

Feb. 4, 2015

Dear Winnetka Parents,

I am contacting you to express **my deep concern about the upcoming PARCC test** that will be given to all Winnetka 3rd through 8th graders this spring. The PARCC was created as a Common Core test by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

Superintendent Trisha Kocanda eloquently expressed her concerns about the PARCC in the monthly *Winnetka Wire*, which was picked up by the national press. I echo these concerns, which include:

- **Time:**
 - Administration of the PARCC will take 13-14 hours.
 - The ISAT took no more than seven hours.
- **Impact on instruction:**
 - With one test unit administered each day, students will be tested over a two-week period, interrupting many instructional days.
 - Additional time—2-3 hours-- allocated to familiarizing students with the online testing experience.
 - As the tests are taken in computer labs and resource centers, most regularly scheduled classes cannot take place for approximately six weeks.
- **Stress:**
 - The length of the test, the rigor, and the change of routine may cause stress and discomfort for many students.

As a long-time educator, a national advocate, a former Winnetka parent, and a current Winnetka grandparent, my additional concerns are listed below:

- **“Guinea Pigs”**
 - Our children are being treated as “guinea pigs.”
 - The PARCC was quickly rolled out, not allowing enough time to develop test logistics nor to verify its validity or reliability, yet schools, teachers, and children will be judged by its results.
- **Keyboarding Skills**
 - The online testing format is especially challenging for students who may not yet have the sophisticated keyboarding skills needed to complete the test.
 - The format is completely inappropriate for 3rd graders.

- **Inappropriate questions**
 - The questions tend to be intentionally tricky and convoluted. People with Ph.D.'s are finding some of them impossible to answer!
 - Children may feel anxious and inadequate.
- **No diagnostic or instructional value**
 - As parents, students, and teachers never see the test results, they have no diagnostic or instructional value.
- **Lack of participation**
 - Initially in 2010, there were 26 PARCC member states, but, since then, 17 states have pulled out as they discover the many downsides of the test.
 - Now, only 9 states—including Illinois—plus the District of Columbia remain. Why is Illinois still participating?
- **Access to data**
 - The PARCC was created by a private company that controls the extensive data collected from the tests - data about each and every child who takes it.
 - According to the website stopcommoncoreillinois.org, “The PARCC consortium will make the data, including identifiable records, available to a variety of federal government agencies and research firms. Student data privacy laws have been loosened to allow for this data sharing and parents will not be notified.”

What can you, as a parent, do?

- The federal law mandates that schools must administer assessments, but not that children must take them. While there is no “opt out” provision in Illinois, children can refuse the test (but must do so each day the test is given).
 - Let your child’s teacher know that your child will be refusing.
 - Rally a group of children in your child’s class to say “no” together.
- Write, write, write – to your Congressman, Senators Kirk and Durbin, Governor Rauner, Secretary Duncan, and President Obama.
- Make your opinion known in letters to the editor, on Facebook, and on Twitter.

As a concerned parent, I urge you to join the growing outcry--both in Winnetka and on the national scene--that the PARCC is wrong for our schools and wrong for our children.

Sincerely,

Blakely Bundy

Executive Director Emeritus and Senior Advisor, The Alliance for Early Childhood;
National Advisory Board Member, Defending the Early Years, www.deyproject.org