

A Proposed New Test: Survey Results

In January 2008 we sent out a proposal for a new test. This proposal outlined the need for a new test, a rough test blueprint, including objectives, format, and standards, and steps to development of the test among other things. We enclosed a survey asking for input, comments and criticisms. We received replies from 101 schools and individuals, which came to about a 25% response rate. The following summarizes the responses we received. Please note that percentages given do not add up to 100% because of blank or multiple responses.

1. Please indicate your current testing program:

1970 California Achievement Test (CAT): 76%; CAT 5: 5%; Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS): 11%;
 Stanford Achievement Test (SAT): 1%; Other: 2%; Don't test or don't know: 4%

2. Do you use or have you used Catforms Testing Service for your scoring?

Yes, currently: 60%; Yes, but not currently: 2%; No: 34%

3. How much do these issues concern you in relation to current tests or a new test? On a scale of 1-5, rate the importance of these issues to you, with 1 being not important at all, and 5 being critically important.

	1	2	3	4	5
Objectionable content of many current tests	3%	5%	17%	35%	38%
Having a nationally normed test from a commercial company	25%	28%	24%	14%	5%
Cost of testing (Does your school have a very tight budget?)	3%	17%	47%	22%	9%
Concerns about the quality of a new test	1%	4%	9%	41%	43%
User-friendliness of test (ease of administration, reporting, etc)	1%	5%	13%	49%	30%
Being able to test all grades, not just grades 4-12	3%	4%	12%	33%	45%

4. How much would your school be willing to spend, per student, on an annual basis for achievement testing?

Note: 16-17% of responses were left blank on each row of this item. Some said they were not sure what their school would be willing to spend. Some wanted an option of less than \$6.

	\$6	\$9	\$12	\$15	\$20
For an acceptable test designed in Mennonite circles, with no input from a commercial testing company?	25%	24%	25%	7%	1%
For a test designed with input or items purchased from a commercial testing company?	29%	27%	22%	5%	1%
For a commercial, nationally normed test that would meet your standards?	43%	19%	15%	7%	1%

5. Which best describes your feeling about a new test similar to that outlined in the accompanying proposal?

- 68% I think that it is a great idea and that we would be very likely to use such a test, if the final version is anything close to the proposal. *Catforms customers only: 76%*
- 20% I think that it is worth pursuing and that we may be interested in using such a test, possibly with some modifications. *Catforms customers only: 19%*
- 4% I think that a better testing program is needed for our schools, but I am not sure that this is the answer. It would depend greatly on our school's evaluation of the finished product. *Catforms customers only: 2%*
- 2% I seriously doubt that such a plan is workable. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see what develops, and our school would be open to receiving information about any new test in progress. *Catforms customers only: 2%*
- 4% I am not interested. Our school has a satisfactory program for the foreseeable future, or I think the proposed test is simply the wrong approach. *Catforms customers only: 2%*

6. Can you explain in more detail why you selected the answer you did for Item 5?

7. Please list any comments or criticisms you may have about specific aspects of the new test proposal.

8. Do you have any other suggestions that may help us in our decision-making process?

A sampling of responses to Items 6-8, both pro and con [*Items in brackets are our comments*]:

...More concerned about quality than in cost or development time

...Reservations about new test ; like nationally normed test

...Testing is important, but the test need not be nationally normed.

...Nationally normed tests do not give us a true picture.

...Willing to participate in pilot program even if we do not end up using finished product

...Great idea; huge undertaking

... Don't tie in too heavily with 70 CAT; its norms are too low. Catforms norms are better.

... A new test would be a test we always have, but concerned about state recognition of a test not nationally normed

...Cost is important to many schools; it will affect acceptance of a new test.

...[about a separate test level for each grade:] Separate grade levels are not hard to administer in multi grade classrooms if format, sample questions, and times are identical.

...The test ought to provide a grade equivalent score to provide continuum from year to year.

... We would be really happy to have a consistently-available, not-too-expensive test that we can feel comfortable with as Anabaptist Christians.

...We trust your judgment. [Thanks for the vote of confidence. We also need counsel, not just support]

...The acceptability of new tests to the state and other school authorities will determine its usability for us.

...We appreciate the work done in the past; we encourage you; we will pray for the future.

...Suggestion: Consider purchasing volume of ITBS and rent them out to schools. Tests can be taken throughout year, which makes it possible for schools to use the same tests. [Several responses indicated a strong preference for the Iowa tests compared to the 70 CAT, while a few others were less favorable.]

...The proposal is definitely worth pursuing. The gap between us & society will grow. Our own system would be invaluable.

Survey Conclusions

1. There is strong support for a new test designed by and for conservative Anabaptist groups, especially among our current Catforms customers.
2. Cost is a fairly large factor in acceptance of a new test. However, many schools appear to be willing to spend as much or more on an acceptable Mennonite-inspired test as on a commercial test.
3. Reservations about a test that is not nationally normed exist but are not wide-spread. The most common of those concerns was about state acceptance of such a test.
4. Quality and, to a slightly lesser degree, user friendliness was of critical importance to most respondents. So was the importance of testing the younger grades as well as grades 4-12.