills a student is learning, and it requires the same kind of complex work students do in an effective classroom – or in the real world.	Districts, schools, and classroom teachers use student test data to examine performance results and trends that can then be used to inform instruction, local curriculum, and programs.
<i>Demonstrate Ability</i>	Assessment systems should measure student knowledge and skills against state-developed college- and career-ready standards in a way that, as appropriate.	The federal peer review process for state assessments requires states to provide evidence that their tests provide valid and reliable information on how well students are achieving a state's challenging academic standards to prepare all students for success in college and careers.

*Time-Limited*

While it is up to states and districts how to balance instructional time and the need for high-quality assessments, we recommend that states place a cap on the percentage of instructional time students spend taking required statewide standardized assessments to ensure that no child spends more than 2 percent of her classroom time taking these tests.

By summing the total amount of time students spend taking assessments at each grade level from the Spring Test Administration Manual, and then dividing that by ODE's minimum classroom instructional time, AOS found each grade level is spending well below the benchmark 2% outlined by USDE.

*Fair*

Assessments should be fair, including providing fair measures of student learning for students with disabilities and English learners.

Test Development Committees consisting of Ohio educators, parents, and community members review and evaluate test questions to ensure that each question is fair, unbiased, and does not promote individual moral values.

*Fully Transparent to Students and Guardians*

States and districts should ensure that every parent gets understandable information about the assessments their students are taking, by providing information to parents on any tests students are required to take.

The state provides printed hardcopy individual student reports to families. These reports show students' test scores, performance levels, and relative strength and weakness. The reports also provide general guidelines on what parents can do to help students and where to seek help if needed. Family Reports Interpretive Guides are provided and designed to help families understand the content of the score reports and what the results mean for their student.

In addition, translated Family Interpretive Guides are available in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese to assist parents who are speakers of languages other than English.

*Just One of Multiple Measures*

Assessments provide critical information about student learning, but no single assessment should ever be the sole factor in making an educational decision about a student, an educator, or a school. Information from sources such as school assignments, portfolios, and projects can help measure a student's academic performance.

In many ways, schools are required and encouraged to use multiple measures when making high-stakes decisions. The local report cards include student attendance rate, high school graduation rate, percent of highly qualified teachers, and other measures in the decision of district and school grade ratings.

*Tied to Improved Learning*

While some tests are for accountability purposes only, the vast majority of assessments should be tools in a broader strategy to improve teaching and learning.

Classroom teachers use state test results to determine where instruction is being effective and where they need to strengthen their teaching.

Source: US DoE and ODE