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Barbara Byrd-Bennett
Chief Executive Officer

January 29, 2014

Dear CPS Parent or Guardian,

As a parent and grandparent, I understand that you may have some concerns about the amount of testing that goes on in our schools. I believe that rigorous, high-quality assessments are valuable in measuring student growth, but I do not want them getting in the way of the one-on-one instruction that is so critical to your children and their learning. The challenge is to strike a balance between the two.

As the testing season approaches, I want you to understand where we are in this process. This year, we reduced our number of required assessments from 25 to 10, allowing schools to focus on the measures that are most critical to student learning. One of these key assessments is the NWEA MAP, which will be administered to students in grades 2-8 this spring.

I am asking that you make the NWEA MAP a priority for your family. The NWEA MAP is uniquely able to help your teachers pinpoint your child's specific needs, through its ability to adapt to your child's responses. In addition to the instructional benefits of NWEA MAP results, scores at or above the 24th percentile will be required for selective enrollment eligibility and promotion for children in grades 3, 6 and 8.

As parents, you have the option to opt out of this or any test, however I strongly discourage you from doing so. In addition to its direct impact on your child's progress, the NWEA MAP is a key element of teacher evaluation, principal evaluation, and the new School Quality Rating Policy, with low test participation lowering the overall school rating.

If you are considering opting out of the NWEA MAP, you must first meet with your child's principal to discuss the consequences for your child. If after that conversation you still wish to opt out, you will need to present your request in writing. This written request will be kept in your child's cumulative folder.

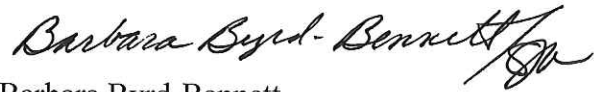
Please understand that there will be no alternate instruction given during the assessment. Children who are not being assessed will be required to engage in a silent, self-guided activity while their peers are being tested.

In addition to the NWEA MAP, it is also important that your children participate in this year's ISAT, which will be more aligned to the Common Core and will provide us with greater clarity on what our students know and can do under a new set of standards. ISAT and PSAE are required assessments under No Child Left Behind.

I hope you will strongly consider the value of these assessments in providing your child with a high-quality education that will prepare her/him for college, career and life. If you have any questions about the District's testing policy, I encourage you to speak with your school principal.

You are essential to your child's education and I value your contribution for the work you do each day in raising Chicago's next generation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Byrd-Bennett" followed by a stylized flourish.

Barbara Byrd-Bennett
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools