



Why Should New York Continue to Opt Out in 2017?

- **NO REAL CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE STANDARDS:** Changes to the Common Core Standards adopted by New York State are almost nonexistent and the most developmentally inappropriate early education standards remain unchanged.
- **TESTS ARE STILL TOO LONG AS COMMISSIONER ELIA CONTINUES TO IGNORE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE TESTING:** Commissioner MaryEllen Elia continues to ignore the Common Core Task Force recommendation to reduce testing from three to two days for both ELA and math.
- **NEW UNTIMED TEST POLICY LACKS RESEARCH AND INCREASES TEST LENGTH:** Despite propaganda that *untimed tests* relieve student anxiety, untimed testing is a thinly veiled ploy to artificially increase test scores. As a result, some students are sitting for more than 4 hours per day for three consecutive days per state assessment. In other words, tests are LONGER than ever before. In fact, it is likely that many schools are in violation of the NYS law that requires a 1% cap on the time spent on state tests. Despite the experimental nature of the untimed test policy and lack of research to support it, Commissioner Elia has not required schools to report or keep ANY data on student use of additional time and the impact that this additional time has on student performance.
- **SAT-ALIGNED CAREER AND COLLEGE READY BENCHMARKS STILL DESIGNED TO FAIL STUDENTS:** New York State has not changed its' flawed career and college readiness benchmarks (the benchmark by which student proficiency is determined) which means that thousands of students will continue to be misidentified as failing or in need of academic intervention services (AIS). If these benchmarks are not revised, graduation rates will plummet in the next few years.
- **NYS TESTS CONTINUE TO UTILIZE DEVELOPMENTALLY INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT:** State tests continue to include reading passages and test questions that utilize reading passages and language up to four years above the grade level being tested.
- **TESTS SCORES STILL USED TO RANK, SORT, AND PUNISH:** Test scores continue to reduce students to a number and result in the labeling, ranking, and sorting of students based on a simplistic and flawed metric. State test scores continue to be used as one of the primary factors to punish schools and make them vulnerable to privatization or closure through the state's receivership law.
- **THE MORATORIUM ON THE USE OF STUDENT TEST SCORES FOR PROMOTION AND PLACEMENT WILL END IN 2018:** The moratorium that prohibits state test scores from showing up on students' transcripts and bars school districts from using state test scores as the leading factor in deciding grade promotions and placement will end in 2018.
- **PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE UNDER THREAT:** Betsy DeVos is a staunch advocate for expanding charter schools and private school vouchers. Under Secretary of Education DeVos, the threat of corporatization and privatization of our public schools will be greater than ever. Both charter schools and vouchers siphon funds away from public schools and transfer them to private entities that operate with little to no accountability. State test scores that disproportionately fail students in poverty are often used as the justification for these "reforms."

- **TEST SCORES CONTINUE TO BE MANIPULATED AND MISUSED:** The misuse of politicized test scores to rank and sort schools makes ALL school districts and schools vulnerable to privatization and loss of local control. These scores are subject to political whim and manipulation through the adjustment of cut scores and a process known as equating. Test scores continue to be used in a way that is not grounded in research or evidence.
- **TESTS STILL LACK MEANINGFUL INPUT BY NYS EDUCATORS:** New York State teachers continue to have minimal input in the creation of state assessments and, in fact, are not permitted to read the tests they are administering to their students. This means that we must rely on students as young as eight years old to report inappropriate test content or errors until the public release of test questions several months later and even then, not all questions are made public.
- **NYS LAW STILL REQUIRES THE USE OF STATE TEST SCORES IN TEACHER EVALUATIONS:** While there is currently a moratorium on the use of state test scores in teacher evaluations, the moratorium will end in two years. After the moratorium ends, NYS law requires that teacher evaluations once again be largely based on state test scores using the value-added model which has been proven to be invalid and volatile. We know that as a result, teachers will once again be forced to teach to the tests, further narrowing the curriculum and “dumbing down” instruction.
- **STATE TESTS WILL SERVE AS THE VEHICLE FOR CORPORATE DIGITAL LEARNING PLATFORMS AND DATA MINING:** In addition to computer-based testing, for-profit digital “personalized” learning platforms are beginning to take hold in our schools, putting the privacy of student data at even greater risk and allowing edtech investors to profit off the backs of children. Computer-based testing and digital learning platforms are minimizing the important need for children to interact with human beings and for experienced teachers to guide their instruction. Commissioner Elia has stated her intention to eventually utilize embedded, digital assessments in lieu of state tests. This would open the flood gates for the increased use of digital learning platforms and data mining.
- **CHRONIC INEQUITABLE FUNDING CONTINUES:** New York’s public schools are still owed billions of dollars. More than anything, test scores are a reflection of income level and resource availability. Until all schools are fully funded and all students have access to equitable learning opportunities, these scores are meaningless and serve as a distraction from serving the needs of students.

Remember, there is no mechanism for ANY school to lose funding due to Opt Out! If you are told otherwise, ask for the specific regulation, law, or statute in writing.

While the issues at stake extend far beyond testing, Opt Out continues to be our best avenue to demand change and advocate for equitable public education that meets the needs of the whole child.

