

# Denver Alliance for Public Education: Survey on Annual Assessments

Over 700 parents and teachers from every part of Colorado responded to the [Denver Alliance for Public Education Survey on Annual Assessments](#). A large majority affirms that the state’s annual standardized testing program is profoundly broken and in need of immediate repair.

A [link to the survey](#), conducted from November 5 to November 30, was distributed through public media, Facebook, twitter, and person-to-person. This effort is a grassroots affair. Denver Alliance conducted the survey to fill an information gap affecting the validity of work of the HB14-1202 Task Force. Augenblick Palaich and Associates (APA), the consultant for the [HB14-1202 Task Force](#), performed no collection of standardized testing feedback from parents in the state.

Parents were the primary target of the survey, but total respondents include the following cohorts:

▼ Parent	78.91%	565
▼ Guardian	1.68%	12
▼ Student	3.49%	25
▼ Teacher	15.92%	114
Total		716

Respondents from various grade levels include (many respondents had students in multiple grade levels):

▼ k -2	34.14%	241
▼ 3-8	61.76%	436
▼ 9-12	41.64%	294
Total Respondents: 706		

Responses were geographically diverse with respondents from 49 districts:

District Geography	Number of Respondents
Rural east	22
Rural mtns	27
Rural west	10
Cherry Creek SD	44
Jeffco SD	111
Dougo SD	106
Denver	73
North Denver metro	88
Other Denver metro	10
COSpqs, Pueblo	91
Boulder metro	57
Weld, Greeley	4
Charter, online	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>655</b>

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A large majority of respondents (**88%**) report a high degree or moderate degree of familiarity with the state’s standardized testing programs:

▼ Not familiar	1.41%	10
▼ Minimally familiar	10.89%	77
▼ Moderately familiar	36.63%	259
▼ Very familiar	51.06%	361
Total		707

## Too many receive too little testing feedback too late, or not at all

A vast majority of respondents did NOT receive an explanation of standardized test results before the end of the 2013-2014 school year, and in most testing scenarios, a majority did not receive any explanation at all.

Have parents received an explanation of assessment results?					
Grade/Assesment	NO (#)	NO (%)	Yes in 2014-15 (#)	Yes in 2014-15 (%)	Total Respondents
Grades K-2 (Read Act)	170	52.5%	43	13.3%	324
Grades 3-8 (TCAP)	131	27.5%	235	49.4%	476
Grades 4 and/or 7 (CMAS-Social Studies)	184	62.4%	57	19.3%	295
Grades 5 and/or 8 (Science)	192	67.1%	41	14.3%	286
Grade 11 (ACT)	107	51.2%	14	6.7%	209
Alternative Tests	157	65.7%	13	5.4%	239
<b>Total</b>	<b>941</b>		<b>403</b>		

Test feedback received on students in Fall of 2014 on testing that occurred in Spring of 2014 will not be performed by the teachers most familiar with student work and progress. As ample research shows, **untimely feedback and especially NO feedback** has minimal to no impact. These results show that the best that can be said about test results in relation to parents and students is that they are underutilized. In a large majority of cases, results have no meaning at all for parents and students and are thus made insignificant to a student’s education progress.

## Large majority finds standardized testing “NOT BENEFICIAL”

A large majority of respondents find the entire testing program **not beneficial** to them. Based on other survey statements from questions related to student time on tests and time off from school as well as personal costs accrued because of testing, respondents cite too many resources going into a program with little or no productive value. These findings amplify and intensify results from the Augenblick Palaich (APA) study, but in this case, from a predominantly parent cohort.

Are assessment results beneficial to parents, teachers and students?					
Grade	NOT Beneficial (#)	NOT Beneficial (%)	Minimally Beneficial (#)	Minimally Beneficial (%)	Total Respondents
Grades K-2	324	71.2%	101	22.2%	455
Grades 3-8	343	63.4%	152	28.1%	541
Grades 9-12	266	65.0%	113	27.6%	409
<b>Total</b>	<b>933</b>		<b>366</b>		

Teachers in the APA study rated level of benefit on a 1 to 5 scale for instruction and content mastery. Teachers rated the **CMAS at 1.3 as beneficial** for instruction and 1.6 as beneficial for content mastery. They rated

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TCAP/PARCC as 1.8 as beneficial for instruction and 1.9 as beneficial for content mastery. Denver Alliance respondents give harsher reviews. A large majority **rated the benefits of testing at 0**.

## Large majority prefers to OPT OUT of Colorado’s standardized testing program

A large majority of respondents would **OPT OUT of standardized testing if no retribution to students or schools occurred**. Education policy makers should enter into their calculus that **direct force, even coercion**, is the underlying pressure supporting the standardized testing system.

Currently, the Colorado Department of Education sends a letter every year to school districts that students are required to take the standardized tests, as per state and federal law. Most students comply, but as the lack of achievement progress and the onerous, untimely, time-consuming, costly, and resource-draining elements of the testing program become clearer, resentment and public renunciation of the testing program are growing.

▼ Have student(s) participate in all state and federally-required standardized testing	2.59%	18
▼ Have student(s) participate in alternating subject testing, such as reading in 3rd grade and math in 4th, or random selection testing such as assessing randomly chosen children in each grade.	13.36%	93
▼ Have student(s) participate in federally mandated testing only (English language arts and math in 3rd grade through 8th grade and once in grades 10-12; science once at the elementary, middle and high school level)	18.39%	128
▼ Have student(s) 'opt out' of all state testing with no retribution to the student or the school	65.66%	457
Total		696

In another result, **96% of respondents** said they want NO annual state testing or LESS annual state testing.

▼ More annual state testing	0.14%	1
▼ Less annual state testing	47.94%	338
▼ The same amount of annual state testing	3.69%	26
▼ No annual state testing	48.23%	340
Total		705

If the findings above are any indication, choosing to reduce to federal mandates doesn't go far enough for many respondents, as 47.70% (332) selected less annual testing and only 18.39% (128) see federal mandates as acceptable.

## Respondents looking for test cut-backs, not double down

Respondents, mostly parents, reject more time on tests, the hallmark of the coming PARCC testing program. When parents realize that PARCC testing will occur twice this spring, they will be shocked and unsupportive, based on the implications of our findings.

Parents want their kids to spend time on beneficial learning, not on assessments that provide inadequate feedback months after the tests or no feedback at all. Results from the Denver Alliance survey provide reasons more

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vehement than the APA study to **revamp and reduce, or eliminate**, state testing until a **reliable, timely, beneficial program** is put in place.

The survey reveals many other results related to substantial costs incurred by parents and guardians and home time spent on test preparation through homework, psychological support, and other efforts. These areas require much more in depth study to more fully understand the impact of our vast education testing complex on students and their education. CDE is remiss in not energetically seeking this information and in limiting and refusing to support the release of cost data in the most recent APA work. Denver Alliance appeals to the state legislature to expand its research efforts on state standardized testing to establish a reliable and timely program that supports rather than ignores the parents and students held captive by the current system.

While Denver Alliance cannot state that this survey's findings are complete enough or follow scientific survey sampling principles, the results should put policy makers and policy influencers into **pause mode**: the constituencies closest to the tests - parents, students, teachers - find the state's standardized assessment program unworthy of students and running on empty for parents and teachers.