

PARENTS PUSH BACK

HIGH-STAKES TESTING GETS LOW GRADES IN NEW POLLS

New Jersey parents – and the public at large – are poised to push back hard against high-stakes standardized testing.

That's the inescapable conclusion from two new polls, which asked both groups the same questions about a number of issues around the use of standardized tests in New Jersey public schools.

"These polls show that overwhelming numbers of parents and the public are concerned about the impact of high-stakes standardized tests on students and on the quality of education they receive," said NJEA President Wendell Steinhauer. "Parents are clearly ready to mobilize and push back hard against these tests."

The polls, conducted in early December, showed that by large margins, both parents and the general public:

- Believe there is too much emphasis on testing.
- Favor reducing the amount of standardized testing.
- Want greater transparency in reporting the amount of time and money spent on testing, the impact of testing on curriculum and instructional time, the amount of money testing companies are making, and the amount of money those companies donate to politicians.
- Support legislative passage of a "parents' bill of rights" related to the frequency and cost of tests, their subject matter, and how test data is used.
- Want parents to have the right to refuse to have their children take the tests (to "opt out").

The polls were conducted by the Washington, D.C.-based Mellman Group on behalf of NJEA and several education and parent advocacy groups. The pollster gathered the views of 800 registered voters and 400 parents of public school students. The margin of error for these polls is +/- 3.5 percentage points, with a 95% level of confidence.

Here's what the polls found, in several key areas.

EMPHASIS ON/AMOUNT OF TESTING

Percent who believe there is "too much [or too little] emphasis placed on standardized tests in teaching children in public schools."

	TOO MUCH	TOO LITTLE
PARENTS	71%	6%
PUBLIC	62%	7%

WORRIES ABOUT TESTING

Percent who are worried/not worried...

...that testing "causes stress for students."

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
PARENTS	78%	22%
PUBLIC	75%	23%

...that testing "takes time and money from other educational priorities."

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
PARENTS	77%	22%
PUBLIC	77%	18%

...that "teachers are forced to teach to the test."

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
PARENTS	81%	17%
PUBLIC	78%	17%

...that "too much money is spent on testing."

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
PARENTS	69%	24%
PUBLIC	70%	22%

...that "too much of the school year is spent preparing for standardized tests."

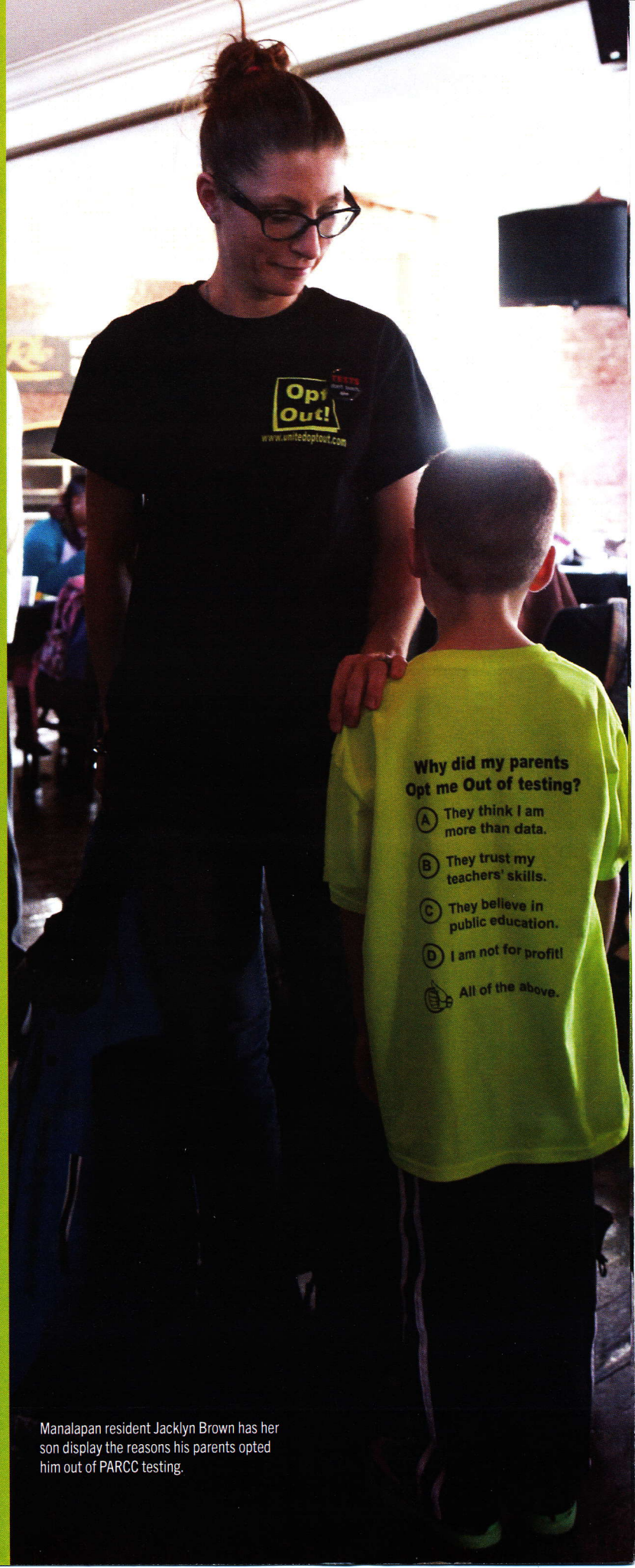
	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
PARENTS	80%	19%
PUBLIC	76%	20%

...that "tests do not provide a good measure of each individual student."

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
PARENTS	81%	16%
PUBLIC	77%	19%

...that "tests are given too much weight when used to make decisions on teachers, schools and students."

	WORRIED	NOT WORRIED
PARENTS	82%	16%
PUBLIC	79%	16%



Manalapan resident Jacklyn Brown has her son display the reasons his parents opted him out of PARCC testing.

Why did my parents
Opt me Out of testing?

- ☐ A They think I am more than data.
- ☐ B They trust my teachers' skills.
- ☐ C They believe in public education.
- ☐ D I am not for profit!
- ☒ All of the above.

REFORMING THE TESTING ENVIRONMENT

Percent who want to...

"Limit the number of hours spent on standardized testing."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	78%	17%
PUBLIC	80%	16%

"Stop giving standardized tests to students below the third grade."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	84%	15%
PUBLIC	77%	19%

"Give parents the right of refusal [opting out] so that their kids don't have to take standardized tests."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	66%	33%
PUBLIC	53%	41%

"Require companies to disclose the money they make from taxpayer money spent on standardized testing."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	88%	9%
PUBLIC	82%	14%

"Require companies that profit from taxpayer money spent on standardized testing to disclose the political contributions they make."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	87%	11%
PUBLIC	83%	12%

"Delay for two years any decisions based on PARCC tests until the results and impact of those tests have been studied."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	74%	17%
PUBLIC	68%	18%

"Pass a parents' bill of rights that provides dates of all tests, their subject matter, costs, how the data is used, and the ways parents can opt out of the testing."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	82%	15%
PUBLIC	73%	23%

"Give standardized tests only once each in elementary, middle and high school, instead of every year."

	FAVOR	OPPOSE
PARENTS	67%	27%
PUBLIC	65%	27%

PARENTS ARE CONVINCED

Parents want action, and believe (by the percentages below) that the following reasons are the most convincing for reducing the amount of standardized testing:

86% Standardized tests take control away from principals, parents and teachers, who know better than corporations and bureaucrats how to prepare students for college and careers.


86% Instead of spending so much time focusing on passing a test, schools should be focusing on teaching kids and giving them the individual attention they deserve.

85% High-stakes standardized tests put too much stress on students, particularly younger students. Children in elementary school should not be expected to take multiple standardized tests every year.

84% Too much standardized testing is putting the quality of our kids' education at risk. Teachers are spending more and more time teaching to the test rather than teaching science, math, and the skills students need in real life.

83% Standardized testing and test preparation take time away from real learning, and employers are looking for well-rounded workers who are creative problem-solvers who can think "outside the box."

83% New Jersey is spending millions of dollars on standardized tests. That money should go for school supplies and up-to-date textbooks, reducing class sizes, or restoring music and art classes.

82% If teachers' jobs are tied directly to their students' standardized test scores, they have no choice but to teach to the test, even if that means neglecting other important learning. 

Concerned about high stakes testing & evaluation?

GET ORGANIZED!

For testing organizing resources

visit: njea.org/testing

There, you'll find...

- Best practices for showing the film, *Standardized and hosting a "Take the PARCC event."*:

Over 35 of these events are now on the books—all hosted by local and county association leaders.

Download our best practice guides, see an upcoming events calendar in order to get the ball rolling to make an impact in your school community.

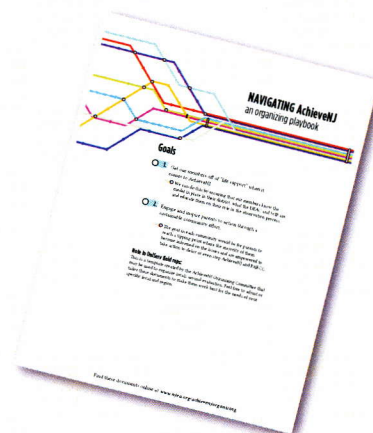
- Invite members and parents to log on to NJKidsandFamilies.org to tell their stories, find resources, and sign up to receive updates on this important issue.
- BOE resolutions on testing.
- Pending NJ legislation on testing.
- "Tests Don't Teach" buttons order forms.
- April month of action organizing plan.

For evaluation organizing resources

visit: njea.org/achievenjorganizing

There, you'll find...

- **Navigating AchieveNJ, an organizing playbook:**
Learn how to empower members to take control of the new evaluation system by organizing a Local Evaluation Committee.
- Sample forms and surveys.
- Brochures and infographics to use in your community organizing efforts.
- Resolutions against standardized testing that boards of education have passed.
- Other resources, including NJEA's guide to hosting coffee klatches with parents.



NJ
Kids and
Families

