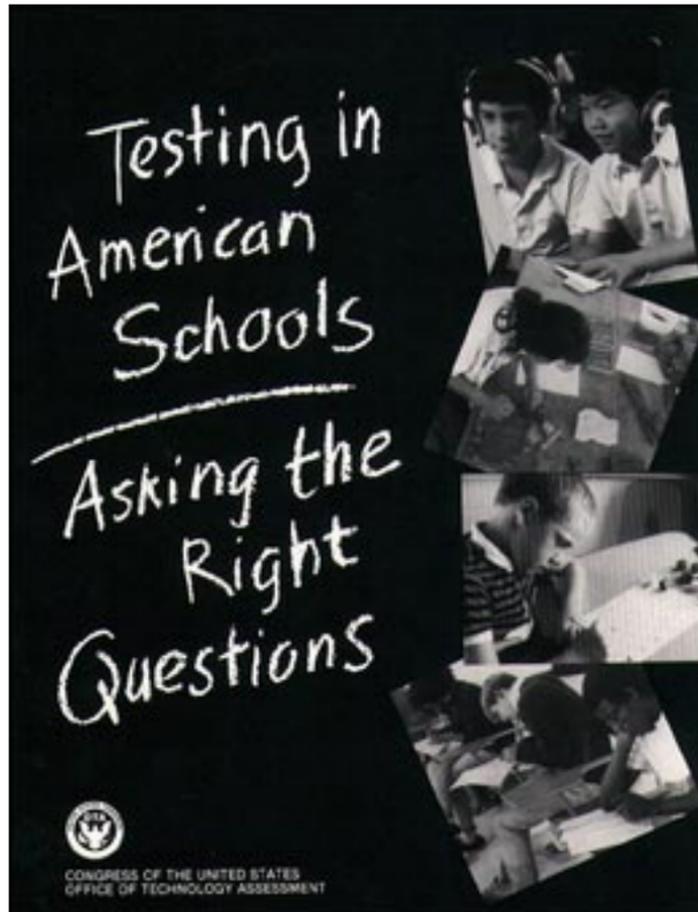


*Testing in American Schools: Asking the  
Right Questions*

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## Foreword

Education is a primary concern for our country, and testing is a primary tool of education. No other country tests its school children with the frequency and seriousness that characterizes the United States. Once the province of classroom teachers, testing has also become an instrument of State and Federal policy. Over the past decade in particular, the desire of the Congress and State Legislatures to improve education and evaluate programs has substantially intensified the amount and importance of testing.

Because of these developments and in light of current research on thinking and learning, Congress asked OTA to provide a comprehensive report on educational testing, with emphasis on new approaches. Changing technology and new understanding of thinking and learning offer avenues for testing in different ways. These new approaches are attractive, but inevitably carry some drawbacks.

Too often, testing is treated narrowly, rather than as a flexible tool to obtain information about important questions. In this report, OTA places testing in its historical and policy context, examines the reasons for testing and the ways it is done, and identifies particular ways Federal policy affects the picture. The report also explores new approaches to testing that derive from modern technology and cognitive research.

The advisory panel, workshop participants, reviewers, and other contributors to this study were instrumental in defining the key issues and providing a range of perspectives on them. OTA thanks them for their commitment of energy and sense of purpose. Their participation does not necessarily represent endorsement of the contents of this report, for which OTA bears sole responsibility.

  
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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

# Testing in American Schools: Asking the Right Questions

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