

The Student & the Stopwatch:

How much time do American students spend on testing?



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Authors

Mark Teoh, Ed.D.
Celine Coggins, Ph.D.
Christine Guan
Tamara Hiler

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About the Lead Author

Mark Teoh, Ed.D., is Director of Research & Knowledge at Teach Plus. Mark is a former high school history teacher and district administrator. Before joining Teach Plus, he was the Executive Director of the Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department in the Seattle Public Schools. For more information about the report contact Mark at mteoh@teachplus.org or visit www.teachplus.org.

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About Teach Plus

The mission of Teach Plus is to improve outcomes for urban students by ensuring that a greater proportion of students have access to effective, experienced teachers.



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Introduction

No subject is more polarizing in education than testing. For some, test data is the essential ingredient of school improvement. Raising student outcomes, the rationale goes, requires high expectations and careful monitoring of progress toward them, necessitating frequent testing. For others, testing is thought to dominate instructional time leaving little time for anything else.

The modern era of testing began in 2001 with the federal No Child Left Behind mandate for annual testing in grades three to eight and once in high school. States and districts had significant latitude in how to implement that mandate, and many added their own testing requirements to the federal requirements.

The debate over whether there is too much or too little testing occupies a prominent place in the policy discourse and in the media. However, the debate is largely ideological and devoid, ironically, of data on the amount of time students spend on testing. This report aims to shed light on the subject by answering the following questions:

1. How much time do students spend on state- and district-mandated tests in English language arts (ELA) and math at three key grade levels (kindergarten, third grade, and seventh grade)?
2. How does test time vary across 12 major urban districts in America?
3. How does test time vary between urban districts and the suburban communities that surround them?
4. What is the gap between teacher reports of test administration time and how district calendars report test administration time (see “Defining Test Time” inset)? And what explains the discrepancy?

The report is organized around four main findings. Taken together, these findings point a specific path forward for public policy that moves away from generalized rhetoric and toward specific, local action.



Key Findings

- Across 12 urban districts, the average amount of time students spend on state and district tests equals 1.7 percent of the school year in third and seventh grades and substantially less in kindergarten.
- The variation in test time across urban districts is large, with high-test districts spending 3.3x as much time-on-testing as low-test districts.
- Urban districts spend, on average, more time than their suburban counterparts on testing. Suburban districts in this study average 1.3 percent or less of the school year on testing.
- Teachers calculate test administration time to be more than double the length reported in district calendars in elementary grades.

Defining Test Time

For this research, we compare publicly available district and state test calendars to teacher reports of test administration time. District and state calendars are an important baseline in the test-time dialogue in that they are a primary way officials communicate the amount of time spent on testing to parents and the public. While most state and district officials would acknowledge that testing takes longer than the amount of time reflected in the district calendar, ours is the first piece of research to measure the gap between the minimum time allocated for tests by administrators and the real time costs experienced by teachers.

In addition to the time it takes for students to complete an assessment and for teachers and staff to administer it, teachers also experience an impact on instructional time when they have to prepare students for the assessment or when they put other instructional plans on hold for the administration of required assessments. Our research examines this impact on instructional time through survey data from over 300 classroom teachers.



Research Methods

The study encompasses research from 32 districts across the United States. It emerged from conversations with teachers in the six districts in which Teach Plus works— Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Indianapolis, Indiana; Los Angeles, California; Memphis (Shelby County), Tennessee; and Washington, DC. Those conversations revealed variations in time-on-testing that suggested a need for further research. To better understand the amount of time spent on testing, we examined these six focal districts in relation to:

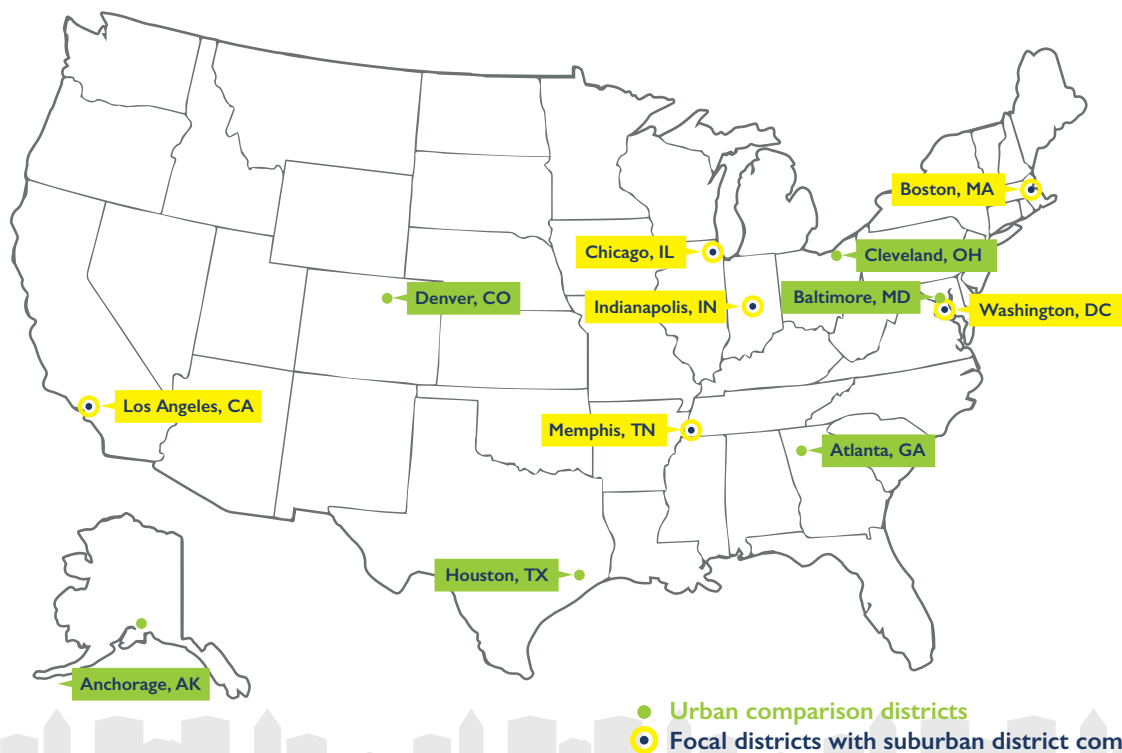
- **Urban district comparison group.** Six additional urban systems were analyzed to situate the representativeness of the original six focal districts in terms of test time. All districts included as “urban” meet the federal Institute for Education Sciences (IES) definition of an urban district.
- **Suburban district comparison group.** For each focal urban district, we analyzed data from three to four of the suburban districts that surround it, using the IES definition for suburban districts.

See Figure 1 for a map of focal and comparison districts.

For each district (focal, urban comparison, and suburban comparison), we collected data on testing time from the following sources:

1. District assessment calendars and guidelines for the 2013 to 2014 school year, including their respective state assessment schedules (publicly available on web pages as listed in the References section).
2. Communication with district administrators (both during and after analysis was complete. Each district received advance written communication from Teach Plus with our findings for that district and the opportunity to contest them).

Figure 1: Map of focal and comparison districts





In addition to these *between* district comparisons, we conducted *within* district analyses in the six focal districts:

- Teacher report comparison to district calendar report of test administrative time. This part of the research involved surveying over 300 teachers in the focal districts (almost all from the three grade levels involved in the study). Teachers were asked to report the precise state- and district-mandated tests they administer and the precise number of minutes required by that test. Those reports were then compared to district calendar data on the same tests.

The kinds of assessments profiled in this study as state- or district-mandated generally fall into two categories. The first category is end-of-year summative assessments largely required by the states, such as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) or the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (T-CAP). These state-required summative assessments are often supplemented with district-required assessments that are used for formative or benchmark purposes. These can be administered infrequently, two to three times a year, or with greater regularity, as often as once every two weeks. Many of the districts included in this study have adopted assessment systems purchased from national providers, such as the Achievement Network (ANet), the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), or the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA).

There are two important categories of assessments, often administered in kindergarten, third, and seventh grades, which this study does **not** include. First, this study does **not** include tests that have been adopted at the school level or by an individual teacher for their classroom. Second, it does **not** include tests that are required for special populations of students such as those who receive special education services or English language learners.

In the first three sections, “time-on-testing” refers to district calendar reports. Section four focuses on teacher reports of time.

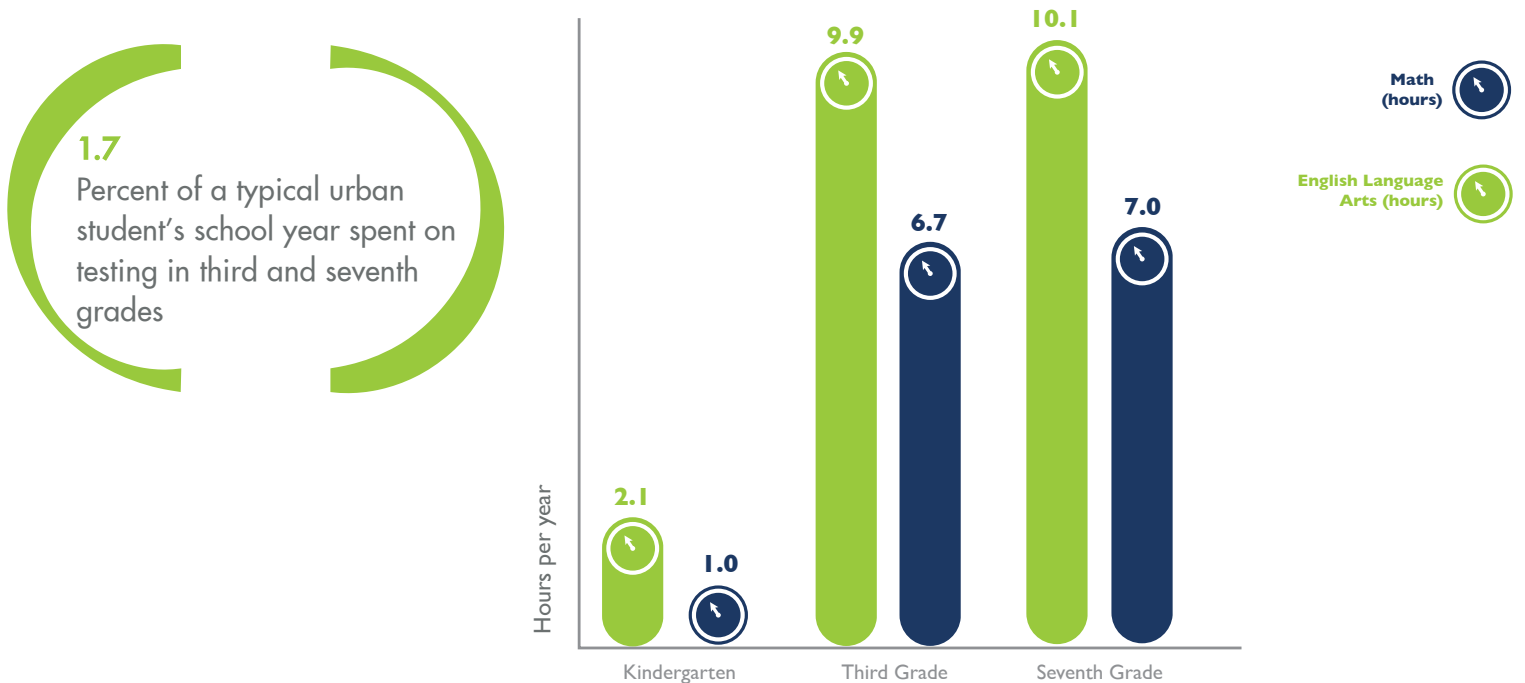
Finding 1. Across 12 urban districts, the average amount of time students spend on state and district tests equals 1.7 percent of the school year in third and seventh grades and substantially less in kindergarten.

In our sample of 12 urban school districts, the typical kindergarten student’s time on state and district testing is calculated at 2.1 hours for ELA and 1.0 hours of math annually. [1] For the sake of consistency, we do include zero hours for districts that do not have any kindergarten testing, which we discuss further in the following section. While kindergarten enrollment can consist of both half-day and full-day programming, it would be difficult to determine, even on average, how much of a kindergarten student’s school year is spent on district and state testing. There are no federal requirements for testing of kindergarten students.



Third and seventh grade students tend to have similar experiences in terms of time-on-testing, spending about 10 hours per year on mandated ELA testing and more than six hours on mandated math testing (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Average time spent on district & state testing per year in urban districts by grade and subject*



* Data revised for Illinois state test

According to a 2013 Education Commission of the States (ECS) report on the minimum amount of instructional time per year, the average time for a kindergarten student in the 12 states featured in this report is approximately 885.9 hours, assuming a full-day kindergarten program. With an average of 3.1 hours of testing per year, the typical kindergarten student is tested for less than one percent of the year. In third grade, the amount of required state instructional time across the 12 urban districts in this study is 953.7 hours, meaning 1.7 percent of the typical third grader's year is spent on state- and district-mandated testing. Likewise, in seventh grade, the average number of instructional hours is 1,016.8, and the average time spent on testing is also 1.7 percent. These 1.7 percent figures do not reflect the many time demands that may be associated with testing such as preparing students or analyzing data. However, it is an important baseline figure. It reflects the cumulative time impact that districts currently use to communicate with parents and the general public about the time students are being tested.

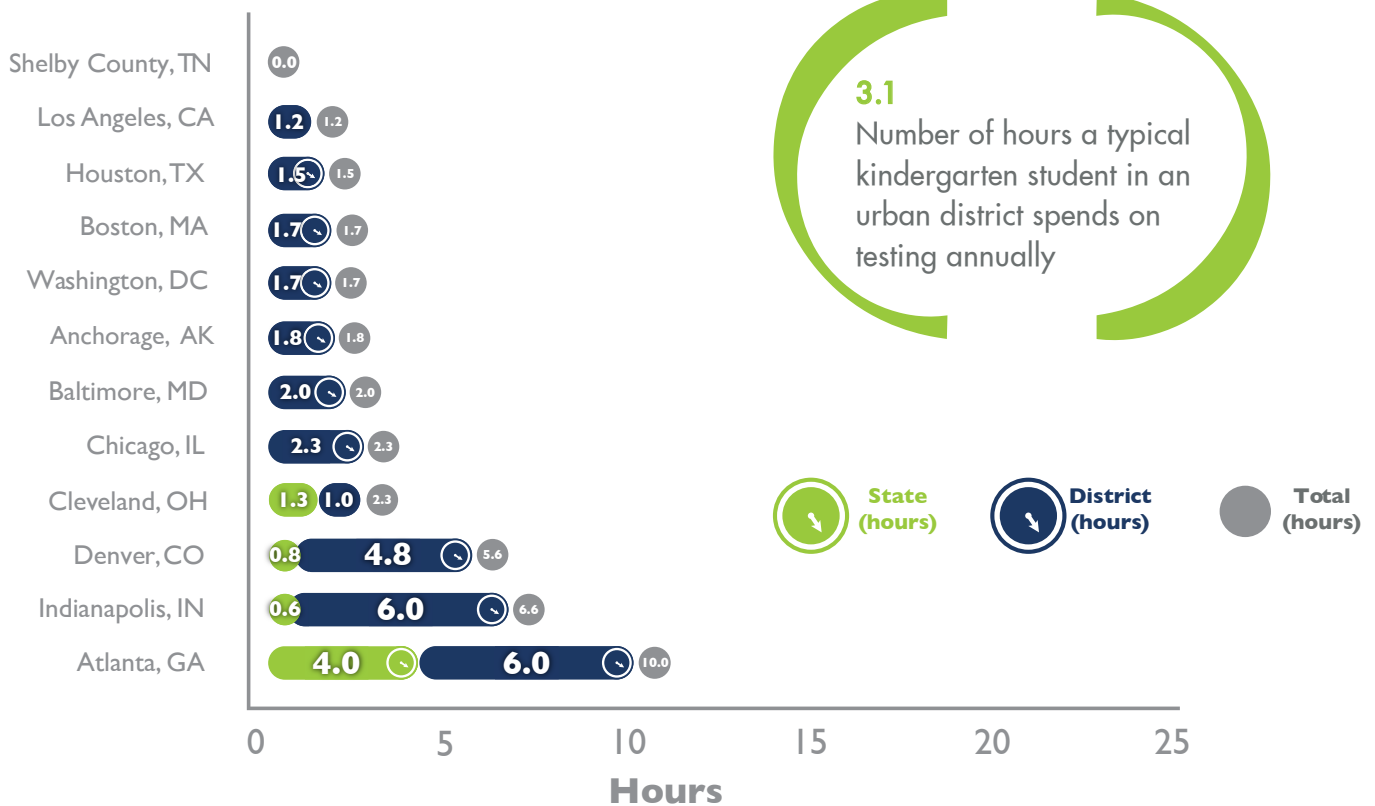
Finding 2. The variation in test time across urban districts is large, with high-test districts spending 3.3x as much time-on-testing as low-test districts.

These across-district summary statistics mask high variation found among districts in both overall testing, as well as the proportion of time absorbed by state (versus district) requirements. At each grade level (kindergarten, third, and seventh), we find that the range in testing hours can vary substantially.

Kindergarten

As expected, there is the least amount of state- and district-mandated testing in kindergarten, when compared with other grades. In fact, only four of the states in this study— Ohio, Colorado, Indiana, and Georgia— seem to mandate any state kindergarten testing. The rest of the testing calendar is a reflection of district decision making. In seven of the districts in our study, there were two or fewer hours of math and ELA testing at this grade level. Only Shelby County schools had no required testing. The balance of the five districts have more than two hours, with Atlanta and Indianapolis with the most required testing for the typical kindergarten student (see Figure 3).

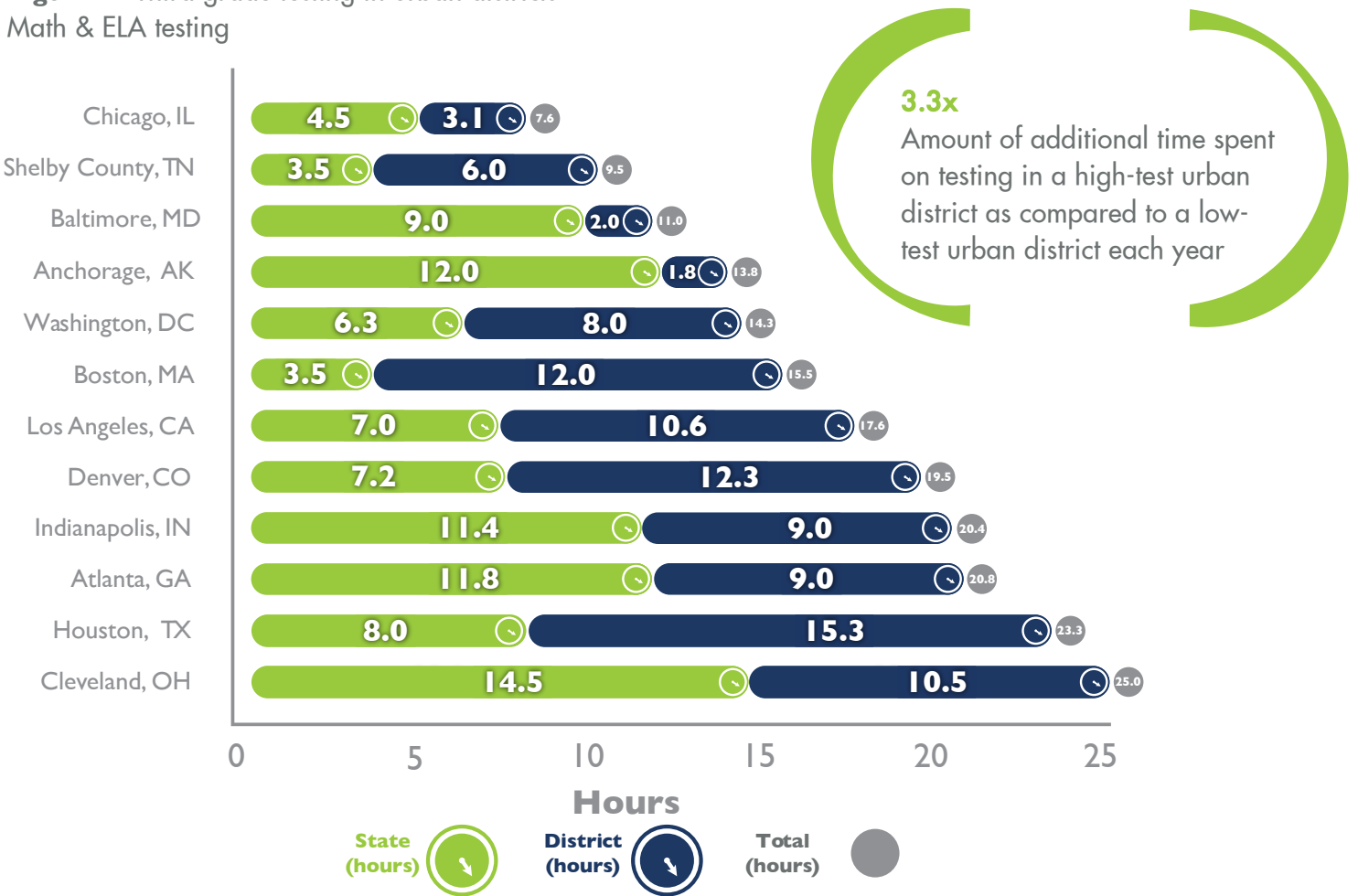
Figure 3: Kindergarten testing in urban districts
Math & ELA testing



Third Grade

While the average amount of math and ELA testing in third grade is 16.6 hours (see Figure 2), there are some districts with fewer than 10 hours, as seen in Chicago and Shelby County, to more than 20 hours as seen in Indianapolis, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Houston. This disparity is fairly substantial, with the amount of testing varying by more than three times between the low- and high-test districts. How significant is this difference? If we estimate that a typical school day includes about 5.5 instructional hours, then the difference between a low-test district and a high-test district could be more than three instructional days per year (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Third grade testing in urban districts*
Math & ELA testing

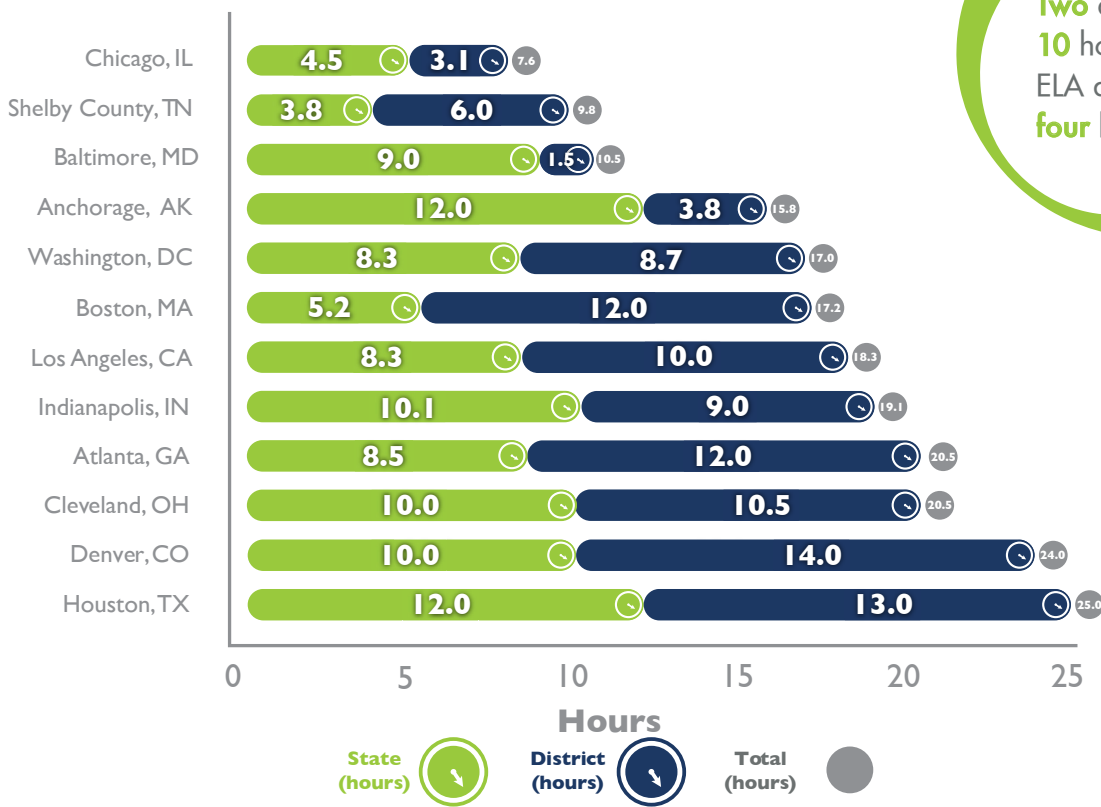


* Chicago data revised for Illinois state test

Seventh Grade

In seventh grade, there are about 17.1 hours of ELA and math testing, on average, in the urban districts in our sample (see Figure 2). Again, Chicago and Shelby County emerged as the two districts with the lowest amount of state and district testing with fewer than 10 hours of testing, and Atlanta, Cleveland, Denver, and Houston having the greatest amount of testing with more than 20 hours of testing. Put another way, the typical seventh grade student in Houston has about 17 hours more testing than the typical seventh grade student in Chicago (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Seventh grade testing in urban districts*
Math & ELA testing



Two districts have less than 10 hours of seventh grade ELA and math testing while four have more than 20

The third and seventh grade results also show that there is a significant amount of variation that occurs not just in total testing, but in how much districts are testing independent of the state requirements. In Baltimore, for example, a typical seventh grade student has only 1.5 hours of district testing in addition to their state testing while in Denver, a typical student can expect to have 14.0 more hours of testing on top of their state tests.

* Chicago data revised for Illinois state test

To more fully appreciate the impact that these differences in testing create, consider that the typical student in the district with the most testing in our sample, Denver, will have about 159.4 hours of math and ELA testing by the time he/she finishes the eighth grade. By comparison, the typical student in Chicago will have had just 53.8 hours of math and ELA testing. The difference of about 105 hours, after nine school years, amounts to about 19 instructional days, or almost four weeks of schools (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Cumulative effect of differences in testing *
Low-test and high-test urban district comparison

105
Number of additional hours a student in a high-test urban district would spend on testing as compared to a student in a low-test urban district by eighth grade



* Chicago data revised for Illinois state test

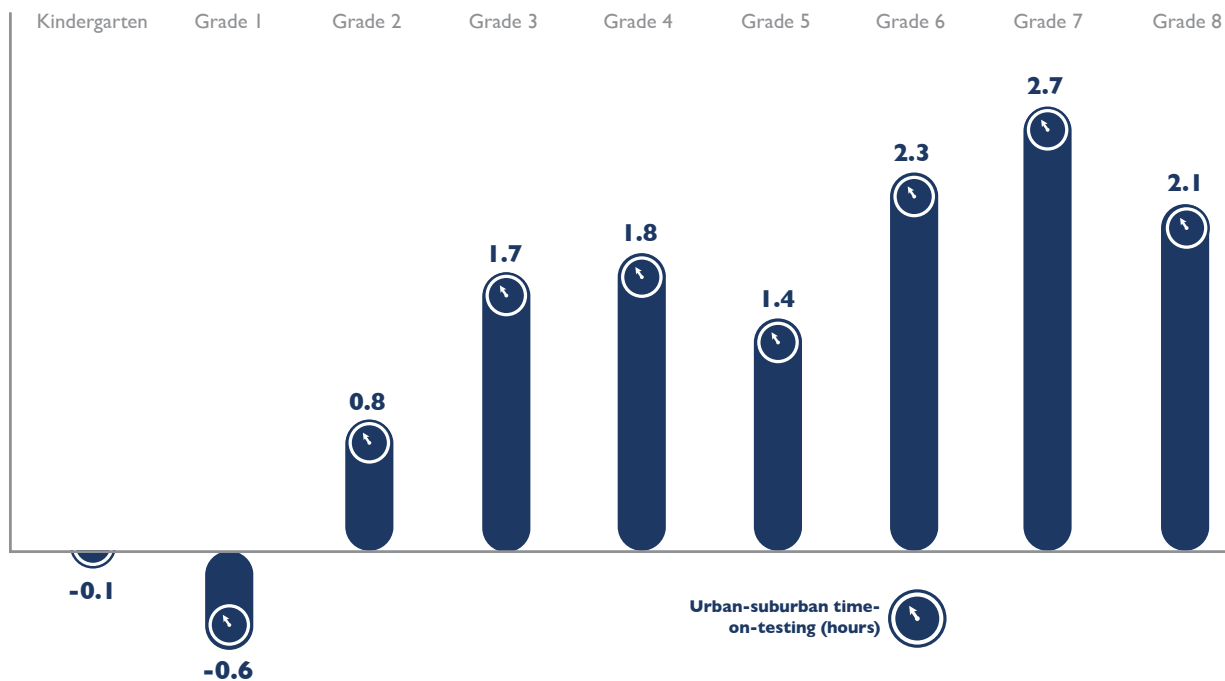
Finding 3. Urban districts spend, on average, more time than their suburban counterparts on testing. Suburban districts in this study average 1.3 percent or less of the school year on testing.

The next section of the report examines the differences between urban school districts and surrounding suburban districts. For this analysis, we used our focal sample of six urban districts, including Washington, D.C.; Indianapolis, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; Boston, Massachusetts; Los Angeles, California; and Shelby County, Tennessee and compared them to a set of surrounding suburban communities (see Appendix 1 for a list of suburban comparison districts). Of the 20 suburban districts in our sample, the average time spent on testing in a school year is 0.3 percent in kindergarten, 1.3 percent in third grade, and 1.2 percent in seventh grade.

To make these comparisons, our analysis looks at the average difference between each of the urban districts and their respective suburban districts. When each focal urban district is compared to its surrounding communities, the urban districts average about 1.3 hours more testing annually than their suburban counterparts in combined ELA and math testing (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Difference in math and ELA testing by grade in urban and suburban districts

1.3
Average amount of additional testing in hours that an urban district requires as compared to surrounding suburbs each year



While the urban districts are, on average, testing more than their suburban counterparts, a district-by-district analysis shows how this varies across locales. Three of the urban focal districts in this study test less than their suburban comparison districts, including Los Angeles, Chicago, and Shelby County, whereas three districts, Boston, Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis, test more than the suburban districts.

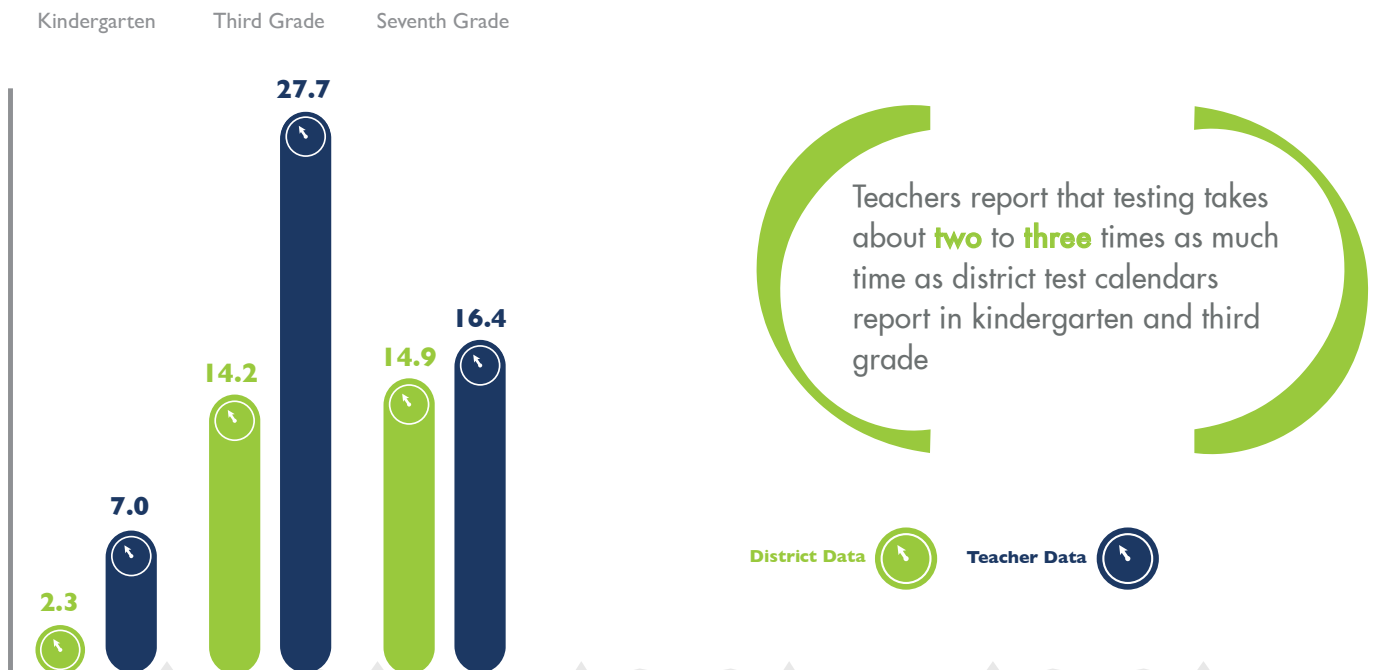
Finding 4. Teachers calculate test administration time to be more than double the length reported in district calendars in elementary grades.

While these studies of the district assessment calendars are informative to learn about students’ time-on-testing, these hours express only the time allocated for students to complete these tests. For most teachers and administrators, it has long been clear that the technical administration time does not equal the amount of instructional time a teacher loses. However, this report is the first to quantify the difference.

To better understand how much instructional time is being spent on testing, we asked teachers in six urban sites about how much time is spent on administering tests, specifically asking, “Each time a [specific] test is given, how many minutes does the test take to administer?” We also asked them, in addition to the time it takes to administer these assessments, other ways in which their instructional time was impacted by these tests. In this analysis, only teacher responses from the six focal districts are used.

In this sample, we asked over 300 teachers, including those in kindergarten, third, and seventh grades, how much time they spent administering tests and found they reported spending, on average, about three times as much time in kindergarten and twice as much in third grade as the amount of time set aside for testing on district calendars. In seventh grade, the report on time-on-testing from teachers was closer to what the district calendars reported (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Average math and ELA testing in the six urban focal districts according to district test calendars and teacher reports*



* Data revised for Illinois state test

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In this analysis, the names of the tests that teachers reported they used were reviewed at the various grade levels and only those that were also required by the district or state were included, thus ensuring that there was a fair comparison between the teacher reports and the district calendars.

The difference between how elementary teachers are reporting on time spent on these assessments and the district time for student completion can be revealing in terms of how much time is actually being spent in schools on testing. In third grade, for instance, while time students spend on answering test questions might be 14.2 hours, the real cost is double that. In the younger grades, the process of executing test administration with inexperienced test-takers has high time costs which appear to diminish over time. These reports only reflect teachers' calculations of administration, not the additional time burdens associated with testing such as preparing students and analyzing data. The additional time cost is taken up in the teacher report data in this section.

We also asked teachers to report on the assessments they give in their own classroom and those given throughout the school. While there was great variation on the amount of time spent on classroom- and school-based assessment, classroom and school based assessments absorbed substantially more time than state- and district-mandated assessments.

In addition to asking how much time they spent on testing, teachers were also asked an open-ended question on how state and district tests impacted instructional time in their classrooms. The teachers' responses make it clear that they conceive of the time spent on testing as more than just the time it takes to complete the tests. In the analysis of these open-ended comments from teachers, four general themes emerged concerning the impact on instructional time. These themes were:

- *Assessments done well can be a seamless part of a teacher's curriculum and instructional practice.*
- *Some assessments are not well-aligned with state standards or district and school curricula.*
- *Test preparation can take up instructional time.*
- *The ways tests are administered can adversely impact instructional time.*

Assessments done well can be a seamless part of a teacher's curriculum and instructional practice.

A theme that emerged among teachers' responses was how assessments, when used appropriately, had a positive impact on instructional time in classrooms. When teachers made positive comments on how student test results were useful to them in driving instructional improvements, it was often as part of a process that required them to incorporate assessment results as part of their curricular planning, differentiating of instruction, and student monitoring.

- *"District assessments are administered to students when it is convenient to teachers during a two-week window. The window of time is usually the last two weeks of a quarter. Teachers utilize these results much more successfully than state-mandated tests. They are timely and inform teaching immediately. Instructional time is often not missed because the tests are based on the standards being taught." – Third grade teacher*

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- “By using the data from the assessments, instructional time can be maximized by focusing on the students’ specific needs. My planning is always focused around the data from these assessments.” – Third grade teacher
 - “Instructional time is impacted as data is derived and used to plan to differentiate the needs of students in small group instruction and/or whole group emphasis of deficit areas.” – Third grade teacher

While these teachers were clear that student assessment results were useful to them in conjunction with standards and curriculum, this seemed to be evident when the assessments they used were tightly integrated with what they taught. In these instances, testing was not seen as an additional burden but as a seamless part of their instructional practices. It is when the assessments that teachers were using were not in alignment with standards or their curriculum that teachers perceived there to be a more negative impact of testing on their instructional time.

Some assessments are not well-aligned with state standards or district and school curricula.

An issue that was raised by a few teachers concerned how district-mandated tests or district-provided curricular materials could sometimes fall short of alignment with the state test, causing confusion or extra work. However, we also find that when district assessments are aligned with curricula or the state test, teachers found the assessments useful in their practice.

- “There is not a direct correlation between what is asked on the [district test] and the [state test].” – Seventh grade teacher
- “Yes, units of study need to be planned around them, the textbooks do not match up so there is a lot of skipping around which can be confusing for students.” – Seventh grade teacher

When teachers perceive a lack of alignment of tests with district or school curricula or state standards, teachers were observed to comment that the administration and preparation for these tests were an add-on to their regular instruction and not an integral part of their instruction.

Test preparation can take up instructional time.

In addition to the time it takes to administer them, a refrain heard among teachers was that they often set aside time to provide students with test-taking skills. This test preparation seemed to vary between setting a few days aside before the state test to being a regular part of the school day or week in other cases.

- “It takes a lot of time to prepare for the tests. We usually spend time making sure students review what they learned during the year to ensure they are ready.” – Third grade teacher
- “Yes, with daily test prep and standards review sessions. More than 35 percent of instructional time is spent on these assessments per year. That includes initial instruction, review, scoring, planning, preparation of additional assessment materials, and reassessments.” – Third grade teacher

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- “The prepping for the test takes a lot of time. Instead of possibly doing projects or more hands-on learning, we really focused on the testing format and preparing our students to be comfortable taking the test. The prepping starts at the beginning of the year and ends in April. We also have to do the practice tests for the [state test] and [district test]. These practice tests can take up to an hour to do.” – Third grade teacher
 - “We spend time practicing getting into our testing groups, taking practice tests, etc. We also typically take time from our usual instruction to focus on test prep in the week or two leading to the test. For example, I stop teaching the novel we are reading for a week to do multiple choice test prep. Also, during the week of the test, we have literally no instruction. I would say overall we lose about 15-20 days of instruction to testing to statewide testing. Another 20 days we are instructing, but it is focused on test prep.” – Seventh grade teacher

The ways tests are administered can adversely impact instructional time.

When it came to district testing, one of the most significant ways in which these tests impacted instructional time seemed to be in the logistics associated with administering these tests. Many districts have adopted formative or interim testing that requires them to be administered on computers. While computer-based testing often means results can be returned to students and teachers quickly, this often requires whole computer labs or libraries to be used exclusively for testing. Also, unlike state testing where there are very clear administrative routines concerning the delivery, administration, handling, and grading of assessments, there is often less infrastructure in schools and districts to manage and support district-based testing.

- “Grading the tests and tracking their scores takes a lot of time away from instruction. If students do not track their own data, the tests are worthless.” – Seventh grade teacher

Another area concerning testing logistics and the impact on instructional time that emerged concerned how kindergarten testing was handled. Some districts are using computer-based, whole-class assessment for their kindergarten students while others rely on teacher-determined assessments of kindergarten student development, often requiring them to work with students in a one-on-one setting at the exclusion of working with other students, as seen in the following comments.

- “It takes away from learning because students are given busy work in order to keep them quiet enough to administer the test in the classroom. It makes me unavailable to teach. There are positives too. I use the information to see what individual students need academically.” – Kindergarten teacher
- “While one on one tests offer much more valuable information than any computerized test can offer at the kindergarten level, they are extraordinarily time consuming. The beginning of the year is very difficult as most students have great challenges with keeping quiet independently while I am testing, which not only impacts their learning, but also the testing of the individual students.” – Kindergarten teacher
- “Scoring and entering results into computer or transferring data to answer sheets. Cannot test whole group at one time. Must test in small groups to get best results.” – Kindergarten teacher

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined in the report, Teach Plus recommends these next steps for policy:

Shift the debate from global to local. Since the adoption of the federal No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, there have been continual calls to reduce the amount of “testing in America,” including the amount of federally-required testing. This report shows that there is no uniformity in “testing in America,” rather a wide-ranging set of expectations that vary by district. Likewise, this research shows that the tests that take up the most time are not the state tests administered in response to federal requirements but district tests. New federal legislation (a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) is unlikely to roll back decisions made at the local level. Individual districts should evaluate their current testing regime in light of the new knowledge that an urban district in our study spends 1.7 percent of the school year on testing and 1.3 percent or less in suburban districts.

Work with teachers to streamline testing in high-test districts. While the average amount of instructional time schools spend on state- and-district-mandated testing is considerably lower than most people would estimate, the range in time-on-testing by district is strikingly wide. This has clear implications for public policy. Districts at the higher end of the spectrum should commit to ensuring that their students are not shortchanged on instructional time and should streamline testing requirements. As a first step, they should ask teachers which district-mandated tests are useful — and which aren't.

Focus on test content over test time. A review of student achievement results as reported on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows no clear relationship between the time spent on testing and student test results (see Appendix 2). The teacher comments make clear that when tests are properly used in conjunction with the curriculum, test appropriate standards, and are part of a teacher's regular instructional practice, the amount of time allocated for testing becomes a less important factor. Debating time-on-testing, then, without a discussion of the test type and content misses the point.

Recognize that some of the test-features teachers value take time. Constructed response items, essays, and other assessments of higher-order thinking take longer than simple multiple choice test items, yet teachers want the data they provide. District leaders need to listen to teachers in order to better understand which tests are worthwhile. Thousands of teachers from 48 states recently rated the value of assessments required by their state or district on a teacher-created website, Assessment Advisor (<http://www.assessment-advisor.org/>). Teachers were clear: not all tests are created equal. Some fit seamlessly into their instruction. Others don't. Districts should involve teachers in the test adoption process to ensure that required tests are well-aligned to standards, integrated into the curriculum, and give teachers the information they need to improve their practice.

Proceed with Common Core implementation, recognizing that long-term gain will exceed short-term pain. The assessments associated with Common Core have the potential to create additional angst over testing. They will reflect higher standards at each grade level; their attention to higher-order skills will take time; and some students will undergo “double-testing” as the new tests are field-tested while current tests are still in place. Ultimately, these tests should better satisfy teachers' wish for tests that align to curriculum and test higher-order skills.

Report test-time in ways that better reflect teacher-reality, especially in the elementary grades. Teachers in kindergarten and third grade calculate test administration time to be almost double the time reflected in district calendars. This should be clearly communicated to parents and the public. After all, even when teacher estimates of time are factored in, the average amount of testing does not exceed four percent of the academic year, leaving the remaining 96 percent of class time for non-test activities.

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Appendix 1

Urban school districts

- Anchorage School District (Anchorage, Alaska)
- Atlanta Public Schools (Atlanta, Georgia)
- Baltimore City Public Schools (Baltimore, Maryland)
- Boston Public Schools (Boston, Massachusetts)
- Chicago Public Schools (Chicago, Illinois)
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District (Cleveland, Ohio)
- Denver Public Schools (Denver, Colorado)
- District of Columbia Public Schools (Washington, DC)
- Houston Independent School District (Houston, Texas)
- Indianapolis Public Schools (Indianapolis, Indiana)
- Los Angeles Unified School District (Los Angeles, California)
- Shelby County Schools (Memphis, Tennessee)

Suburban comparison districts

Washington, DC

- Fairfax County Public Schools (Fairfax, Virginia)
- Prince George’s County Public Schools (Prince George’s County, Maryland)
- Howard County Public Schools (Howard County, Maryland)

Chicago, Illinois

- Kinnikinnick School District #131 (Roscoe, Illinois)
- Minooka School District #201 (Minooka, Illinois)
- River Forest Public Schools (River Forest, Illinois)

Boston, Massachusetts

- Lexington Public Schools (Lexington, Massachusetts)
- Needham Public Schools (Needham, Massachusetts)
- Somerville Public Schools (Somerville, Massachusetts)
- Lawrence Public Schools (Lawrence, Massachusetts)

Indianapolis, Indiana

- Brownsburg Community School Corporation (Brownsburg, Indiana)
- Center Grove Community School Corporation (Greenwood, Indiana)
- Merrillville Community School Corporation (Merrillville, Indiana)

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Shelby County (Memphis), Tennessee

- Elizabethton Tennessee City Schools (Elizabethton, Tennessee)
- Hamilton County Department of Education (Chattanooga, Tennessee)
- Knox County Schools (Knoxville, Tennessee)
- Sullivan County Department of Education (Blountville, Tennessee)

Los Angeles, California

- Garvey School District (Rosemead, California)
- Lawndale Elementary School District (Lawndale, California)
- Whittier City School District (Whittier, California)

Appendix 2

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2011 and 2013 Results

One logical question that stems from this study is whether there is a correlation between how much time a district tests and the respective student achievement. We looked at the data on test time and student improvement on the NAEP tests using the closest grade levels, which are fourth and eighth grades, and from the most recently available data, 2011 to 2013, and while no evident pattern seems clear, this is a jumping off point for additional research.

Change between 2011 and 2013 NAEP mathematics and reading average scores for fourth- and eighth-grade public school students, by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Mathematics		Reading	
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 4	Grade 8
Nation (public)	↑ 1	↑ 1	◆ 1	↑ 2
Large city	↑ 2	◆ 2	◆ 2	↑ 3
Atlanta	↑ 5	◆ 1	◆ 3	◆ 2
Baltimore City	◆ -3	◆ -2	◆ 4	↑ 6
Boston	◆ #	◆ 2	◆ -3	◆ 2
Chicago	↑ 7	◆ -1	◆ 3	◆ 1
Cleveland	◆ #	◆ -3	◆ -3	◆ -1
District of Columbia (DCPS)	↑ 7	↑ 5	↑ 5	↑ 8
Houston	◆ -1	◆ 1	↓ -5	◆ #
Los Angeles	↑ 5	◆ 4	↑ 4	↑ 4

- ↑ Higher average score in 2013.
- ↓ Lower average score in 2013.
- ◆ No significant difference between 2011 and 2013.
- # Rounds to zero.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2011 and 2013 Mathematics and Reading Assessments. Retrieved January 24, 2014 from http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_tuda_2013/#/executive-summary



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End Notes

[1] To account for variation among districts in how they categorize testing subjects, in this study, English Language Arts includes test descriptions that include ELA, writing, reading, literacy, and speaking. When districts or states indicate a range of time allocated for student completion of tests, the high end of the range is used.

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The Student & the Stopwatch:

How much time do American students spend on testing?

By the Numbers

- 1.7** Percent of a typical urban student's school year spent on testing in grades three and seven
- 0.4** Percent of a typical urban student's school year spent on testing in kindergarten
- <1.3** Percent of a typical suburban student's school year spent on testing
- 3.1** Number of hours a typical kindergartener in an urban district spends on testing annually
- 16+** Number of hours typical third and seventh graders spend on testing annually in urban districts
- 3.3x** Amount of additional time spent on testing in a high-test urban district as compared to a low-test urban district each year
- 105** Number of additional hours a student in a high-test urban district would spend on testing as compared to a student in a low-test urban district by eighth grade
- 1.3** Average amount of additional testing, in hours, that this study's urban districts require compared to surrounding suburbs, each year between kindergarten and eighth grade
- >2x** Teacher estimates of test-administration time compared to district calendars for kindergarten and third grade