



## Testing is Broken. Can This Bill Fix It?



They cause anxiety, steal time from learning, narrow the curriculum, fail to address long-standing inequities, and only about a [quarter of educators](#) find the results useful.

These are just some of the alarming criticisms leveled at standardized tests, which the 2015 federal Every Student Succeeds Act requires students to take annually in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school, and three times in science (once in grades 3-5; once in grades 6-9; and once in grades 10-12).

A [bill](#) introduced in March by U.S. Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) would change that, reducing the testing burden on teachers and students through methods such as testing a representative sample of students rather than assessing every single child and limiting the amount of testing per grade-level span.

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, Rep. Bowman, a [former teacher and principal](#), hosted a lawmaker/policy staffer briefing in Washington on this “[More Teaching, Less Testing Act](#).” The event focused on [Educational Accountability 3.0: Beyond ESSA](#), a report published earlier this year by NEPC and the [Beyond Test Scores Project](#) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

[Educational Accountability 3.0](#) grew out of a convening of scholars held in 2022 in Boulder, drawing upon research to offer six recommendations for creating an equitable and effective assessment and accountability system:

- 1. Align assessment policy with goals for high-quality curricula and instruction:** This means that even as states set standards, curricula would remain in the

hands of districts and schools, and assessment would be embedded in the curricula, as would grading standards.

- 2. Develop a system with reciprocal accountability:** Just as assessments aim to hold educators accountable to lawmakers and the public, lawmakers and the public in turn need to be accountable to schools for providing the resources required to provide all students with rich opportunities to learn.
- 3. Ensure that representative community members play a meaningful role in the system:** Under the current system, marginalized and minoritized communities have typically borne the brunt of the negative consequences of accountability measures—such as closures and state takeovers—but they have not necessarily had a seat at the table. New systems should be designed with input from currently disenfranchised stakeholders.
- 4. Move toward a broader array of school quality indicators:** This recommendation entails broadening assessments beyond standardized tests, lowering the stakes of assessments, and decreasing the time spent on summative testing. This occurs through such practices as assessing a representative sample of students rather than testing every single child, and adopting a broader array of indicators that include not only outputs (such as graduation rates or test results) but inputs (such as access to high-quality learning experiences).
- 5. Ensure interpretable and actionable results:** Accountability measures should support ongoing improvement of schools with timely data that educators and the general public can access and understand.
- 6. Design a system that will evolve and improve:** The accountability system itself needs to grow and improve over time based on the experiences of educators, students, and families.

ESSA was due for reauthorization a few years ago. The report and the attendees at the Hill Briefing hope to light a fire that will spur Congress to act, pointing out that the current test-focused federal policies continue to harm America's schoolchildren.

The report authors who spoke at the briefing were NEPC director [Kevin Welner](#), NEPC Fellows [Jack Schneider](#) of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, [Edward García Fierros](#) of Villanova University, [David García](#) of Arizona State University, [Julian Vasquez Heilig](#) of Western Michigan University, and [Christopher Saldaña](#) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, along with [Scott Marion](#) of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, [Jennifer Randall](#) of the University of Michigan, [Andrew Saultz](#) of Pacific University, and [Stephen Sireci](#) of the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

NEPC Resources on Accountability and Testing

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