

THE BEST OF TIME OR THE WORST OF TIME? WHAT TEACHERS THINK ABOUT TEST PREPARATION



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► ABOUT TEACH PLUS

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success.

► **Is preparing students to take tests a bad thing?** Or is there a difference in how and what teachers do to prepare their students for tests – and does this affect whether teachers think it’s time well spent?

Most people think of test prep as one monolithic iceberg of time, not valued by teachers and detrimental to instruction. But teachers use ‘test prep’ to refer to lots of different things – on one end of the spectrum, there are narrow test-focused activities like practice-test drilling or motivational pep rallies; on the other end, there are strong teaching strategies like workshops on improving writing with evidence or challenge activities to help students master specific standards. We first categorized the different activities – 17 in all – that teachers commonly use as part of their test prep. Was the activity used to support curriculum, develop a skill, or motivate students? We then took a close look at each activity, with an eye to time and, importantly, to quality. The result is a first-of-its-kind framework that hones in on what teachers find valuable in the variety of activities that make up test preparation.

We started our study with the simple question: what do teachers across our national network think of test prep? What we learned was that the prevailing narrative in education, that teachers are overwhelmed and overburdened by the amount of test preparation, only tells half the story. More than half of the teachers in our study told us that they were spending too much time on test prep. Almost as many, or slightly less than half, believed that the amount of time was about right. How the teachers measured time came down to three important ‘A’s’: alignment, autonomy, and activities. The teachers in our study confirmed what we at Teach Plus have learned from previous research and from speaking with thousands of teachers over the past five years: that alignment between assessments and curriculum, access to highly-valued activities, and the autonomy to choose what’s right for students all contribute to how teachers perceive the value of activities they use to prepare their students for tests, and are all factors that can be changed to reduce wasted time and increase valued instructional time.

The topic of testing is perennial and polarizing in American education, never more so than during the spring testing time. This year, we have a new opportunity to get testing right: Provisions of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) include explicit support and funding for states that want to conduct audits of state and district assessments to reduce unnecessary and redundant testing. Thanks to Teach Plus teachers’ successful advocacy, ESSA includes a provision that requires assessment audits to include the amount of instructional time spent on test preparation. In states that choose to conduct these audits, the review of assessments will include a thorough review of activities that teachers use to prepare their students for tests. I hope to see teachers at the table in every state in the nation, working with district and state policymakers to make sure that bad tests are eliminated and quality tests remain.

Celine Coggins
CEO and Founder
Teach Plus

THE BEST OF TIME OR THE WORST OF TIME? WHAT TEACHERS THINK ABOUT TEST PREPARATION

FINDING #1: Time

More than half of the teachers believe that the amount of test prep is too much and almost half believe that it's about right — and that perception hinges on a number of factors.

FINDING #2: Alignment

Teachers are more likely to believe that the amount of test prep is right when tests are aligned to curriculum.

FINDING #3: Autonomy

The amount of decision-making ability teachers have when preparing their students for tests affects whether they think there is too much test prep or the amount of time is about right.

FINDING #4: Activities

Teachers who say that the amount of test prep is about right spend almost all of their test prep time on activities they rate as valuable.

► INTRODUCTION

The continued focus on testing among educators, policy makers, and the public has led to a number of recent studies that have documented the time and estimated costs associated with school, district, and state testing.¹ In our report, *The Student and the Stopwatch: How much time do American students spend on testing?*, we showed that there is not only considerable variation between states in terms of time spent on testing, but that the amount of testing within states also varies, with districts often adding their own required assessments on top of what is already mandated by the state.²

The existing research on testing, however, has been limited to the actual administration of tests in schools or very specific test-related activities such as interim testing. There has been little research to date on how teachers prepare their students for

testing, to say nothing of how teachers rate the quality of the activities they use as test prep. On top of this, research thus far has treated all test prep activities homogenously without discerning the worthy from the worthless.

In this study, we set out to learn if there was some bright line that could be drawn around a threshold amount of time or a set of characteristics where teachers would say, "This is good test prep." The bright line we found showed that alignment between tests and curriculum is important, that there are clearly some activities that teachers want to be doing, and that teachers prefer to have autonomy in choosing the test prep activities they do.

► METHODOLOGY

Our study consisted of two phases of research. In the first phase, we held focus groups with teachers from across the country to learn how they prepared their students for state or district tests. We then categorized 17 test prep activities commonly practiced in schools in an iterative process. We organized these 17 activities into three categories defined by how teachers generally described their classroom use. In the second phase, we set out to understand how often teachers do each activity, how much time they spend on it, and what they think of the use of time.

Based on this teacher input, this report offers a first-of-its-kind typology of test prep activities. Far from a monolith of 'drill and kill,' teachers are using an array of strategies which differ from one another both in terms of time required and of value.

Phase 1: Categorization




The first category, 'Curriculum Supporters,' is

comprised of activities meant to support, enhance, or supplement a student's regular curriculum or instructional plan. This category includes interventions related to improving student mastery of standards, such as practicing citing text evidence when responding in writing. The second category, 'Skill Developers,' includes activities meant to improve a student's skill and development, such as learning to pace their responses on a test or learning to use a computer efficiently. The final category, 'Student Motivators,' are activities meant to help promote or improve student motivation, such as participation in student assemblies (see Figure 1). Using teachers' reviews of the content of these activities, we developed a typology that we discuss later to analyze their value.

In our study, we did not ask teachers to draw a distinction between the activities that take place during the regular school day and those that take place during extracurricular hours.

Figure 1

Description and categorization of test prep activities

<p>Curriculum Supporters</p> 	<p>Activities meant to support, enhance, or supplement a student's regular curriculum or instructional plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions related to improving standards measured on tests • Extension or challenge activities • Test preparation-specific activities provided in a curriculum • Text-dependent questions related to core content • Predictive tests • Writing workshops on how to improve writing with evidence or paraphrasing
<p>Skill Developers</p> 	<p>Activities meant to improve a student's skills and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of students' computer skills • Training on using dictionaries, calculators, rulers, or other instruments for use on an assessment • Test-taking strategies • Time for students to practice test items online • Opportunities for student typing practice • Pacing of responses on a test
<p>Student Motivators</p> 	<p>Activities meant to help promote or improve student motivation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pep rallies meant to motivate students before or after a test • Award assemblies to support student perseverance or increase their motivation • Parent assemblies on test-related information, support, or strategies • Motivational music or songs • Gifts or prize giveaways intended to motivate students

Phase 2: Typology

In the second phase of this study, teachers from the Teach Plus network answered a questionnaire that listed each of the 17 activities, commenting on the time spent and value of each activity and whether they were required to do the specific activity by their school or school system. We also asked teachers for their perspectives on how well-aligned their state and district assessments were to their curriculum and how they felt about the amount of time they spent on test prep during the school year.

This study encompassed nearly 400 teachers and the thousands of test prep activities they did

during one school year. It is organized around two groups of teachers (see Appendix). The teachers who believe that the amount of time spent on test prep is “too little” or is “about right” are grouped together as a way of comparing them to those teachers who believe that there is “too much” test prep in schools.

These two groups provide an opportunity to better understand how teachers differentiate between good and bad test prep, and give us a glimpse into the conditions, policies, and practices that create both.

► FINDINGS

FINDING #1: Time

More than half of the teachers believe that the amount of test prep is too much and almost half believe that it's about right — and that perception hinges on a number of factors.

When we asked teachers in our study how they felt about the time spent preparing students for tests, we found that the majority of teachers — 57 percent — said they were spending “too much” time on test prep. The other 43 percent of teachers said the amount of test prep was “about right” or “too little” (these are teachers whom we have grouped together and refer to as the ‘about right’ group.)³ For both groups of teachers, those in the ‘too much’ and ‘about right’ groups, what role does the amount of time play when it comes to their perspectives on test prep? The typical teacher in the ‘too much’ group spent about 16 hours a month on test prep activities. In comparison, the typical teacher in the ‘about right’ group spent about 12 hours a month on test prep activities.⁴

What we also found, however, was that time was only one of four key factors driving teacher perspectives about test prep — *some teachers could spend as little as five hours a month on it and think it was too much time, while others could spend as much as 26 hours on it and think it was about right.* Test prep time, in other words, is not created equally. To better understand why some teachers felt that the amount of test prep was too much while others thought it was about right, we looked at a range of other contributing factors, such as whether or not teachers felt they were preparing students for tests that were aligned to their curricula, how much choice they had in selecting test prep activities, and how they valued those activities.

FINDING #2: Alignment

Teachers are more likely to believe that the amount of test prep is right when tests are aligned to curriculum.

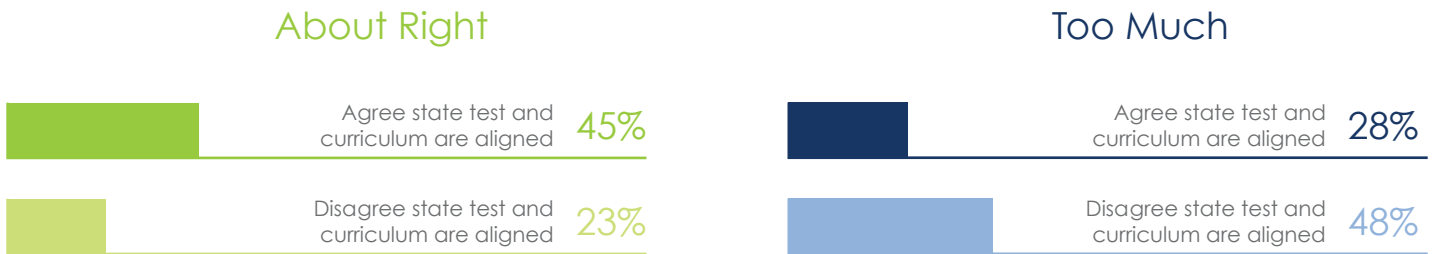
What helps drive the quality of test prep activities? Our earlier work in examining test quality showed that teachers valued assessments that were aligned closely to the curriculum in their classrooms.⁵ We wanted to see if this emphasis on test and curriculum alignment had a role in how teachers viewed the time spent preparing students for those tests. Specifically, we wanted to see if teachers who said they had greater alignment between their state and district tests and their curriculum were also more likely to feel that the time spent preparing

their students for those tests was right.

We first asked teachers the degree to which they felt their state assessment was well-aligned to the curriculum they taught. We found that teachers who think that the amount of test prep time is about right were more likely — 45 percent versus 28 percent — to also report that their state test was well-aligned to their curriculum when compared to those teachers who thought there was too much test prep (see Figure 2).⁶

Figure 2

How state test and curriculum alignment influences teachers' perspectives on the amount of time spent on test prep



These results suggest the importance that the state test-curriculum alignment plays in schools. Teachers who have access to tests that are well-aligned to their curriculum are probably finding that more of their instruction is serving to both teach the standards upon which their curriculum is based and prepare their students for an end-of-year test.

As with state tests, we were also curious about the degree to which curriculum alignment of district tests mattered to teachers and if this was another factor that influenced their overall perspective on test prep.

We found that teachers who believe that the amount of test prep is right are more likely to have a district test that is well-aligned to their curriculum. Compared to teachers who felt that the amount of test prep is too much, teachers who felt that the amount of test prep is about right were much more likely to report that their district test is well-aligned to their curriculum — 41 percent versus 30 percent (see Figure 3).⁷ Put another way, teachers who felt that there was too much test prep were also more than twice as likely to report that their district test is not well-aligned to their curriculum — 50 percent versus 22 percent.

Figure 3

How district test and curriculum alignment influences teachers' perspectives on the amount of time spent on test prep



We also observed the value that alignment brings when we looked at how teachers rated the value of predictive tests. Predictive tests, as discussed earlier, are generally school, school system, or district-administered assessments given during the course of the year to help teachers and administrators

determine how well students might do on a summative test at the end of the year. One value of a predictive test lies in how well the test does in providing teachers with information on their students' progress — if the test is well-aligned to the curriculum, it stands to reason that the value

of that information will be perceived as higher. Since we have found that the teachers who believe the amount of test prep is right are also more likely to have a district test that is aligned to their curriculum, we can again compare the two groups of teachers and see if there is a difference in how they value predictive tests.

Subsequently, when asked about the use of time, almost double the percent of teachers — 63 percent — who said that the amount of time spent on test prep was right said that predictive tests were a good use of time, in stark contrast to those who said they were spending too much time on test prep — 37 percent (see Figure 4).⁸

Figure 4

How teachers perceive the use of time spent on predictive tests and their overall impressions of test prep time



With many schools and school systems choosing to supplement their state tests with district or predictive tests during the school year, the results here suggest that teachers closely link the value of these tests to how well they are aligned to the curriculum they are teaching. If the district test is aligned to the curriculum, then teachers are spending their

test prep time on an assessment that they feel will provide them with more usable feedback on their students' progress. When that test and curriculum alignment is off, either at the district or state level, we see that teachers are more likely to feel that the time they are spending on test prep is less valuable and takes away time from instruction.

FINDING #3: Autonomy

The amount of decision-making ability teachers have when preparing their students for tests affects whether they think there is too much test prep or the amount of time is about right.

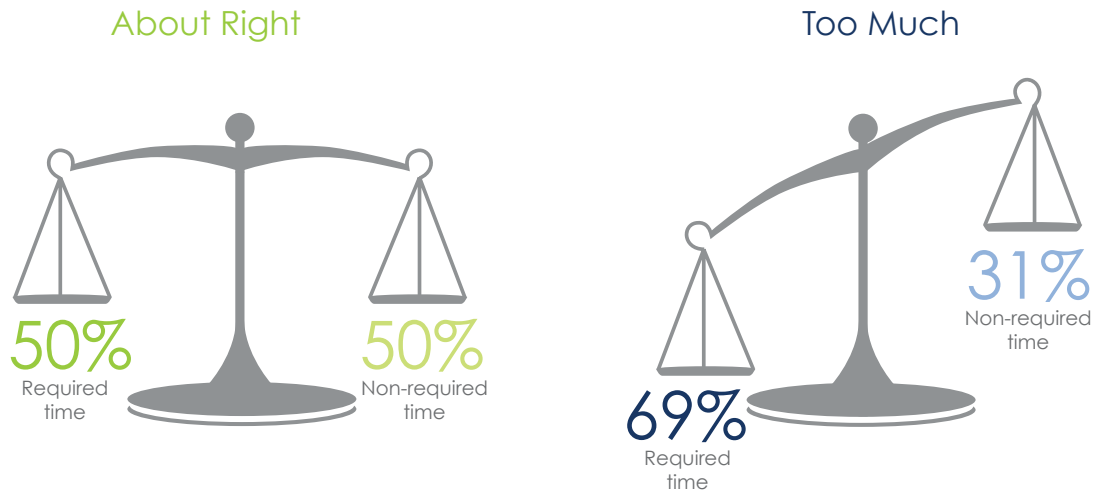
What kind of flexibility do teachers have when it comes to preparing their students for tests, and does this influence how they perceive the amount of time spent on test prep? To answer this question, we looked at whether the amount of test prep required by teachers' schools or school systems influenced their overall perspectives.

For each activity, we asked whether test prep was required by a teacher's school or school system (e.g. their school district or charter network). By

looking at the amount of time teachers were spending on required versus non-required activities, we found that teachers in the 'about right' group spent half their test prep time — 50 percent — on test prep activities of their own choice. In comparison, teachers in the 'too much' group were able to spend less than a third — 31 percent — of their test prep time on activities of their own choosing, with 69 percent of their test prep time being mandated by their school or school system (see Figure 5).⁹

Figure 5

How much preparation time is mandated by teachers' schools or school systems?



This highlights a key difference between these two groups of teachers — that those who think the amount of test prep is right are able to select more

of their own preparation activities when compared to those teachers who feel that they are spending too much time on test prep.

FINDING #4: Activities

Teachers who say that the amount of test prep is about right spend almost all of their test prep time on activities they rate as valuable.

We recognized that test preparation looks different in all classrooms and can depend on a multitude of factors (content, grade level, school philosophy, etc). We therefore asked teachers to not only indicate how much time they devoted to various activities, but to rate the quality of the time they spent on them. Specifically, we asked them how they felt about the use of time when it came to

these 17 activities. Of the various activities, we found that they could be categorized along two dimensions — the average length of time teachers said they spent on the activity and whether the activity was a “good” or “poor” use of time, on average.¹⁰ With these two dimensions, we can categorize the activities into four groups (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

The average time per month teachers spend on test prep activities and how they value them (as a “Very Good” or “Good” use of time)

LENGTHY ACTIVITIES HIGHLY VALUED BY TEACHERS			
Activity	Category	Time	Value
Developed students’ computer skills	Skill Developer	5.0 hrs	92.6%
Ran writing workshops on how to improve writing with evidence or paraphrasing	Curriculum Supporter	6.1 hrs	88.1%
Answered text-dependent questions related to core content	Curriculum Supporter	7.9 hrs	86.1%
Provided extension or challenge activities	Curriculum Supporter	4.9 hrs	86.0%
Provided students with opportunities for typing practice	Skill Developer	3.5 hrs	84.3%

SHORT ACTIVITIES HIGHLY VALUED BY TEACHERS			
Activity	Category	Time	Value
Taught students how to use dictionaries, calculators, rulers, or other instruments for use on an assessment	Skill Developer	3.2 hrs	89.3%
Provided or participated in parent assemblies on test-related information, support, or strategies	Student Motivator	0.6 hrs	86.1%
Played motivational music or songs	Student Motivator	3.1 hrs	82.4%

SHORT ACTIVITIES NOT HIGHLY VALUED BY TEACHERS			
Activity	Category	Time	Value
Taught students test-taking strategies	Skill Developer	3.2 hrs	74.2%
Offered gifts or prize giveaways intended to motivate students	Student Motivator	1.4 hrs	73.9%
Attended and participated in award assemblies to support student perseverance or increase their motivation	Student Motivator	0.5 hrs	73.3%
Taught students how to pace responses on a test	Skill Developer	2.6 hrs	73.2%
Provided time for students to practice test items online	Skill Developer	2.8 hrs	66.0%
Took students to pep rallies meant to motivate students before or after a test	Student Motivator	0.3 hrs	50.9%
Administered predictive tests	Curriculum Supporter	1.6 hrs	47.3%

LENGTHY ACTIVITIES NOT HIGHLY VALUED BY TEACHERS

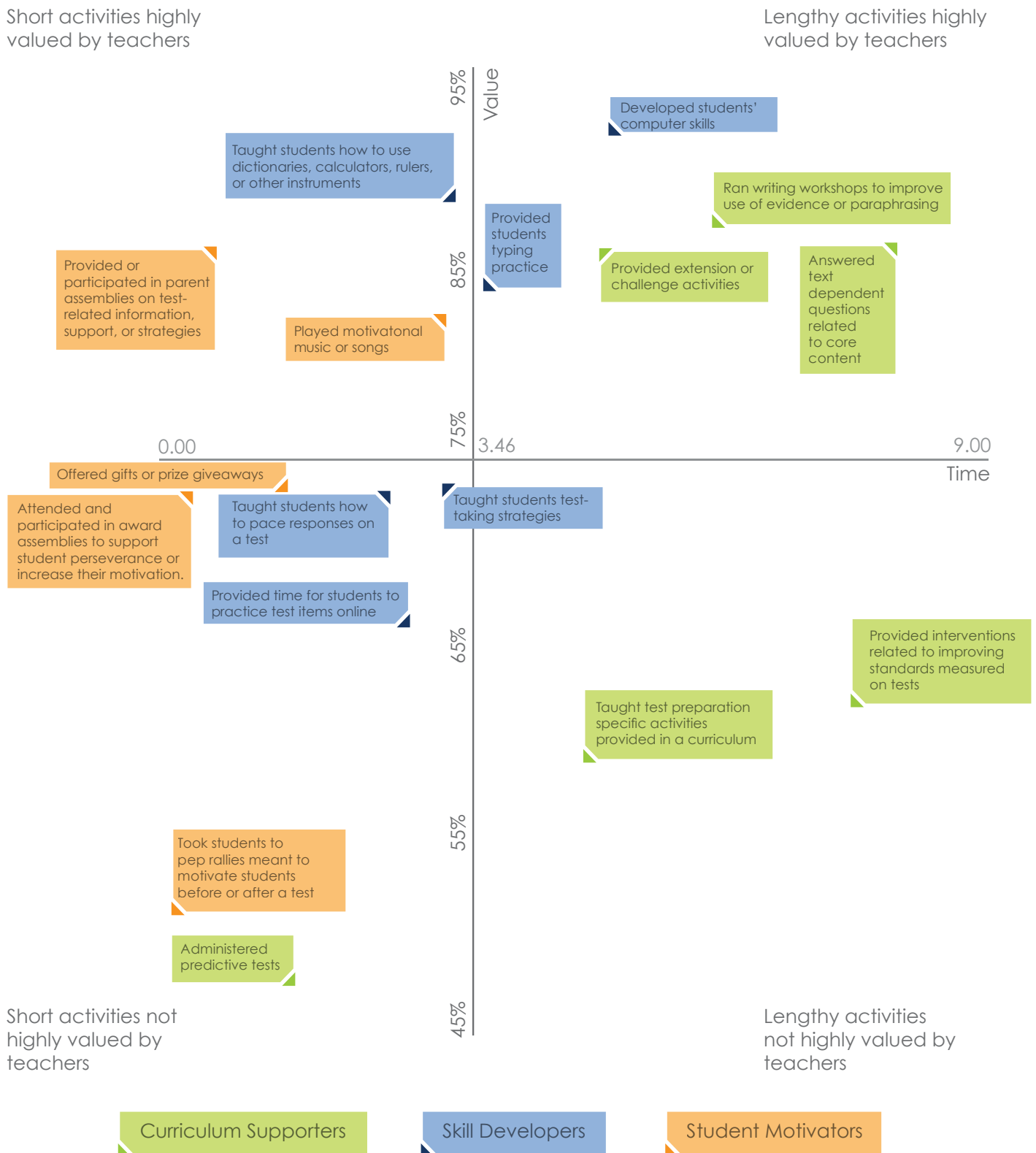
Activity	Category	Time	Value
Provided interventions related to improving standards measured on tests	Curriculum Supporter	7.6 hrs	61.8%
Taught test preparation-specific activities provided in a curriculum	Curriculum Supporter	4.7 hrs	59.1%

When we plot the relative value of each activity, as measured by the percent of teachers who considered the activity a “very good use of time” or a “good use of time,” and the time spent on the activity, as measured by the average number of hours each activity took per month, we notice

that curriculum-supporting activities (Curriculum Supporters) generally took the most amount of time, followed by the skill development activities (Skill Developers), and finally the motivational activities (Student Motivators) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

How teachers felt about the value of time spent on each activity (percent good use of time) and how long the activity took on average per month (hours)



Lengthy Activities Highly Valued by Teachers

Based on the results, five activities could be classified as being highly valued that required a high investment of time. The curriculum-related activities (Curriculum Supporters) in this group are closely aligned to the key shifts found in the Common Core State Standards, which might explain their value to teachers.

Short Activities Highly Valued by Teachers

There were three activities that were highly valued but required a short amount of time, with two being ‘Student Motivators’ and one being a ‘Skill Developer’. It is possible that the ‘Skill Developer’ items that were highly regarded by teachers were rated as such because they are frequently seen as transferrable skills across content areas, and transcend the requirements of a single assessment as integral parts of college and career readiness.

Short Activities Not Highly Valued by Teachers

The third category consisted of seven activities that were rated as low value but did not take up a lot of time. Three of the activities in this category were ‘Student Motivators’ and three were ‘Skill Developers’, suggesting that there are some student skill development activities that teachers find less than helpful as well as some motivational type activities that seemed not to be a great use of time. This suggests that some ‘Student Motivators’ (including gift incentives and student assemblies) do not have as much impact as some administrators might desire. In terms of low-value skill-building, practicing test items online, teaching test-taking strategies, and teaching students to pace responses on a test seem to have the least transferrable value or real-life applications.

Lengthy Activities Not Highly Valued by Teachers

The final category consisted of two activities that required an above average amount of time but were not highly valued by teachers. These again

point to the low value that teachers place on activities that seem to have low transferrable skill quality and do little to support the curriculum outside of test-related material.

Overall Value of Test Prep Activities

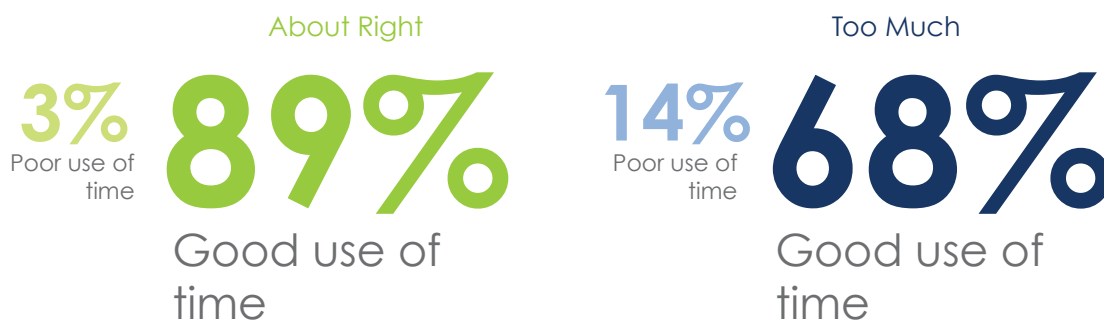
While these average ratings give some insight as to how teachers valued activities and the relative time they require, they tend to mask the conditions under which these activities can be considered valuable. For example, the use of predictive tests received the lowest overall average rating with just 47 percent of teachers considering it a good use of time. That rating jumps to 63 percent for the subset of teachers who believe that the amount of test prep is about right — and it is those teachers who are more likely to have state and district tests that are aligned to their curriculum. Our findings suggest that teachers’ distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ test prep can be traced back to the instructional tools, policies, and conditions that affect where the teacher works.

These results suggest that there are many activities that are valuable and that this could be largely driven by the curriculum, test alignment, and how those activities were chosen, if at all. In the best possible scenario, teachers would be doing test prep activities they considered highly valuable, and so we looked at whether there was a difference in how teachers rated the time they spent on test prep and their overall perspective on test prep.

For teachers who felt that the amount of test prep is about right, almost all of their test prep time — 89 percent — is spent on activities they felt were a “very good” or “good” use of time. In comparison, teachers who felt that they were spending too much time on test prep were only spending about two-thirds — 68 percent — of their time on activities they thought were a “very good” or “good” use of time (see Figure 8).¹¹

Figure 8

How much test prep time do teachers spend on activities they think are a good or poor use of time?



While teachers in both groups may be spending about the same amount of time on test prep activities, it seems that the quality of test prep time spent is fairly different, suggesting that when

teachers are able to spend more time on highly-valued test prep activities, they are also more likely to view that time as appropriately used.

► RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings outlined in this report, Teach Plus teachers recommend the following next steps for policy:

RECOMMENDATION #1

Ensure that curriculum and assessments are aligned at the state, district, and school levels.

We recommend that states ‘opt-in’ to adopting the new SMART (Support Making Assessments Reliable and Timely) Act provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA provides a golden opportunity for each state to take a closer look at its assessment system to ensure that tests are aligned to standards. It is imperative that districts make sure assessments are aligned to the curriculum so teachers are not teaching standards in isolation.

The SMART Act section of ESSA provides funding to states to “improve assessment quality and

use, and alignment, including ... alignment to the challenging State academic standards.”¹² Specifically, the law allows states to use \$1.5 million of their federal education funds to audit and streamline the number of additional tests required at the district level and to better support teacher use of high-quality assessments. It also requires states to include teachers in decisions about which assessments to continue and which to eliminate. It is important that states take advantage of this opportunity — and teachers may need to advocate for the adoption of these provisions since implementation of them is optional.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Give teachers the opportunity to inventory and evaluate test prep activities; keep what's valuable, and jettison time-wasters.

We recommend that districts survey teachers on which activities give the most value to student learning, while at the same time streamlining and dropping test preparation activities that teachers consider a waste of time. This could be done as part of ESSA's SMART Act implementation since the law requires that an audit of instructional time spent on test preparation be included in all assessment audits.

Based on teacher feedback, a district could assess the scope and sequence at each grade level to look for efficient places to add authentic preparation activities. The questionnaire used in our study was created with the consultation of current teachers and could be made available to districts interested in learning more about teacher perspectives on test preparation activities.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Expand student access to technology so that it is both meaningfully incorporated into classroom practice and helps students develop the skills needed for success on technology-based assessments.

Resources are scarce and too many schools and students still lack access to educational technology. As assessments are increasingly administered on computers and tablets, districts should provide sufficient access to technology so that students can develop needed skills and familiarity prior to using

it for testing, and so that teachers can support students in using the technology. Districts should continue to improve access to technology as an essential component of preparing students for their future.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Use predictive tests only if they are clearly aligned to the curriculum and the summative assessments.

We recommend that districts work with teachers experienced in administering predictive tests to determine whether they are truly useful as predictive tools. If tests are found to be generally poor or misaligned predictors, we recommend that the district work to correct these deficiencies or end the tests altogether. In the event of misalignment

between predictive tests and curriculum, we recommend that districts re-examine their curriculum maps and solicit the feedback of content-level teachers to determine best practices with regard to the pacing and sequencing of standards.

► CONCLUSION

The perception of test preparation is that it is largely about ‘teaching to the test’ or that it ‘takes time from learning,’ but what seems to be lost is the value of some activities that teachers and students are engaged in and how test prep activities can complement the overall instructional program. Our study of when and why teachers say there is too much test prep in their schools and when they say the amount of test prep is about right suggests what differentiates good test prep from bad test prep.

Our report shows that there is a sizeable group of teachers who think that the test prep that they and their school are doing is appropriate. Our research has highlighted what ‘right’ test prep looks like for teachers, including the content and the conditions under which it happens. We saw in this study that time is a distinguishing, though simplistic, metric for evaluating how teachers prepare students for testing.

Though limited in scope by our study’s sample size, we believe that our research takes a critical first step towards understanding what is important to teachers when they are preparing their students for tests. Knowing what optimal conditions and best practices look like for teachers is key as we continue to learn more about the role and place of testing and test preparation. We encourage others to extend this research and to continue asking teachers critical questions about the need and importance for test and curricular alignment, for flexibility in choosing how to use prep time, and for the right mix of activities when it comes to preparing students for tests.

Schools and districts should aim to have more teachers in the ‘about right’ group by not narrowly focusing on just time and by considering the other factors that our research has found to be important. They should ensure that there is clear alignment between tests and curriculum and that teachers have autonomy in choosing the test prep activities that they see as most appropriate and valuable to improve student learning.

► APPENDIX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We wanted to understand, in general, how teachers were spending time on test preparation-related activities and how they valued (or did not value) these activities. Specifically, we were interested in answering the following research questions:

- Research question #1: Do teachers' perspectives about the value of test prep activities differ based on when their district and state assessments are and are not well-aligned to their curriculum?
- Research question #2: Do teachers' perspectives about the value of test prep activities differ based on the amount of test prep they are required to do by their schools or school systems?
- Research question #3: Are there test prep activities that teachers value more than others? What factors contribute to this difference in perspective?

To address these research questions, we administered a questionnaire to teachers in the Teach Plus Network that was based on extensive input from current teachers. The invitation to answer the resulting questionnaire was sent electronically to 15,161 teachers. The questionnaire invitation was sent in two rounds: the first from September 1 to September 15, 2015 and the second from September 14 to October 12, 2015.

Demographic information for the responding 389 teachers: Teaching experience (n = 389) Responses: 0 to 5 years: 15.2 percent (59), 6 to 10 years: 18.5 percent (72), 11 to 19 years: 33.2 percent (129), 20 or more years: 24.4 percent (95), No response: 8.7 percent (34). School types (n = 389) Responses: Traditional public school: 88.7 percent (345), Charter public school: 11.3 percent (44). Grade levels (n=389) (results sum to greater than 100 percent because teachers teach in more than one grade span): Pre-kindergarten: 2.1 percent (8), Kindergarten to grade 5: 41.6 percent (162), Grades 6 to 8: 30.1 percent (117), Grades 9 to 12: 30.8 percent (120), Other: 3.3 percent (13). Teaching subjects (n = 389) (results sum to greater than 100 percent because some teachers indicated multiple teaching assignments) Responses: Arts: 2.1 percent (8), Business: 0.3 percent (1), Computers: 1.5 percent (6), English / English Language Arts (ELA): 24.7 percent (96), English language learner instruction: 7.7 percent (30), Foreign language: 2.6 percent (10), General subjects / all subjects: 29.8 percent (116), Health education: 2.1 percent (8), Math: 20.3 percent (79), Music (including band, orchestra, chorus): 0.8 percent (3), Other: 4.9 percent (19), Physical education / gym: 0.8 percent (3), Reading: 8.5 percent (33), Science (including biology, chemistry, physics, etc.): 12.9 percent (50), Social Studies / history / economics / government: 12.6 percent (49), Special education: 13.1 percent (51), Vocational education: 1.5 percent (6).

Demographic information for teachers in the 'about right' group: Teaching experience (n = 167) Responses: 0 to 5 years: 16.8 percent (28), 6 to 10 years: 19.8 percent (33), 11 to 19 years: 32.3 percent (54), 20 or more years: 22.8 percent (38), No response: 8.4 percent (14). School types (n = 167) Responses: Traditional public school: 82.0 percent (137), Charter public school: 18.0 percent (30). Grade levels (n=167) (results sum to greater than 100 percent because teachers teach in more than one grade span): Pre-kindergarten: 2.4 percent (4), Kindergarten to grade 5: 35.3 percent (59), Grades 6 to 8: 29.9 percent (50), Grades 9 to 12: 36.5 percent (61), Other 4.8 percent (8). Teaching subjects (n=167) (results sum to greater than 100 percent because some teachers indicated multiple teaching assignments) Responses: Arts: 1.2 percent (2), Business: 0.6 percent (1), Computers: 1.2 percent (2), English / English

Language Arts (ELA): 23.4 percent (39), English language learner instruction: 6.0 percent (10), Foreign language: 2.4 percent (4), General subjects / all subjects: 26.3 percent (44), Health education: 1.2 percent (2), Math: 24.6 percent (41), Music (including band, orchestra, chorus): 1.2 percent (2), Other: 4.8 percent (8), Physical education / gym: 0.0 percent (0), Reading: 8.4 percent (14), Science (including biology, chemistry, physics, etc.): 12.0 percent (20), Social Studies / history / economics / government: 12.0 percent (20), Special education: 12.6 percent (21), Vocational education: 2.4 percent (4).

Demographic information for teachers in the 'too much' group: Teaching experience (n = 222) Responses: 0 to 5 years: 14.0 percent (31), 6 to 10 years: 17.6 percent (39), 11 to 19 years: 33.8 percent (75), 20 or more years: 25.7 percent (57), No response: 9.0 percent (20). School types (n = 222) Responses: Traditional public school: 93.7 percent (208), Charter public school: 6.3 percent (14). Grade levels (n=222) (results sum to greater than 100 percent because teachers teach in more than one grade span): Pre-kindergarten: 1.8 percent (4), Kindergarten to grade 5: 46.4 percent (103), Grades 6 to 8: 30.2 percent (67), Grades 9 to 12: 26.6 percent (59), Other: 2.3 percent (5). Teaching subjects (n = 222) (results sum to greater than 100 percent because some teachers indicated multiple teaching assignments) Responses: Arts: 2.7 percent (6), Business: 0.0 percent (0), Computers: 1.8 percent (4), English / English Language Arts (ELA): 25.7 percent (57), English language learner instruction: 9.0 percent (20), Foreign language: 2.7 percent (6), General subjects / all subjects: 32.4 percent (72), Health education: 2.7 percent (6), Math: 17.1 percent (38), Music (including band, orchestra, chorus): 0.5 percent (1), Other: 5.0 percent (11), Physical education / gym: 1.4 percent (3), Reading: 8.6 percent (19), Science (including biology, chemistry, physics, etc.): 13.5 percent (30), Social Studies / history / economics / government: 13.1 percent (29), Special education: 13.5 percent (30), Vocational education: 0.9 percent (2).

► ENDNOTES

¹ See Hart, R., Casserly, M., Uzzell, R., Palacios, M., Corcoran, A., & Spurgeon, L. (2015). *Student Testing in America's Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Great City Schools. Lazarin, M. (2014). *Testing Overload in America's Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress. Nelson, H. (2013). *Testing More, Teaching Less What America's Obsession with Student Testing Costs in Money and Lost Instructional Time*. Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers.

² See Teoh, M., Coggins, C., Guan, C., & Hiler, T. (2014). *The Student and the Stopwatch: How much time do American students spend on testing?* Boston, MA: Teach Plus.

³ Question: "When you think about how much time you spent on 'test prep' during the 2014-2015 school year, how do you feel about the amount of time?" (n = 389) Responses: "Too much time was spent on 'test prep' activities" (57.1 percent), "The amount of time spent on 'test prep' activities was about right" (38.3 percent), "Too little time was spent on 'test prep' activities" (4.6 percent). Results may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

⁴ Teachers who provided usable data on time spent on activities (n = 263) had a median total time of 15.0 hours per month. Teachers in the 'about right' group (n = 117) had a median total time of 12.0 hours per month. Teachers in the 'too much' group (n = 146) had a median total time of 16.4 hours per month. Assumptions used to calculate the time were: 20 school days a month, four school weeks per month, nine months in a school year. One school day consisted of 6 hours and one class period was 60 minutes. These assumptions were determined by the teacher authors of this study.

⁵ See Endnote 2.

⁶ Question: "Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The state assessments my students take are well-aligned to the curriculum I teach.'" Teachers in the 'about right' group (n = 166) Responses: "Strongly agree" (11.4 percent), "Agree" (33.1 percent), "Neutral" (25.9 percent), "Disagree" (15.1 percent), "Strongly disagree" (7.8 percent), "Not applicable" (6.6 percent). Teachers in the 'too much' group (n = 222) Responses: "Strongly agree" (5.0 percent), "Agree" (23.4 percent), "Neutral" (17.6 percent), "Disagree" (27.0 percent), "Strongly disagree" (21.2 percent), "Not applicable" (5.9 percent).

⁷ Question: "Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The district-required assessments (not including the state-required assessments) my students take are well-aligned to the curriculum I teach.'" Teachers in the 'about right' group (n = 167) Responses: "Strongly agree" (6.6 percent), "Agree" (34.7 percent), "Neutral" (24.6 percent), "Disagree" (16.2 percent), "Strongly disagree" (5.4 percent), "Not applicable" (12.6 percent). Teachers in the 'too much' group (n = 220) Responses: "Strongly agree" (4.5 percent), "Agree" (25.0 percent), "Neutral" (15.5 percent), "Disagree" (26.4 percent), "Strongly disagree" (23.2 percent), "Not applicable" (5.5 percent).

⁸ Question: With regards to "Administered predictive tests," "Do you think this was a good or poor use of time?" Teachers in the 'about right' group (n = 75) Responses: "Very good" (29.3 percent), "Good" (33.3 percent), "Neutral" (21.3 percent), "Poor" (13.3 percent), "Very poor" (2.7 percent). Teachers in the 'too much' group (n = 111) Responses: "Very good" (13.5 percent), "Good" (23.4 percent), "Neutral" (17.1 percent), "Poor" (24.3 percent), "Very poor" (21.6 percent).

⁹ Question: For each activity, teachers were asked, “Was this activity mandated by your school and/or school system?” The average percent of time that teachers in the ‘about right’ group (n = 157) spent on non-required activities is 49.55 percent and on required activities is 50.45 percent. The average percent of time that teachers in the ‘too much’ group (n = 204) spent on non-required activities is 31.21 percent and on required activities is 68.79 percent.

¹⁰ The average length of time for test prep activities (n = 17) was 3.46 hours per month and the percent of teachers saying the activity was a “Very good” or “Good” use of time was 75 percent, on average.

¹¹ Question: For each activity, teachers were asked, “Do you think this was a good or poor use of time?” The average percent of time teachers in the ‘about right’ group (n = 116) spent on activities they considered: “Very good” or “Good” use of time (89.2 percent), “Neutral” (7.9 percent), “Poor” or “Very poor” use of time (3.0 percent). The average percent of time teachers in the ‘too much’ group (n = 144) spent on activities they considered: “Very good” or “Good” use of time (68.1 percent), “Neutral” (18.4 percent), “Poor” or “Very poor” use of time (13.5 percent).

¹² See U.S. Department of Education. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/essa>.

