



www.deyproject.org



www.TheAllianceForEC.org

April 1, 2016

Dear Winnetka Parents,

From April 4 to 29, the Winnetka Public Schools are required to administer the PARCC tests to all 3rd through 8th graders. The PARCC was created by the Pearson, Inc., a private company, as a Common Core test. This will be the second year that it will be administered.

As a former Winnetka parent, current Winnetka grandparent, long-time educator, and national early childhood advocate, I have **grave concerns about the PARCC**. They include:

- **Time taken away from instruction**
 - Valuable classroom time is replaced by many hours devoted to the tests and, even before they are given, to familiarizing students with the tests and testing procedures.
 - Computer labs and resource centers, which are used for testing, will be unavailable for other activities for most of the month of April during “testing season.”
- **Stress**
 - Many children experience test stress, especially when the test format is unfamiliar and their regular routines are disrupted.
 - PARCC test questions are written to be intentionally tricky and convoluted, making some children feel anxious and inadequate.
- **Validity**
 - The PARCC tests are neither valid nor reliable, so the results are essentially meaningless.
- **Parents, teachers, and schools don’t see the PARCC results until the following school year**
 - The results have no diagnostic or instructional value.
 - In 2015, results were not available until late fall, seven months after the tests were given; this year, they are promising that the results will be available in early fall, but still long after the 2015-16 school year is over.
 - PARCC tests are primarily used to assess schools and teachers, not individual students.
- **Many states have dropped out**
 - Initially, there were 26 PARCC member states. Since then, 19 states have pulled out, once they learned about the downsides of the tests and heard the protests of parents and teachers.
 - Illinois is one of only six states plus the District of Columbia that are still administrating the PARCC.
 - Last year, over 625,000 students opted out nationwide, with 40,000 of them in Illinois

The Winnetka Public Schools are mandated to administer the PARCC, but children are not mandated to take them. In fact, several states have passed opt-out laws, although Illinois has not done so yet. **There will be no penalties to your child or to the Winnetka Public Schools if your child opts out. In fact, last year 32% of Winnetka students opted out (with 50% opting out at Washburne).**

To opt out, you, as the parent, should send a letter to your child’s principal and your child’s teacher notifying them that your child will be refusing the PARCC. It’s a good idea to discuss with your child why you have made this decision. Last year, children opting out had the option of staying home during the testing time or going to another room at school for reading, homework or alternative activities. As there were so many students opting out, there was absolutely no stigma for children nor any repercussions for parents for making this decision.

Let’s see if we can beat last year’s 32% opt out rate, protect our children, and send an important message about inappropriate testing to the Illinois State Board of Education and to our politicians, too!

Sincerely,

Blakely Bundy

Executive Director Emeritus and Senior Advisor, The Alliance for Early Childhood

Co-Director, Defending the Early Years

Former Winnetka parent and current Winnetka grandparent (at Hubbard Woods and Skokie Schools)