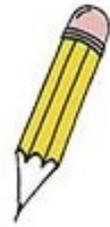# MORE testing – LESS privacy??

How inBloom and Common Core testing will link our children to the "education marketplace"

Data privacy has become an important new factor in the fight against high-stakes standardized testing.

- More and more information about our children is being collected and stored.
- Business interests are pushing states and school districts to expand online learning.
- With most states now tracking all their students and using the same standards and tests, many believe that the next step is a national database that will share private information about children and families.

Department of Education changes laid the groundwork

RTTT requirement for new learning standards and tests: As part of its Race to the Top program, the Department of Education under Arne Duncan required states to adopt new learning standards and tests in order to qualify for certain grants. States were allowed to write their own, but time pressure and massive funding from the Gates Foundation pushed most to adopt the **Common Core State Standards** and **CCSS tests** written by one of two test writing groups (known as PARCC and Smarter BAC).

RTTT requirement for longitudinal student database: Federal funding also required states to track all student assessment scores and other information from year to year in a longitudinal database. This information used to stay at the school district level – when a student moved out of the district, these records did not follow him or her. Now the state will track the student.

Revised FERPA: Twice in recent years, the US Department of Education rewrote the regulations for carrying out the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act allowing student data to be shared with third parties - even for-profit companies - without parents' permission.

Creation of inBloom

The Gates Foundation provided states with incentives to contract with the Shared Learning Collaborative (SLC) to collect, store and share private student data. SLC, which started out as a $100M funded project of the Gates Foundation, soon spun off into a separate corporation called inBloom, Inc. inBloom's operating system was built by Wireless Generation, now part of Amplify, a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. The inBloom database will be stored on a cloud run by Amazon.

InBloom across the US: Originally, nine states were to be a part of InBloom, but only three besides Illinois are still officially participating: New York, Colorado, and Massachusetts. Of those, Massachusetts is now reconsidering whether it will upload data from its sole pilot district. After protests, Jefferson County, Colorado, that state's only pilot district, has just announced that it will allow parents to opt out of any sharing of their children's data with inBloom.

InBloom in Illinois: In Illinois, Normal and Bloomington's district 87 has already shared data with inBloom. 34 other Illinois districts are set to join over the next year. However, ISBE's contract with inBloom says that it is leaving it up to district whether they wish to participate or not. The Illinois State Board of Education's data sharing plan is called ISLE, the Illinois Shared Learning Environment.

InBloom in Chicago: Starting in January 2014, the Chicago Public Schools is scheduled to begin participating in ISLE.

More Than a Score's concerns about inBloom

1) New York State has refused to allow consent from parents before their children's information is added to the inBloom database. Recently legislation has passed the NY State Assembly, but not their State Senate, to give parents the ability to opt their children out of inBloom. It is not clear what options, if any, Illinois parents will have to protect their children's privacy.

2) The data in inBloom's possession will be shared with for-profit, third party vendors for the purpose of creating educational software or other products – again, without parental consent. InBloom and its supporters state repeatedly that its databases will conform to FERPA. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the changes in FERPA regulations were designed specifically to allow subcontractors and software companies access to data, and to allow third-party access to sensitive student data without consent. There is currently a lawsuit in federal court against the US Department of Education's rewriting of FERPA regulations.

3) InBloom is structured to allow for the collection and sharing of more than 400 data points about each student, including some highly sensitive private information about health, disciplinary actions, family biographical information, out-of-school legal records, and of course, testing data—information like whether a student was ever pregnant, involved in a criminal case outside of school, had foster child status with the Department of Child and Family Services, etc.

4) InBloom has explicitly declared that it cannot guarantee the security and privacy of the data held in its databases and that it will not liable for breaches of security.

5) The fundamental purpose of inBloom is to reduce and replace the need for a human teacher in the public education system; ironically, in the $1 trillion education industry, this is referred to as "personalization." Labor costs are the biggest portion of spending on educating our children. Replacing teachers with computers means less money spent on teachers and more money spent on software and hardware, as Bill Gates himself pointed out an educational software conference this past spring.

What You Can Do as a Chicago Public Schools' parent:

Please write and call your local, state, and federal elected officials, including Governor Pat Quinn and State Superintendent Chris Koch, and express your concerns about inBloom.

Check our web site, www.morethanascorechicago,org, for more actions you can take as we continue to work on this issue. More Than a Score is planning a forum on InBloom and student data privacy on November 21, 2013, an online petition, and a coordinated letter-writing/calling campaign to let our elected officials know that Illinois needs to end its participation in this dangerous experiment with our children's most sensitive information.

Links to more information about this topic can be found here: http://morethanascorechicago.org/data-privacy/