

Study: Kids Take 100-Plus Required Tests Through The 12th Grade

BY JENNIFER C. KERR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Students, parents and teachers have long lamented the hours that kids spend taking standardized tests, especially since the introduction of the Common Core academic standards. But just how much time each year is it?

- A. Between 10-15 hours.
- B. Between 20-25 hours.
- C. Between 30-35 hours.

The correct answer is "B," according to a comprehensive study of 66 of the nation's big-city school districts by the Council of the Great City Schools. It said testing amounts to about 2.3 percent of classroom time for the average eighth-grader in public school. Between pre-K and 12th grade, students took about 112 mandatory standardized exams.

The study analyzed the time spent actually taking the tests, but it did not include the hours devoted to preparation ahead of the testing required by the federal government, states or local districts. It also did not include regular day-to-day classroom quizzes and tests in reading, math, science, foreign languages and more.

In connection with the study's release Saturday, President Barack Obama called for capping standardized testing at 2 percent of classroom time. Even while acknowledging that the government shares

some responsibility for an over-emphasis on testing, the president said federal officials would work with states, schools and teachers to "make sure that we're not obsessing about testing."

The Obama administration still supports annual standardized tests as a necessary assessment tool, and both House and Senate versions of an update to the No Child Left Behind law would continue annual testing. But the rewrite legislation would let states decide how to use test results to determine what to do with struggling schools. Differences between the two bills still need to be worked out.

"Learning is about so much more than just filling in the right bubble," Obama said in a video released on Facebook. "So we're going to work with states, school districts, teachers, and parents to make sure that we're not obsessing about testing."

To drive the point home, Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan met in the Oval Office on Monday with teachers and school officials working to reduce testing time. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Obama acknowledged in the session that the federal government can do more to ensure U.S. schools aren't overly focused on testing.

"How much constitutes too much time is really difficult to answer," said Michael Casserly, the council's executive director. He said the study found plenty of redundancy in required testing — supporting concerns from teachers and other critics about the tests consuming too much

teaching and learning time.

For example, Casserly said that researchers found some states and school districts were mandating not only end-of-year tests, but end-of-course tests in the same subjects, in the same grade.

"Having states and school districts jointly reviewing redundancy and overlap in their testing requirements will be an important step in reducing unnecessary assessments," he said.

The council reviewed testing for more than 7 million students in about three dozen states during the 2014-2015 school year.

A "testing action plan" released by the Education Department over the weekend said too many schools have unnecessary testing.

The department pledged to work with states and schools on ways to reduce time spent on testing, with federal guidance to the states expected in January. The plan also said the agency has adjusted its policies to provide more flexibility to states on how much significance to place on student test results in evaluating teachers.

Aiming to close achievement gaps and assess learning, the No Child Left Behind Act signed by President George W. Bush in 2002 mandated annual testing in reading and math for students in grades three through eight and again in high school. States and local school districts decide which standardized assessments to use to gauge student learning and progress in those two subjects and others.

Webster

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"I see kids all over town wearing them as 'Webster Winners,'" Ryken said. "That is what we want to see. We want to spread the message."

The strategy is to empower the kids to be allies for each other by giving them the tools not to simply be a bystander when bullying takes place. This included incorporating weekly meetings developed by each teacher where students can feel safe discussing bullying topics.

"Sometimes they role play, sometimes they watch a little clip online and talk about it," said school counselor

and anti-bullying committee member Lesli Hale. "Just to reinforce the contents of the program and get kids reporting."

Hale admits that it can be difficult for kids to get over that cultural aspect where telling an adult is seen as snitching or tattling. But because of the success of the program, Hale is seeing less of those fears.

Hale and school counselor Andrea Wright are permanent members of the committee. Each year, Webster teachers rotate as members to help the counselors plan the kick-off and other aspects of the weekly classroom discussions.

This year's other members include teachers Traci

Peterson and Melanie Duchsher.

The program usually runs the day before Thanksgiving, but this year's committee wanted the kick-off celebration to happen earlier to conjunct with "Character Counts" week.

"It is important to have community support like this," Wright said. "That is why we do it — to show that it is not just in the schools, it is something that is everywhere."

Ryken agreed that the biggest success of the program is the impact seen and practiced outside the classrooms and around the community.

"What means the most to me are the comments from parents that they are noticing it in other places," Ryken

said. "I think the more kids go through, the more they will be aware. That is really what it is. It is empowering them to stand up."

The excitement from the students was clear from the minute they entered the gymnasium Monday. Teachers and faculty notice the enthusiasm for the program and try to make this kick-off rally and the weekly programs fun, as well as educational.

"They are real hyped up about it, even the newbies like the pre-school to younger kindergarten," Peterson said. "I think they have just heard from older siblings and they catch on."

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Shooting

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Wollman has said state law requires him to charge a 16-year-old as an adult if he or she commits a serious felony.

Investigators said Buhl confronted Harrisburg High School Principal Kevin Lein with a handgun in his office on the morning of Sept. 30, and fired a single shot with a handgun. Lein suffered a gunshot wound to his right arm.

Buhl was tackled after the shooting by Assistant Principal Ryan Rollinger, who, along with the school's

activities director, held him down until sheriff's deputies arrived. No one else was hurt, and students were sent home for the day.

Lein, 57, was discharged from the hospital the same afternoon and returned to his job the following day sporting a sling on his right arm.

The school's superintendent said after the incident that the shooting was sparked over a disciplinary action, but didn't elaborate. A motive wasn't discussed during Monday's brief hearing.

Buhl is being held without bond at a juvenile detention center in Sioux Falls. The judge set a trial date of Jan. 19.



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Thursday

5-7pm – Domestic
Beers **\$1.50**
5-7pm – Hamburger/
Pizza Burger & Fries
\$5.00

Friday

Meatloaf
Serving
5:30-8:00

Saturday
Entertainment

No Band
Regular Menu 5:30-8:00

Bingo Wed. at 7:00p.m.
Sunday at 6:30p.m.
Happy Hour M-F
4:30-6:00

Chislic Served Last
Wednesday of Month

City

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also noted that the city's pool is beginning to show its age amongst respondents.

"The swimming pool received some favorable satisfaction levels overall, but we're lower than some other areas," she said. "No one's surprised about that. Our pool is dated and there's been lots of discussion of a (new) pool over time. That

really matches what we've seen over the course of the year, so it's not like they dramatically dropped off and were strong prior."

On the note of upgrading services, Nelson said many comments came back seeking an upgrade from the current Yankton Community Library.

"Library satisfaction rates were very high," she said. "We did have a lot of comments regarding the need for a new library."

From here, Nelson said

it's up to the various departments to look into specific comments and concerns to know how they should go forward.

"What we do with the survey comments — they're not measurable so we can't really statistically measure them — but what we can do is read through them and look where we received multiple comments," she said. "I've asked the department heads to pick apart the comments that pertain to their departments and see if

there's a way we can address them.

In other business Monday, the commission:

* Held a special meeting for one hour prior to the main meeting discussing downtown Yankton.

* Closed out projects on Park St. and Highway 81.

* Approved a 3 percent base salary adjustment.

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Sunday, November 1, 2015
10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Sacred Heart Parish Center, 509 Capital St., Yankton

Serving delicious turkey dinner with stuffing, mashed potatoes & gravy, choice of salads, bun, dessert & beverage

Family Fun Games For All Ages at Link Auditorium including Bingo 12-2PM

Take Out Meals! Raffle! Games! Religious Book Sale! Bakery Booth & More!

6th Grade to Adult \$10, 3 Yrs.-5th Grade \$5, Children 2 Years & Younger Free

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