



What can I do to combat the state's obsession with standardized testing?

Parents and teachers across the state are standing up and speaking out about the need for the state to get student assessment right. Educators and their union are working closely with parents to advocate for a balanced approach to student assessment. Here's how you can get involved:

- ✔ Go to www.nysut.org/parents to find a wealth of materials on the state's new Common Core Standards; testing; and what's needed to get it right. Share this material with friends and neighbors and on Facebook and Twitter.
- ✔ Engage with teachers and your local Parent-Teacher Association to create a parent-teacher partnership and workgroup to discuss issues and establish action steps with your local board of education. Informed parents can make a huge difference.
- ✔ Attend and participate in your local school board meetings — use your voice as a parent and taxpayer to engage policymakers.
- ✔ Send a letter to the editor and weigh in via social media about the need to focus on learning, not testing, in our schools. Share your experiences — use your voice to engage your community.



Parents and educators know:
A student is more than
a test score!

Reducing test anxiety

Use these techniques to help students combat test anxiety:

- ✔ Use positive self-talk to interrupt negative thoughts and short-circuit the worry response. Silently shouting “Stop!” or “Stop thinking about that,” when negative thoughts arise is a good technique.
 - Positive self-talk can build confidence and decrease test anxiety.
- ✔ Release tension by contracting and relaxing muscles.
 - Place feet flat on the floor and grab beneath the chair. Push down with your feet and pull up on the chair simultaneously for five seconds.
- ✔ Use visualization.
 - Place hands over eyes and mentally picture a relaxing scene.
- ✔ Relax through deep breathing.
- ✔ Practice cue-controlled relaxation.
 - Repeat cue words such as “I can get through this” or “Tests don't scare me.”

GETTING IT RIGHT: A parent's guide to STUDENT ASSESSMENT



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What parents should know about standardized testing

What are standardized tests?

Standardized tests typically are administered and scored in a consistent way. All students answer the same questions, usually in multiple-choice format.

Standardized tests can be helpful as one tool in assessing student learning — but they are not the only or even the best way to assess student learning.

Why are they given?

- ✓ Federal and state requirements mandate school districts to annually measure student achievement.
- ✓ State Regents examinations are required for students to earn a high school diploma.
- ✓ Standardized tests are also used as part of teacher/principal evaluations and to rate schools and districts, helping the state determine which are in need of improvement and targeted aid.
- ✓ English as a Second Language tests and alternative assessments for students with severe disabilities are used to determine student progress and instructional needs.

When are they given?

- ✓ Statewide-standardized tests are given in grades 3-8 in English Language Arts and Math, and in grades 4 and 8 in science.
- ✓ High school students must pass Regents exams in Comprehensive English; Global History and Geography; U.S. History and Government; one Math subject; and one Science subject — at minimum — to earn a Regents diploma.

Test overload

NYSUT estimates the average student takes a minimum of 74 hours or 4,440 minutes of standardized tests through grades 3-12.



For more information go to www.nysut.org/testing

Why are parents and teachers concerned about standardized testing in New York state?

Many teachers and parents believe that the state is obsessed with over-use of commercial standardized tests — imposing too many, too often and with inappropriate high-stakes consequences. The state rushed out new standardized tests even though the majority of school districts had not fully implemented the new Common Core material. Teachers know that you don't give a test before the material is taught, and yet that's what the state did.

New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) is calling for an end to the state's over-emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing. Tests should be used to help teachers diagnose student strengths and weaknesses, and to help students improve.

Many school boards have passed resolutions against the state's obsession with commercial standardized tests. Parents are speaking out about the stress their children are experiencing and describing how an over-emphasis on testing erodes a rich, meaningful curriculum and hinders their children's joy in learning.

How does standardized testing impact children?

Testing can be stressful for some students. It can be worsened by an over-emphasis on test stakes, consequences or grades. The focus should be on learning, not testing. (See the back page for tips on reducing test anxiety in children.)

Besides standardized tests, how else are students evaluated?

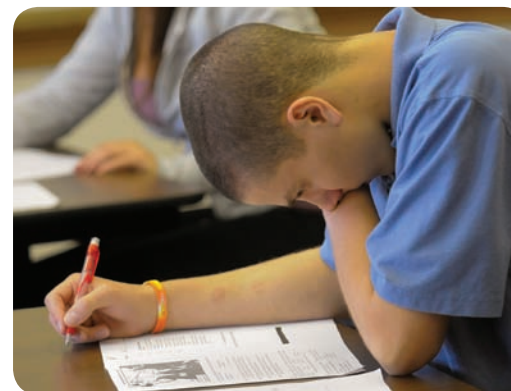
Authentic assessments, the fundamental method educators regularly use in the classroom, provide a more comprehensive picture of what students know and can do. Some examples are: portfolios, writing journals and end-of-course capstone projects. Students are asked to do performance-based, real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of their knowledge and skills.

What can authentic assessments tell me about my child's learning?

Because of the product-oriented nature of these assessments, your child's work is tangible evidence of his/her progress and subject-area knowledge. Parents are given information regularly throughout the year and have the opportunity to discuss concerns with the child's teacher.

How can schools be certain authentic assessments are rigorous enough?

Authentic assessments must be aligned to the state learning standards. Performance rubrics developed by the teacher, or a team of teachers, are used to evaluate student work. A rubric is a type of score sheet that defines how well a student meets the learning goals and objectives.



Please send me more information about student testing and assessment and other information to help me make the best educational decisions as a parent and a member of the community.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone (with area code): _____

School District: _____



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