

WHY OPT OUT?

HIGH STAKES STANDARDIZED TESTS:

- Have become too important, forcing teachers to "teach to the test," not to our students.
- Promote a singularly test-obsessed culture in our schools.
- Force increased testing, test prep, and progress monitoring at unsurpassed levels, creating a toxic, high stress learning environment for children and teachers.
- Are developmentally inappropriate/inaccurate/meaningless for K-2. Are unethically tied to teacher pay/bonuses/employment, school grades/real estate values.
- Waste valuable instructional time, sacrificing critical activities such as electives, experiential learning and recess.
- The latest policies using wide-scale online testing for "personalized learning" or competency-based education (CBE) have led to an explosion of high-stakes standardized tests and excessive "screen time," especially for young children.
- Perpetuate massive collection of students' personal data - our children are not in school to labor for The State's or District's benefit.
- Data are misused to perpetuate the labeling of struggling schools as "failing," enabling their turnover to private interests.
- Exacerbate the teacher exodus, estimated to be >10,000 next year.
- Are inherently limited in scope, unable to assess creativity (art, music, dance, creative problem solving, etc) and emotional intelligence.

WHAT IS The Opt Out Florida Network?

We are a statewide network of parents, grandparents, students, teachers and other educators, and concerned community members.

Since 2012, The Opt Out Florida Network has advocated for multiple measures of meaningful and authentic assessments, that are used to inform instruction and which do not result in punitive consequences for students, teachers and schools.

We provide information about parental options regarding high stakes testing and the way in which test data is used to label Florida's public schools as "failing" in order to justify the re-direction of public funding to private interests, which are unaccountable to the public.

IF YOU'RE NOT OPTING OUT... YOU'RE OPTING IN.

Current Opt Out Guide:
bit.ly/2019OptOutGuide

ALL the tools:
bit.ly/OptOutToolbox

*Statewide Opt Out support & discussion group:
bit.ly/OptOutSupport

Opt Out group just for 3rd Grade:
bit.ly/OOFL3rd

For the most current testing and education news: The Opt Out Florida Network



Last updated: Apr 24, 2019

OPT OUT of FSA? Yes, You CAN!

INFORMED CONSENT

IT IS EACH PARENT'S DUTY
TO INVESTIGATE AND TO WEIGH THE HARM
BEING DONE TO THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION
BY HIGH STAKES TESTING,
AND TO UNDERSTAND THAT
THEY CAN CHOOSE CONSCIOUSLY, WHETHER
OR NOT TO ALLOW THEIR CHILD TO TEST,
AND THAT DOING SO PROVIDES THE DATA
WITH WHICH THE STATE RANKS, SORTS AND
LABELS THEIR CHILDREN AND TEACHERS,
HARMING PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL.

THE
**OPT
OUT**
FLORIDA NETWORK
for a #PublicEdRevolution

NYWX XL | JEGXW

- Florida law mandates that districts must administer the FSA. It says that all students must "participate." The law does not define "participation."
- When students sit for the test, break the seal on the test, and refuse to complete it, they have PARTICIPATED, have compromised test security and cannot be re-tested. They have now "opted out."
- **Some parents prefer "THE OTHER OPT OUT":** If a student is absent on test day, they will be scheduled for the make up upon return. The rest of the student's class should already have taken the test and will be "back to normal." After the student refuses during the make up testing, they are usually sent back to class. You can work respectfully with your school.
- **BOTH** Reading & Writing are needed for a valid ELA score in Gr 4-10 only. THEREFORE, if a parent decides to opt out AFTER a student in Grade 4-10 has taken the Writing test, THEY CAN STILL OPT OUT of Reading. **IMPORTANT:** (Gr3 scores each section separately.)
- Students who OPT OUT receive a score code of NR2, which does not negatively affect their teacher's evaluation or their school's grade.
- A concordant (passing) score on the ACT or SAT replaces a failing (or missing) 10th grade FSA Reading score. Opting out of FSA does NOT affect grades.
- State EOCs count for 30% of final grade.
- Despite the mandated validity study of Summer 2015, there have been no published reports demonstrating that the 17 FSA exams are valid, fair or reliable for at-risk populations of students (ESE, ELL, low socio-economic, etc).
- **TO DATE**, there are **STILL** no published validity studies on the remaining 11 tests.
- On the subject of assessment reform, "OPT OUT" has been the single most significant action to hold the attention of education policy makers and legislators to force any reduction of testing.
- **NO** school district has ever lost a single \$ because students opted out of the FSA.

OPT OUT 101

THE NOTE TO SCHOOL

- Parents should send in a brief note in advance of testing to confirm that opting out is your parental decision, not your child's.
- You are not asking for permission to opt out.
- Notifying the school of your intent to opt out is a COURTESY, allowing teachers to plan for your child to opt out and minimize disruption for students who are testing. Most teachers appreciate this.
- Sample letters are available on our website at: bit.ly/OptOutLetters

THIRD GRADE:

- Students opting out may be told by their friends that they will fail or will be held back. Reassure them that you have taken steps with their teacher to ensure that they will be promoted.
- Eight year olds already KNOW there is too much testing. Discuss this with your child to help them understand WHY it happens, so they can be confident when opting out.
- 3rd Grade retention is mandated if a student fails the FSA. HOWEVER, by law, students CAN be, and ARE promoted by good cause exemptions via alternative assessments (SAT10, Terra Nova, portfolio...).
- **UNDERSTAND** the difference between a test portfolio and a **REAL** portfolio. bit.ly/Gr3OptOutToolbox
- Students must pass ONE assessment, not all.

TO OPT OUT OF A PAPER TEST

The student simply fills in their name (if no pre-printed label), break the seal of the test, close it and push it away. If prompted to begin, student should politely decline. THAT'S IT. Any badgering to test may be considered coercion.

TO OPT OUT OF A COMPUTER-BASED TEST

Follow instructions to log-in and 'Start test.' Press 'End test' (they might have to enter one letter for the 'end test' button to become available), and then 'Submit test'. The goal is simply to submit a blank (near-blank) test.

DURING THE TEST

CHECKING STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL

- Ask what time testing will begin so that you can go to the office and sign out your child a few minutes AFTER testing has begun. After your child breaks the seal and pushes the test away, they SHOULD be allowed to leave the room if you request them in person and return them when class resumes.
- The ONLY time a school may lawfully deny a parent access to their child, on demand, is during a security lockdown or under a restraining order.

DURING THE TEST

Most students can handle "sit & stare" or "opt out & nap" if they think of it as their SILENT PROTEST.

Your school should have a policy that (after your child breaks the seal, signs test, and turns it in) allows them to read (after 90 minutes for the Writing Test) for the rest of the time. "You may allow students to read after they have finished a session AND their test materials have been collected.") Once a student has opted out of FSA Reading, they should be allowed to read for the remainder of testing.

Some schools will tell you there is no "opt out," but they'll say, "minimal participation." It's the same thing. So if you want to OPT OUT, say so. We don't consent to how the test is used. We are way past the point of using "soft language" to make anyone "comfortable" with this protest.

They have their job to do. We have ours.

**STUDENT DATA FUELS THE TESTING MACHINE.
PARENTS CAN SHUT DOWN THE MACHINE.**

DENY THE DATA... OPT OUT.