

## Parents, should you opt your child out of standardized testing?

**Why opt out?** Over the past few years, Chicago Public School (CPS) students have been given increasing numbers of standardized tests. Even some of the youngest students in CPS were taking standardized tests a dozen times.

Some families have decided to opt their children out of these tests, saying that their children should not have to take so many standardized tests and that they will learn more by reading a book or doing a project rather than spending so much time taking tests.

Some families do not wish to be a part of the testing-industrial complex being used to punish students, teachers, and schools unfairly:

- The CPS school rating system depends primarily on standardized test data, especially in elementary school. Test scores have been used to justify mass school closings and turnarounds in Chicago and around the country, and the disruption and negative effects of these school actions have been disproportionately borne by children, teachers and communities of color.
- Because of changes in IL state law in 2010, test scores now form 30% of teachers' evaluations.
- And for almost two decades, CPS' high-stakes test based promotion policy has resulted in tens of thousands of students being retained, a policy shown to hurt students' life chances not help them, and unfairly discriminate against children of color that has no benefits.
- Students are sorted into high schools (or even elementary schools) based on test scores, and more resources are directed towards schools with the highest-scoring students, creating a vicious cycle for the neediest schools and students, especially since the institution of student-based budgeting.

Focusing so much on testing makes it impossible for schools to provide children with a well-rounded education with time for the arts, civics, history, free play, project-based learning and physical exercise.

### **How to opt out:**

- Ask your child's school for a detailed schedule of the standardized tests your child will be given this year. They are required to provide this under state law, Public Act 099-0590.
- Talk to your child's teacher about these tests and how the results will be used; this information should also be included on the schedule the school provides. It is important to understand that some tests are high-stakes for students. Currently, Spring (EOY) NWEA MAP scores for 3rd, 6th and 8th graders are used to decide if your child goes to summer school or is promoted to the next grade. The Spring MAP scores for 5th and 7th graders will be used if your child is applying for a Selective Enrollment Academic Center or Selective Enrollment High School for enrollment in Fall 2019.
- Share your concerns with other parents in the school; it helps to know that you are not alone! Thousands of parents every year opt their children out of standardized testing in Chicago Public Schools. Learn more about tests and testing on our website.
- According to the CPS Office of Assessment, as of January 2013, a letter from a parent is sufficient for opting out of any standardized test or assessment tool besides state-mandated PARCC testing. If you decide to opt your child out of any of the tests, write a letter to the principal. You can use the sample letter below or write one for yourself.
- Administrators may put pressure on you for opting out. Be clear that you have the right to opt your child out of any tests and that the state of Illinois recognizes children's right to *refuse* state tests. Most educators understand that too much testing is not in the best interests of children.

For support or additional information, email [info@ilraiseyourhand.org](mailto:info@ilraiseyourhand.org) or go to [www.ilraiseyourhand.org](http://www.ilraiseyourhand.org)



**Standardized Testing Opt-Out Form 2017-2018**

Dear Principal \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to request that my child, \_\_\_\_\_,

be exempted from the following standardized tests for the current school year:

**All/any grades:**

- ACCESS
- NAEP
- REACH Performance Tasks
- Stride Academy
- CC Benchmark Tasks

**Pre K:**

- TS GOLD
- ELLCO
- CLASS

**Elementary (K-8):**

- PARCC or DLM
- NWEA MAP\*
- NWEA MPG
- Illinois Science Assessment
- NWEA Science
- easyCBM
- mClass Math
- STEP
- KIDS
- MARS tasks
- mClass Reading (DIBELS, TRC, IDEL)
- Fountas and Pinnell BAS

**High School:**

- PARCC or DLM
- Illinois Science Assessment
- STAR
- HS Interims
- SAT\*
- PSAT

During whole class standardized testing, I understand that my child will be provided with appropriate accommodations in order to engage in quiet, self-guided activity like silent reading, drawing or writing so as to not disrupt other students.

Please share this information with any impacted school personnel, including my child’s classroom teacher(s). I am happy to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ (print parent name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (parent signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)

\*Note that some administrations of these tests may be **high-stakes tests** for students, i.e. for some grade-levels they may be required for promotion, selective enrollment admission, or graduation.