



KNOW THE FACTS — EXERCISE YOUR RIGHTS

UNDERSTANDING PARCC AND TESTING MANDATES

PARCC, a test used widely in the United States in an attempt to measure student mastery of Common Core standards, is the subject of widespread controversy. The Common Core itself is contentious, but PARCC has caused protests in several states, and tens of thousands of parents have opted their children out of taking the tests. Here are eight key facts about the PARCC tests.

FACT #1 PARCC IS NOT A VALID MEASUREMENT: PARCC is published by Pearson, a multi-national corporation based in Britain. PARCC writing samples are obtained under high pressure timed conditions. The writing prompt may or may not be a topic the student has interest or experience with. The student sample is then graded by temporary workers without mandated education experience. These workers grade hundreds of samples over the course of an eight hour shift, with emphasis on productivity, not quality.

A standardized writing sample is a far inferior indicator of a student's writing ability compared with classroom essays reflecting a student's best work. Research has determined a body of writing obtained over the course of a year or a semester on subjects students have both familiarity and interest and graded by a professional educator, is a valid and reliable indicator of a student's writing ability.

On standardized tests such as PARCC, cut scores are arbitrarily set, often by people who have had no classroom experience. Both the levels of proficiency and students scores are subjectively evaluated. Classroom assessments are evaluated by professional educators, standardized tests are not.

State mandated tests have a long record of failures that include computer grading malfunctions, incorrectly scored answers, and inaccurate labeling and assessments of students that create barriers to future opportunities.

FACT #2 PARCC IS NOT AN INDICATION OF COLLEGE OR CAREER READINESS: College work emphasizes higher levels of thinking: synthesis, evaluation, analysis and application. Standardized tests are limited primarily by a multiple choice format and represent the lowest levels of learning. There is no career with a requirement of standardized test taking skills and yet by the time a student graduates from high-school they will have spent the equivalent of a full year preparing and taking standardized tests.

According to data gathered in colleges and universities throughout the country, students are less prepared for the rigors of college or career than ever before. College remediation rates have increased to 60%, nearly three times higher than when Congress passed No Child Left Behind. Under the reforms of high-stakes testing, students have too much test taking practice and too little educational experience.

FACT #3 PARCC IS A WASTE OF MONEY AND TIME: The textbook and testing industry generates nearly \$30 billion dollars yearly. Pearson brings in more than \$9 billion annually, and is the world's largest education company and book publisher. According to their financial reports their revenues in digital products and services have doubled over the past seven years. Scarce school budgets are now being directed at aligning curriculum to the tests, narrowing what gets taught and shrinking opportunities and services for students. Class sizes have grown larger; many schools have lost art, music and PE. field trips, after school programs. Essential family support services are being completely eliminated. The benefits of all of this testing is minimal at best, and the foregone learning is incalculable.

FACT #4 PARCC TESTING CONTRADICTS RESEARCH ON TEACHING AND LEARNING Medical experts agree that standardized tests are not developmentally appropriate, especially for young children. Students progress at different rates and have unique talents and abilities that fall outside of standardized measurements. Neuroscience has demonstrated evidence that supports a multi-sensory, experiential, and learner driven approach to achieve higher levels of cognitive functioning. Collaborative learning, not comparative rankings, provide the types of social and emotional growth required for human development.

FACT #5 PARCC VIOLATES STUDENT PRIVACY Student data is sold and shared without parental knowledge or consent. Massive amounts of data and metadata are collected by these online tests; this data is not protected by privacy laws. The collection and unregulated distribution of the data has the potential to interfere in a student's future opportunities for college, military and career.

Using Tracx spy software Pearson is "empowered... with social-listening and reporting" tools to monitor students' social media activity.

Learn more about student privacy: <http://tinyurl.com/llrztek>

FACT #6 PARCC AND TESTING MANDATES LEAD TO LESS ACCOUNTABILITY Before standardized testing, communities were held responsible for their neighborhood schools. Today's reforms have transferred the authority away from students, parents, teachers, administrators, superintendents, and school boards members, elected by the citizens and given that authority to the Pearson Corporation. This has resulted in less accountability. Accountability rests in an informed and engaged citizenry designed to hold political representatives and government institutions accountable, not the other way around.



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FACT #7 PARCC REINFORCES INCOME INEQUITIES AND RACIAL SEGREGATION

Socio-economic status has the highest correlation to test scores. Tying indicators of school or teacher quality to test scores incorrectly labels high-poverty schools as failing and unfairly rewards high-income schools, reinforcing an unequal and increasingly divided education system. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind, communities have returned to pre-civil rights levels of segregation in racial and economic terms.

The achievement gap has widened since the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act. There are now twice as many students identified as at-risk. Poverty has increased with the majority of American children enrolled in free and reduced lunch programs. Since the adoption of high-stakes testing, the rate for children living in extreme poverty has increased twofold.

FACT #8 PARCC NARROWS CURRICULUM AND INSTITUTES A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL EDUCATION.

Today school districts administer between 12 & 28 standardized assessments to students annually. You can request a list of all standardized tests administered at your school. Most high-schools require the PSAT and ACT. National tests include the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a proven valid and reliable measurement that is not profit driven and has provided national benchmark data since 1968. International comparisons are provided by PISA. Both NAEP and PISA test a representative sample of students providing statistically reliable comparisons both nationally and internationally.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

There are alternatives to standardized testing mandates. Solutions that respect students, support educators and engage parents are possible. Legislators have the opportunity to set budget priorities to ensure tax dollars benefit students instead of corporations. Policies that emphasize prevention and intervention will lead to far better outcomes for children and communities. America's real challenge is not national rankings but the issue of poverty, income inequality and racism. The United States has a very important opportunity to embrace our diversity, encourage innovation and ensure that liberty and justice for all is more than a declaration.

SCHOOL REFORM	SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
Purpose: raise ratings & rankings	Purpose: advance student learning and engage community
Externally managed	Democratically governed
Prescribed outcomes	Process oriented
Conformity is enforced	Diversity is encouraged
Standardized curriculum and assessments	Customized curriculum and assessments
Measurable indicators	Innovative solutions
Punishments/sanctions	Opportunities/Resources
Competition/comparison	Collaboration/cooperation

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join the movement to honor students, support teachers and engage parents.
You can OPT OUT of state mandated standardized testing by submitting a refusal letter to your child's school.

Learn more at AngelaEngel.com and Uniting4Kids.Com
Get your Opt Out guide at UnitedOPTOUT.com