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Mississippi educators give new tests an A

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HATTIESBURG, Miss. (AP) — The Common Core State Standards tests will be both less expensive and better than Mississippi's own tests, state education officials say.

The 20-state consortium developing the tests recently said they'll cost \$29.50 per student, and include two tests a year for both English and math. Mississippi's test costs \$30 per subject area plus \$17 for Mississippi's MCT2 test.

The new tests will also give teachers more information about their students, said Stacey Pace, Lamar County School District assistant superintendent.

"It will tell us what students know and make them think instead of guessing at an answer," she told The Hattiesburg American. "The type of questions that will be asked will not be your typical multiple choice question. The students will have to actually tell how they got their answer."

Richard Bailko, with the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Student Assessment, agrees that the test being developed by the the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers will test greater depth of knowledge.

"The questions from the MCT2 and the Subject Area Tests are all multiple choice and have only one answer per item," he wrote in an email. "The questions from the PARCC assessments provide a wide span of items. To many of the problems, there will be more than one answer. Some questions will say 'select all that apply' or 'which four answer choices out of seven are correct?'"

Since the tests will be given on computers, students can do much more than fill in circles on an answer sheet, Bailko said.

"The students will be able to interact with graphs, manipulate shapes, click on an excerpt of an essay and then a video with the task of typing an essay explaining the similarities/differences of the content they read or watched," he said.

In addition, the PARCC tests will give students a separate writing score at every grade level. In Mississippi, only students in fourth, seventh and 10th grade were tested in writing. The state discontinued the writing test after the 2011-12 school year.