

Education Minnesota

OLA report finds flaws in standardized testing in Minnesota

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ST. PAUL, Minn. March, 6, 2016 - The deep flaws in standardized testing revealed in the new report from the Office of the Legislative Auditor confirm the public's confusion about these tests and should lead policymakers to make necessary reforms, said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota.

The audit report released Monday, "Standardized Student Testing," found four major flaws in standardized testing in the state, and made an important call for an accounting of the local costs to school districts. The issues:

- Misspent time. Teachers are spending too much time teaching students how to take tests. Students lose too much learning time on test preparation and test taking. More than 300 schools spent five weeks or more on testing in 2015-16.
- The ripple effect. Assessment season affects students who are not taking the tests because testing monopolizes computer labs and libraries, and forces the reassignment of teachers and counselors.
- Pointless laws and mandates. One example: State law requires MDE to distribute essentially meaningless measures of "progress toward college and career readiness" for elementary and middle school students.
- The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments were not designed to help improve the instruction of individual students, and they still don't. Fifty-three percent of teachers told the OLA the MCAs were not useful for improving instruction while 41 percent said they were only "somewhat useful." Most districts buy additional assessments to complement the MCAs.

"One thing is obvious after reading this report. The taxpayers are not getting their money's worth from this sprawling system of state and local standardized testing," Specht said. "It's past time for districts, the state and the federal government to streamline all these assessments so educators get some useful data without disrupting the whole school for a month."

"The MCAs can be a useful snapshot of the statewide school system, but the auditor confirmed they can be misleading for individual students," Specht said. "If parents want to know how their children are doing in school, they should ask someone who knows the students' names. Ask an educator – not a test score."

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota's members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota's public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota's community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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