

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. Last year even some of the youngest students in CPS were taking standardized tests more than 15 times.

Some parents have decided to opt their children out of these tests, saying that their children should not have to take so many tests and that they will learn more by reading a book or doing a project rather than spend so much time taking tests. Some parents say that they do not wish to be a part of the testing-industrial complex being used to punish students, teachers, and schools.

After strong protests from parents last year, CPS decided to cut back on the number of standardized tests schools are required to give. However, testing and test prep will continue to take up too much classroom time. This year, for example,

- CPS will use a new school rating system that depends almost entirely on standardized test data.
- Test scores will form a larger part of teachers' evaluations. A few thousand students will be held back solely because of their test scores.
- Focusing so much on testing leaves little time for other important areas of learning such as the arts, civics, history, and many other subjects that motivate students to learn.

How to opt out:

- Ask your child's school for a schedule of the standardized tests your child will be given this year.
- Talk to your child's teacher about these tests and how the results will be used. It is important to understand that 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. MTAS is advocating for families who wish to opt out of the MAP in those years, but are not certain yet what CPS' decision will be. In addition, we are not yet sure which scores will be used for selective enrollment high schools and academic centers for Fall 2015 admissions (see more here: <http://pureparents.org/?p=20769>).
- Share your concerns with other parents in the school; it helps to know that you are not alone! Join More Than a Score, a group of CPS parents working for better assessment practices in Chicago: visit www.MoreThanaScoreChicago.org or contact us at info@MoreThanaScoreChicago.org. Learn more about tests and testing on our web site.
- 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. 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. Most educators understand that too much testing is not in the best interests of children. Please contact us for support or information at info@MoreThanaScoreChicago.org.

Standardized Testing Opt-Out Form

_____ (date)

_____ (name of school)

Dear Principal _____,

I am writing to request that my child(ren)

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> REACH Performance Tasks | <input type="checkbox"/> Access/ELL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NWEA MAP (reading and math) | <input type="checkbox"/> Explore, Plan, ACT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NWEA MPG (reading and/or math) | <input type="checkbox"/> PSAE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mclass Reading (DIBELS or TRC) | <input type="checkbox"/> HS Interims |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mclass Math | <input type="checkbox"/> COMPASS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IDEL | <input type="checkbox"/> ISAT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other CPS-mandated literacy/numeracy assessments | <input type="checkbox"/> STAR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Core Quarterly Benchmark Performance Tasks | <input type="checkbox"/> NAEP |

During whole class standardized testing I understand that my child(ren) 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(ren)'s classroom teacher(s). I am happy to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

_____ (print parent name)

_____ (parent signature)