

PS 321 educators believe tests are extremely useful if the tests are valid, and used thoughtfully, as true measures of student learning and growth. We use authentic assessments on a daily basis to gain valuable insights into the children in our classrooms, and help guide instruction.

We believe that parents should be knowledgeable about all aspects of their children's education, including testing policy.

Our goal today is to provide useful information so parents can make informed decisions for their children.

Lack of transparency is one of the issues that the Testing Task Force has with current testing policy. In order for exams to be useful diagnostic tools, teachers and parents must be able to see the questions as well as the student's responses. Until 2011 tests were released in full.

When Pearson got the contract in 2012 this changed and tests were not released at all in 2012 or 2013. Students reported the infamous "Talking Pineapple" passage in 2012, bringing the quality of the tests into question.

50% of the test questions were released in 2014 and 2015. Our presentation today is based on several of the released questions.

Are these tests developmentally appropriate?

PS 321 teachers called a rally after administering the ELA in 2014 saying, "The teachers and administration are truly devastated by what a terrible test it was and how little it will tell us about our students." The PS 321 rally gained media attention and dozens of NYC schools followed suit.

This fall we surveyed PS 321 teachers in grades 3-5 and asked:

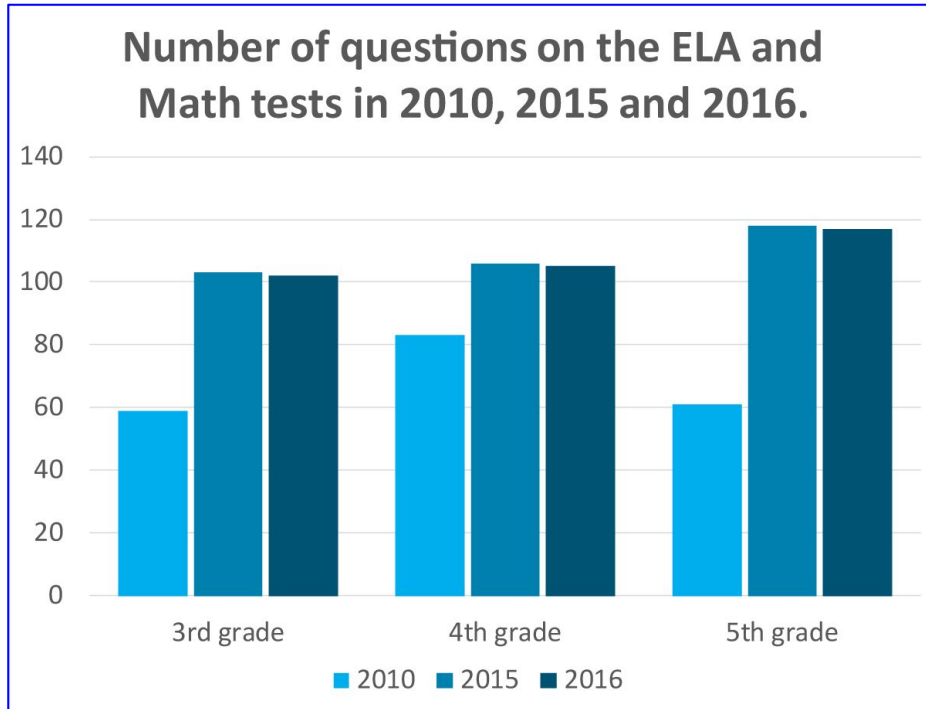
Do you think the length and content of the current ELA and Math tests are developmentally appropriate for the students you teach?

25 out of 28 teachers answered "NO" (1 answered "YES" and 2 felt the Math test is fair)

When you receive your students test scores do they provide you with helpful feedback about your students? All 28 teachers surveyed answered "NO"

**What has
changed?**

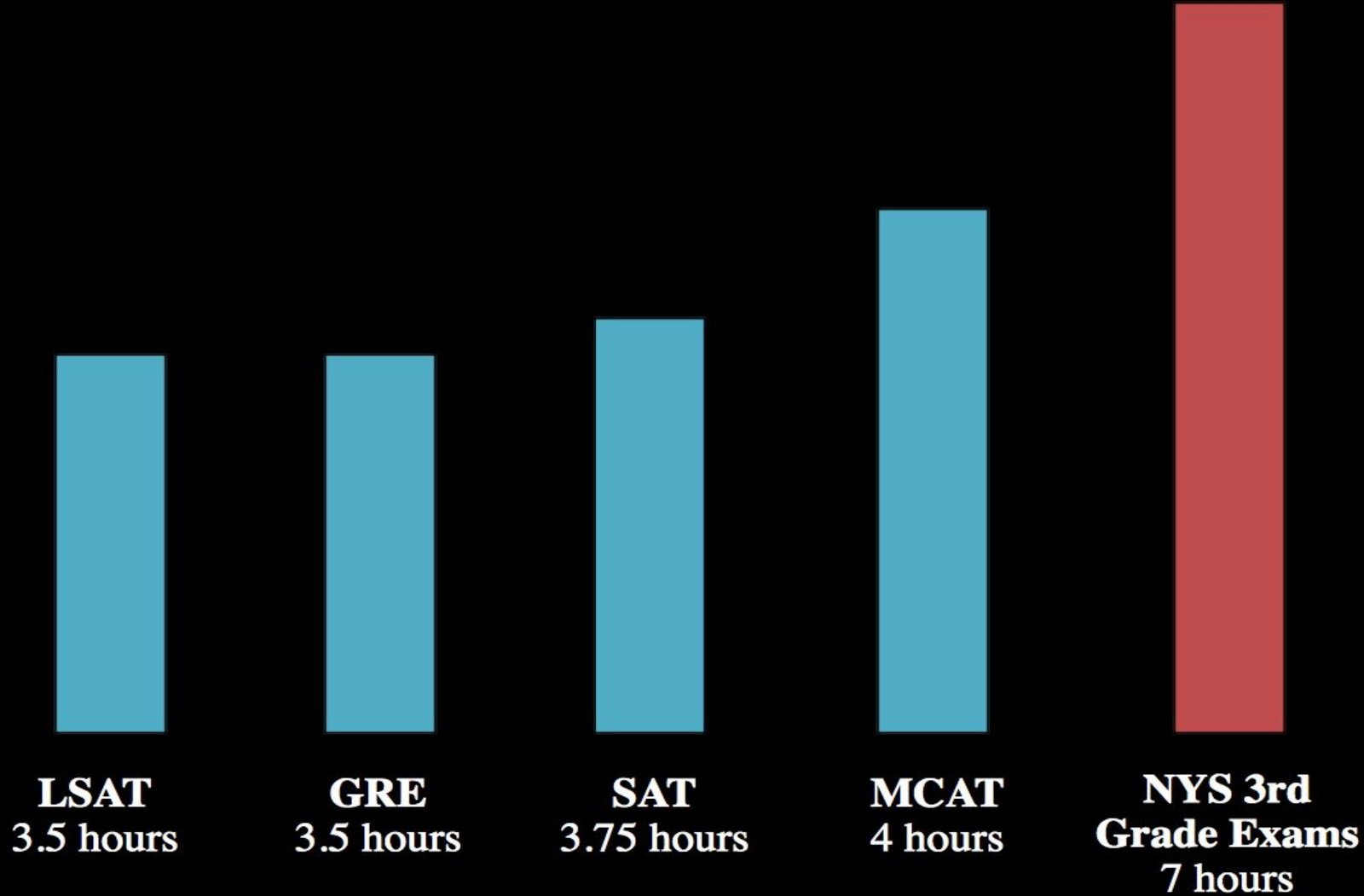
This year the tests will be untimed and the number of questions was reduced.



Using NYSED's online test archive, we calculated how many test items students were required to answer in 2010 and 2015 and compared that to the number of items in 2016. A 5th grader this April will be faced with 117 questions (combined math and ELA). 2010's 5th grader? 61. That's 56 more questions, or an increase of 92%.

Test Length in 2015

Grade	Test	Time/day	Total testing time
3	Math & ELA	6 days, 70 minutes per day	7 hours
4	Math & ELA	6 days, 70 minutes per day	7 hours
5	Math & ELA	6 days, 90 minutes per day	9 hours
3/4/5 Children w/IEP	Math & ELA	6 days, up to 180 minutes per day	Up to 18 hours
4	Science	Untimed	



Teacher evaluation

In 2014 NYS passed a new law requiring that teacher evaluations be based 20% on growth in student state test scores, and 20% on “local measures” to be chosen from a menu of options at the school level. The remaining 60% was based on observations by principals and/or assistant principals. Prior to this evaluations were based entirely on principal observations.

In 2015 Cuomo proposed new legislation, The Education Transformation Act, that increased the weight of growth on state test scores to 50% of a teacher’s evaluation. New York State Legislators passed this proposal into law.

This year (2016), New York State issued a moratorium on using state test scores for teacher evaluation until 2020. (continued on next slide)

However, the state law reads that test scores count for 50% of teacher evaluations, so teachers will now be evaluated on other measures. This year, schools will be using “local measures” for teacher evaluations. Schools chose their local measures from a menu of MOSLs (Measures Of Student Learning) last spring. At PS 321 our local measure for ELA is children’s performance on the running records. Our local measure for math is schoolwide performance on the 4th grade Math tests. As a result, we do not have a measure to substitute for the Math tests so observations will be weighted more heavily this year.

Many schools in NYC use NYC Performance Tasks (another standardized test) as their local measure. Teachers in these schools will be evaluated based on the scores on these tests. ESL teacher’s evaluations are based on NYSESLAT scores.

We do not know yet what tests will be used to evaluate teachers next year.

New York State replaced Pearson, signing a \$44 million contract with Questar.

The state tests that will be administered in April 2016 were created by Pearson, as in years past.

The new contract requires Questar to develop tests that can be given on computers. When testing is done on computers, third graders will be expected to type multi-paragraph responses to essay questions in order to complete the tests. This is already happening in other states that do testing on computers.

It is worth noting that many of the states who administered PARCC tests on computers in 2014 faced serious technological challenges.

**It is also worth noting that Questar has
never developed ELA or Math tests for
Grades 3-8.**

**Their only other contract is with
Mississippi.**

Middle School Admission

At BNS 82% of students opted out in 2014 and 95% opted out in 2015. Here is what their principal says when asked about middle school:

In our experience, middle schools seek to admit a range of students. We've had students get accepted to their top choice schools with high scores, low scores and no scores. We've also had students not get accepted to their top choice schools with high scores, low scores, and no scores. We have heard from middle schools that attendance and lateness are considered during the admissions process, along with many other factors. It does seem that there is a degree of random selection to the whole thing.

— Anna Allanbrook, Brooklyn New School Principal

How does opting out affect MS applications?

The following schools did NOT look at test scores in 2014 or 2015:

MS 447 (Math & Science)

New Voices

MS 839

Mark Twain

Park Slope Collegiate

Brooklyn Prospect Charter School

Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies

BUGS

MS 442 Carroll Gardens School for

Innovation

ICE (Institute for Collaborative Education)

These schools DID look at test scores this year:

MS 88 (but they do not penalize children without scores)

MS 51

The MS 51 website currently states:

Report Card = 40%

Test Scores = 25%

Attendance = 10%

Academic and Personal Behaviors = 25%

Missing test scores will be replaced with an additional 10% in math and ELA report card grades and an additional 5% in Academic and Personal Behaviors.

**What is still
the same?**

How do the state tests affect our children?

In 2015, 6.9% of students with disabilities, and 4.4 % of English Language Learners passed the ELA statewide. In Math 11.3% of students with disabilities, and 14.6 % of English Language Learners passed.

This leads many educators to question the appropriateness of administering tests to children who we know will fail them.

In order to meet the needs of students who get testing modifications, we need all hands on deck. This means art, music and gym teachers, as well as service providers for children with IEPs, dedicate their time to testing during the 2 weeks of testing, as well as when make up tests are given. This affects all the children in the school. Kindergarteners also lose recess while tests are being administered.

How do the state tests affect our teachers?

ELA and Math test scores cannot be used for teacher evaluation this year, however, it has been suggested that future evaluations may be based on multiple years of data (for example, by averaging several years of scores). This means this year's scores could potentially be used to evaluate teachers in 2020.

Teachers lose valuable time for instruction:

- Teachers must pace spring curriculum around the testing schedule
- Although we limit test prep as much as possible, the skills required to do well on these tests are not the same skills needed to succeed in school, and require practice.
- On testing days, it is very difficult to do any real teaching: children are exhausted and need to unwind. Focus is very limited.

How do these tests affect our school?

- Daily schedules for grade K-5 must be rearranged for testing days.
- PS 321 is required to send 7 teachers off-site to grade tests for 5 days each, removing them from their classrooms. We also must pay for substitute teachers to cover their classes.
- Guidance counselors, related service providers (OT, PT, paras etc), and academic intervention teachers may have their regular schedules interrupted to help administer tests and makeups to students in small groups. Beyond the ELA and Math tests, they help with the NYSESLAT, Science, and Gifted and Talented testing throughout the year. Scheduling all of this is formidable.

(continued on next slide)

- Test answer sheets must be copied and packaged for scoring which is confusing and time consuming. All of the Assistant Principals spend time on this, and often Liz has to help too, because there is a very quick turnaround time on this task.
- After all answer sheets are printed by the school, scanned by the school, and sent to scoring sites. Originals must be stored and organized in the basement. With 2100 books of tests, this is a huge amount of paper to move and manage. If there are mistakes, we must hand deliver the tests they need to the scoring sites.
- PS 321 must cover all expenses to print answer documents except for paper. The school must pay for a special printer and toner that is required for all the copying. This is very costly. The pencils, rulers, envelopes are all also paid for out of the school budget.

(continued on next slide)

Every school has a test administrator, often an Assistant Principal. Time is spent on testing related work from the last week of March through the end of May. That is 8 weeks that would otherwise be spent doing the following:

- Observing instruction and coach teachers
- Helping students and teachers with discipline issues
- Interacting with parents on issues unrelated to testing
- Organizing student volunteer projects and school events
- Working on content areas and student support services

In a school as large as PS 321 one assistant principal is not enough to cover all of the time needed. This year all 3 assistant principals, and Alex Messer (our Math Coach) will all be spending a significant amount of time on test related duties.

How do these tests affect public schools in our city?

Many of the teachers at PS 321 have spent time teaching at high poverty schools. They have witnessed first hand how the current emphasis on standardized tests has narrowed curriculum. In some schools, social studies is not taught because the entire focus is on ELA and Math. Students at these schools are being deprived of the well rounded education that we demand for our children at PS 321.

Additionally, even with the current moratorium on using test scores in teacher evaluation, schools with low scores are still threatened with receivership and closure. The small improvements that we are seeing this year have not alleviated any of the test based pressure these schools face.

What do we want?

Significantly shorter ELA and Math tests (ideally 1 day each)

Tests must be fully transparent to parents and teachers in order to be useful diagnostic tools

Appropriate tests for students with IEPs and English Language Learners

Tests should be criterion based

Standardized test scores should not be used to evaluate teachers, principals, or schools