



**MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION**

*Ensuring a bright future for every child*

**Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Education**

Office of Communications & Government Relations

Patrice Guilfoyle, APR, Director of Communications \*601-359-3706

Jean Cook, APR, Director of Public Relations \* 601-359-3519

**NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release: August 13, 2019*

**Mississippi Student Testing Task Force Recommends Ending the U.S. History End-of-Course Assessment**

JACKSON, Miss. – Of the 29 members, the Mississippi Student Testing Task Force voted 9-2 to recommend elimination of the U.S. History end-of-course assessment following a survey of secondary education teachers. The U.S. History end-of-course exam is the only state test not required by federal or state law.

The U.S. History exam is given to high school students upon completion of the course. It is one of four end-of-course assessments that Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) policy requires students to take to graduate. The other required tests include Biology, Algebra I and English II. Federal law requires end-of-course testing in Biology, Algebra I and English. Students don't have to pass the subject area tests to graduate, as the SBE offers several options for students to earn a diploma.

The task force's Aug. 6 vote followed a poll of high school teachers in July. At the request of the task force, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) distributed a single-question poll to determine the opinion of high school teachers about the exam. The question stated: Should Mississippi continue the U.S. History end-of-course exam?

<b>Responses from Those Who Identified as High School Teachers</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
U.S. History Teachers	170 (27%)	457 (73%)	627
History Teachers (Other than U.S. History)	128 (26%)	360 (74%)	488
Other Teachers (Not History)	416 (21%)	1592 (79%)	2008
<b>Total</b>	<b>714 (23%)</b>	<b>2409 (77%)</b>	<b>3123</b>



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The MDE will present the results of the teacher poll and task force recommendation to the Commission on School Accreditation (CSA) on Aug. 19. The final decision will be made by the SBE.

U.S. History will remain a required course for graduation. Any change to the end-of-course assessment would not take place until the 2020-2021 school year.

The task force vote caps a year-long review of state and local school district testing. In May 2018 the MDE established the task force to examine current student testing on the state and local school district levels and to determine best practices for monitoring student progress in meeting grade-level and subject area learning goals.

The goals of the task force were:

- to determine the types, quality and number of tests students take on the state and district level;
- to provide recommendations on ways to ensure student testing is streamlined but measures the learning goals designed by Mississippi teachers;
- to discover and recommend best practices for student testing on the state and district level.

The first meeting was June 19, 2018, and all meetings were livestreamed and recorded. They are currently available on the MDE website.

The task force first surveyed school district leaders about the types and number of tests at the district level and found a range of practices in district testing not required by the state. A [review of the findings](#) found more frequent tests at the district level is not associated with higher rates of student learning.

Additional findings in the district survey based on 2017-18 data were:

- The longer test-sitting time for a student and test administration time in a district for English language arts (ELA) and math, although weakly related, the lower the district's ELA and math proficiency
- Students from A and F districts on average spent relatively more testing time on vendor-created assessments, compared to students from other districts.



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- C and D districts on average spent more time than other districts administering vendor-created assessments.
- Lack of availability of electronic devices is the most common reason districts take a longer time to test all students.
- The top two factors prolonging test administration time for an individual student are technology issues with district broadband and with vendor software.

Then, the task force, through the work of Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center, surveyed teachers from across the state. The [results showed](#):

- There is too much testing at both the state and district levels, according to teachers.
- The No. 1 ranked challenge of testing is that it takes time away from daily instruction.
- Teachers say too much testing causes stress for them and students.
- There are significant differences among districts in the time to complete testing on all students.
- Teachers also say technology issues are the primary reason for prolonged test administration.

At the request of the MDE, the task force heard from Dr. Chris Domaleski, National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, on [the national landscape of state testing](#) and federal law requirements. The Center is also working on a best practices document for district testing, which will be available in the fall.

John Kraman, MDE's chief information officer, [provided information](#) to the task force on technology and the issues that help or hinder testing on a district level.

The task force met to discuss possible recommendations for the MDE. The one recommendation was for the agency to provide professional development to school leaders and teachers about the appropriate frequency and uses of tests.

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