



Highlights of [GAO-03-389](#), a report to Congressional Requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA) reauthorized the \$10 billion Title I program, which seeks to improve the educational achievement of 12.5 million students at risk. In passing the legislation, Congress increased the frequency with which states are to measure student achievement in mathematics and reading and added science as another subject. Congress also authorized funding to support state efforts to develop and implement tests for this purpose.

Congress mandated that GAO study the costs of implementing the required tests. This report describes characteristics of states' Title I tests, provides estimates of what states may spend to implement the required tests, and identifies factors that explain variation in expenses.

What GAO Recommends

Given that significant expenses may be associated with testing, GAO is recommending that Education facilitate the sharing of information on states' experiences in attempting to reduce expenses. Education agreed with GAO's recommendation but raised concerns about GAO's methodology for estimating expenditures.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-389.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Marnie S. Shaul at (202) 512-7215 or shaulm@gao.gov.

TITLE I

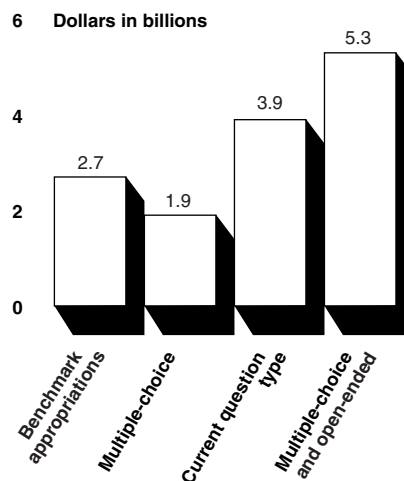
Characteristics of Tests Will Influence Expenses; Information Sharing May Help States Realize Efficiencies

What GAO Found

The majority of states administer statewide tests and customize questions to measure student learning against their state standards. These states differ along other characteristics, however, including the types of questions on their tests and how they are scored, the extent to which actual test questions are released to the public following the tests, and the number of new tests they need to develop to comply with the NCLBA.

GAO provides three estimates of total expenditures between fiscal year 2002 and 2008, based on different assumptions about the types of test questions states may choose to implement and how they are scored. The method by which tests are scored largely explains the differences in GAO's estimates.

If all states use tests with multiple-choice questions, which are machine scored, GAO estimates that the total state expenditures will be about \$1.9 billion. If all states use tests with a mixture of multiple-choice questions and a limited number of open-ended questions that require students to write their response, such as an essay, which are hand scored, GAO estimates spending to be about \$5.3 billion. GAO estimates that spending will be at about \$3.9 billion, if states keep the mix of question types states reported to GAO. In general, hand scoring is more expensive and time and labor intensive than machine scoring. Benchmark funding for assessments as specified in NCLBA will cover a larger percentage of estimated expenditures for tests comprised of multiple-choice questions and a smaller percentage of estimated expenditures for tests comprised of a mixture of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Several states are exploring ways to reduce assessment expenses, but information on their experiences is not broadly shared among states.



Estimates

Source: GAO analysis.