

In summary, which I explain further below, I recommend the following to the state draft-

1. **Reduce the state required 23 tests and a locally-determined test, like ACT or SAT (70 hours of testing), to the 14 ESSA required tests and a locally-determined test, like ACT or SAT (45 hours of testing) – reduced by 35% to 65% of the original.**
 - **The 14 tests match that required by ESSA and include math and English in every grade 3-8 and science once each in the elementary and middle grades.**
 - **A locally-determined test (like ACT or SAT) will cover English, math, and science and replace the 3 required tests at the high school.**
2. **Replace the 14 state tests with norm-based, adaptive tests like the MAP offered through NWEA, in which students take an average of about 50 minutes. Even if we assume students take 2 hours on each adaptive test, this could reduce the time for the 14 required tests from 42 hours to 28 hours – reduced by another 25% to 40% of the original.**
3. **Determine suitable graduate benchmarks for the tests used for Ohio’s graduates. Understand these benchmarks may not mean that students are college and career ready when they graduate high school, but rather mean they have earned a base knowledge that will ensure students will be ready to move on to college or to a career - when they aspire.**

Here are several points for you to consider as you formulate your own opinion:

1. The state has heard through feedback there is a need for “testing students to be more efficient and require less testing time.” However, the Ohio draft still requires unnecessary testing. The plan requires students take 23 tests and a locally-determined test (like ACT or SAT), while the ESSA only requires 17 tests and flexibility to use a locally-determined test, like ACT or SAT, in place of the high school requirements. In the state plan, school districts are required to administer a locally-determined test (like ACT or SAT) on top of the state-required tests. Additionally, districts are penalized if students do not participate in both.

More info-

- The ESSA requires states to test students in math and English in every grade 3-8, math and English once in high school, and science once each in the elementary, middle, and high school grades (totaling 17 tests). The state plan includes all the ESSA required tests, then adds social studies in grade 4 and 6, as well as an additional test in English and math, and two additional in social studies (totaling 23 tests). Of the 23 tests, Ohio only intends to use 8 of the tests as measures students must pass to advance (the 3rd grade reading test) or to graduate (students must take 7 end of year tests and accumulate points to graduate), while 15 of the tests are diagnostic in nature and do not require a proficient score for students to advance to the next level.

- Further, the ESSA and the Ohio plan only address the required standardized testing and do not address the additional tests required of districts prior to third grade, for gifted identification, for students learning English, or for students with special needs.
2. Each Ohio test is 3-3.5 hours in length, which is too long, especially when there are alternate options like adaptive tests or locally-determined tests (like ACT or SAT).

More info-

- 21 of the 23 state tests are 3 hours in length, while 2 of the high school state tests (English I and English II) are 3.5 hours each. Testing 3-3.5 hours could be considered as appropriate for a high-school aged student, but not for a third grade student.
 - The 3-3.5 hour length is for regular education students. With the current model, 70 hours of testing for a regular education student equates to a potential of 300+ hours of testing for a student with special needs or who is learning English.
 - ESSA allows states to use adaptive testing (like MAP), but is not permissible in the current state plan. Adaptive tests adjust to a student's ability level by increasing the rigor of questions when students answer correctly and decreasing the rigor when students answer incorrectly to determine a student's achievement level. Through NWEA's MAP, a known adaptive test, students take an average of about 50 minutes to complete a test.
 - The 7 high school tests take 7 days and equate to 22 hours of testing, while the ACT and SAT is a one-day test of 3 hours.
3. Adaptive tests are not only shorter in length, but they provide immediate feedback, which can result in timely action and intervention.

More info-

- Since 15 of the 23 state tests are diagnostic, at a minimum, these 15 tests should operate in a way to serve that purpose. Based on past experience, students have not received state test scores for months (7-8 months during the 13-14 school year and 2-3 months during the 14-15 and 15-16 school years). Considering the best case scenario of 2 months, students are out for summer and are no longer in a course, which makes intervention impractical. Adaptive tests give an immediate score for teachers and students to gauge and track readiness and growth. Also, on the back end, vendors of adaptive tests also provide numerous reports that provide actionable data to support and direct immediate intervention.
- Due to the timing of results and the timeliness of feedback, many districts have started to use adaptive tests to help determine whether students are on track with grade-appropriate material in hopes to diagnosis issues before they arise on the one-time state test or before they progress to the next level and show deficiencies. These districts and educators find these tests worthwhile.

4. The state requires high school students to accumulate college and career readiness points on the state tests OR achieve a college and career score on the ACT or SAT as part of the requirements to graduate. These benchmarks are unrealistic and not correlated to students' actual aspirations.

More info-

- College and career readiness scores are meant to identify students who will be successful in college (or in a career). According to the data, these benchmarks are met by 40-60% of the students taking the ACT or SAT and at most by about 50-70% of the students taking the subject-based state tests (according to the only released state data from 2015).
- Some of Ohio's high school graduates do not want to go to college, may not need to go to college, and should not be expected to go to college. Where is the cut score for students wanting to enter into the military, go directly into a trade, or gain other specialized skills and training not offered at the high school? There needs to be options for students not attaining the college and career readiness scores, but demonstrating proficiency with the high school curriculum.

5. Once proficiency is redefined, a locally-determined test (like ACT or SAT) would be a better end-of-course test for students to demonstrate competence at the high school.

More info-

- The seven high school tests cover material for a specific year and are intended to be taken when a student completes a course (hence, end-of-course test). However, the state tests must be given $\frac{2}{3}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ the way through the school year, even though students are still tested over the entire year of material.
- Conversely, the ACT and SAT cover material taught in grades 7-12 and can be taken multiple times a year. Multiple-choice questions cover English, mathematics, reading, and science, in addition to an optional writing section. The tested content and skills on these tests are spiraled topics that students build upon each year in classes. Meaning, after partaking in another year of education, one could expect to increase their ACT or SAT score.

***The thoughts and opinions expressed here are my own.
-Julie A. Blevins, Ed.D.***