

TT USA: Standardized Testing, Sickness and School Rules

Hey Tappsters!

Welcome to the USA Teacher Tapp blog ■■ Nine weeks worth of tapping and our panel continues to grow! Welcome to all who joined this week!

The more teachers we have, the more valuable the insights we can share. Share the app with your colleagues and help grow the community. The easiest link to spread the word is onelink.to/teachertapp – it takes them straight to the app store! ■■■

Now let's get into the data...

1. Standardized testing

In November, voters in Massachusetts approved a ballot initiative to eliminate state exams as a high school graduation requirement. ([EducationWeek](#))

This decision aligns with a broader national trend. As of now, only 12 states still require high-stakes exams for high school graduation, a sharp drop from 25 states in 2012. Oregon recently suspended its graduation exam requirements, and New York is exploring a similar move.

But what do teachers on the Teacher Tapp panel think about this shift?

This week's questions reveal a divided landscape. While 58% of teachers support standardized testing as a high school graduation requirement, 42% think it should be scrapped.

When asked to choose just one preferred method of assessment for high school graduation, opinions were even more varied:

- 37% favoured state-wide standardized exams.
- 30% preferred teacher-assessed portfolios.
- 19% opted for externally-assessed portfolios.
- Only 15% wanted district- or school-designed assessments.

Answering multiple choice questions about student assessment can feel quite limiting, however, so we gave the option to tell us more about this topic in an open-ended question. Here's the main concerns raised..

Top concerns about standardized testing...

1. Failure to Reflect Real-World Skills

"I would prefer a portfolio to standardized tests because not everyone is going to college. Many are wisely going to choose career tech jobs and other workforce positions that I feel are represented best by the portfolio."

2. Misses Creativity

"Although I do believe there needs to be consistent standards, my experience has shown me that no two students learn in the same way or test in the same way. Creativity is a huge factor in people being successful, and there is no place for that in standardized testing."

3. Overemphasis on Memorization

"Standardized tests only show how much a student can memorize and not a true example of their skills or mastery."

...and then, support for standardized testing

Although there were concerns, there was also some enthusiasm for a more regulated and accountable system.

1. Social acceptance of the tests

"I dislike standardized tests, but I see their merit. There must be a measure that is universally (within the state/country) accepted as the basic skills to be mastered."

2. Reduced chance of bias

"Standardized testing protects against teacher bias and provides a great generalized snapshot of learning."

"There is a place and use for standardized testing, but it should be combined with projects and grades."

Help us grow the panel so we can uncover even more insights! Share Teacher Tapp with your colleagues using our handy link: onelink.to/teachertapp and help them join the conversation.

2. Sickness ■■

December brings festive cheer with school concerts, gift exchanges, and Christmas crafts... but it also brings something less welcome: the annual wave of stomach bugs, coughs, and colds.

Last week, 10% of Teacher Tapp USA respondents were home sick. ■■

But what's your school's policy for dealing with sickness like diarrhoea or vomiting? The CDC recommends students and staff stay home until vomiting has resolved overnight, food and liquids can be kept down, and diarrhoea has improved. However, these are just recommendations—schools can set their own rules.

So what do YOUR schools do?

- Only 26% of schools require students to stay home for 48 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.
- And just 9% of those schools apply the policy to staff as well.

What about school nurses?

We know from previous weeks that 76% of schools have a nurse onsite. But how often are they being used?

Well, last week 44% of you sent at least one student to the nurse, and 24% sent more than one!

Amazingly, given the miles and cultural differences, the UK had very similar figures on the same day last week. 47% of teachers sent one student to the nurse, and 22% sent more than one!

What do you think of your school's sickness policy? Does student absence interfere with learning? Send us your thoughts or question ideas at usa@techartapp.com!

3. Skool Rulz

Behavior rules are often controversial. The balance between keeping hundreds of students safe and learning, while also allowing them live without anxiety, is a tough tightrope for schools to walk. But it's part of the job.

Over the past decade, there's been a trend for more heavily coded behavior policies. These policies often outline specifics like how students should stand, walk, or even where they should look in the classroom. Supporters argue that clear expectations prevent confusion, while critics worry they create unnecessary anxiety for students.

But how common are these kinds of policies?

Some seem very rare. Just 2% of teachers said their students are never allowed bathroom breaks during class time and 2% also said students must keep their eyes on the teacher.

More common are moving silently between classrooms (24%) and phones being banned on campus (27%).

More Help Needed...

The data makes one thing clear: teachers want more support with behaviour. Only about half of the Teacher Tapp panel feel they receive good help from management on this issue, and

only a small fraction strongly agree that their behaviour policy is effective.

In future we'd like to do more analysis on this to work out which behavior policies are considered the most effective. For example, is it those with stricter policies who are more confident or vice versa? To do that we need the sample to be bigger - and we will be working on this in the New Year, but in the meantime do please encourage colleagues to join as it will make all the difference.

■ Who are the biggest results checkers ■■?

Finally, one of the BEST things about Teacher Tapp is being able to see how others responded to questions - and then sharing those results with others!

But where are the most inquisitive teachers ■■

■■ 3rd place England ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ - they check on average every fourth day

■■ 2nd place USA ■■■■ - you check every two days in seven

■■ and joint first place - Flanders and Belgium ■■■■■■■■! They check every three days ■■

Daily Reads

We know lots of teachers on Teacher Tapp LOVE the daily reads, if you have ideas of reads we could feature, get in touch by emailing usa@teachertapp.com and we will check it out!

This week our most-read blog was...from the [Learning Scientists on restudying vs retrieval](#).