

Md. teachers union launches campaign against over-testing

By **Ovetta Wiggins** August 31

The teachers union in Maryland has launched a statewide advertising campaign to reduce the number of standardized tests teachers administer to students.

The Maryland Educators Association started “Less Testing, More Learning,” a half-million dollar, month-long campaign on Monday with two weeks of television commercials on Baltimore and Washington D.C. stations. The campaign also includes radio and digital advertisements featuring 10 teachers offering their own experiences on “how over-testing makes it more difficult for their students to learn.”

“Anything that isn’t tested gets put on the back burner — it’s just test, test, test, and they’re taking away things that kids need,” a teacher says in one of the advertisements. “Now it seems like there’s testing on top of testing on top of testing...when they’re subject to this kind of testing year after year, we can’t get that time back for our kids.”

The criticism over standardized tests has been growing across the country among teachers, students and parents.

Stephen Hershkowitz, a spokesman for the teachers union, said the campaign is part of the union’s plan to make over-testing a priority in the 2016 General Assembly session. This year, there were bills introduced to reduce the number of standardized tests in classrooms, but the legislature decided to move forward with a measure that sets up a commission to study how many hours are spent on testing in each of the state’s 24 school districts. The commission’s work examining how often and when students take tests is underway.

Hershkowitz said the concern goes beyond the statewide PARCC assessments to local-mandated assessments, which vary by school district.

The union has been on the opposite side of Gov. Larry Hogan (R) over education funding and charter school reform, but testing may be an issue that the two could come to an agreement on. Hogan last year said he had concerns about the number of standardized tests children are given.

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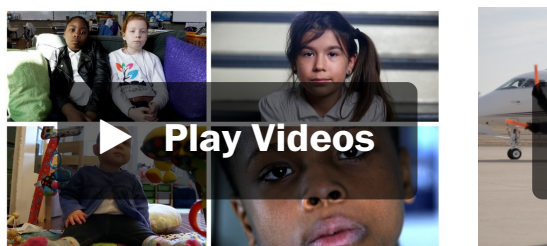
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