Best Practices for showing the film

Standardized

Running time: 1 hour 13 minutes.

An outline for community engagement on standardized testing.

Created & piloted by the
Delran Education Association,
May 1, 2014

President Mike Kaminski
delranea.org

Standardized:
"A film everyone needs to see."

"For decades, standardized testing has been a part of public education. Within the last 10 years, however, education reform has promoted even more testing. Test scores, mistakenly viewed as effective assessments of student ability and teacher/school effectiveness, are anything but. ***Standardized*** sheds light on the invalid nature of these tests, the terrible consequences of high-stakes testing, and the big money that's involved."

Learn more at *standardizedthefilm.com*

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A-1: Preparing for a screening

1. Raise the idea for a screening at your next Rep Council meeting. Introduce the concept to your ARs by providing background on the film and discuss your goals. Move forward when you have secured approval from your Rep Council.
2. Decide on your venue and a date for the screening.
3. Contact the venue and secure the location. Ensure that the venue has a microphone available for your use.
4. Consider using *eventbrite.com* to facilitate RSVPs. *Eventbrite.com* will allow you to collect attendees' school districts and email addresses.
5. Ensure that you have a PRIDE banner or local association table throw for the event. If you do not, request to purchase one on the event's PRIDE application. The items can be found on *njeapridestore.com*. Allow three weeks for delivery.
6. Have sign-in sheets on hand for the event. It will be important for you to collect participants' names, email addresses, home addresses, and cell phone numbers. You can find a sample sign-in sheet on *njea.org/parents-and-community/pride*. You can inform participants that the information will be used to keep them up-to-date on what's happening in the schools and invite them to the next event.
7. Have index cards to give participants for their questions and a bucket to collect the cards. Distribute index cards and pens to participants as they arrive. Feel free to include the index cards and pens on your PRIDE proposal; find the pens at *njeapridestore.com*.
8. Prepare handouts, fliers, and brochures for the event. Consider including:

   A. Testing materials:

   i. NJEA brochure: *Again? Standardized testing does not make my child learn. So why is there so much of it?*

   ii. NJEA brochure: *How much? What is the true cost of standardized testing?*

   iii. NJEA brochure: *What if? What could school look like without so much standardized testing?*

   iv. Copies of this *ap.org* story: *http://bigstory.ap.org/article/more-parents-opting-kids-out-standardized-tests*

   v. Sample opt-out letter (see D-3). (**NOTE:** this should be distributed by a parent group; not the local association.)

   vi. Directions for when students opt-out from Montclair Public Schools: *https://www.njea.org/njea-media/pdf/Montclair_njask-refusal.pdf?1401193519319*

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vii It may be worthwhile to show what other states are doing. See ***"The 95% Participation Rate and How School Districts Do NOT Lose Funding"*** from NYS Allies for Public Education: *http://www.nysape.org/if-my-child-refuses-state-tests-will-my-school-lose-funding.html*

B. Voice your opinion materials:

i. *"Slow down the Testing Tsunami" comment cards.* (Return completed cards to your NJEA UniServ field representative.)

ii. **"Websites, Facebook pages, and Twitter feeds to follow"** handout (see Appendix D-2).

C. Call to action materials:

i. A handout with all the names and contact information of your local and state legislators. Visit *njea.org/issues-and-political-action/legislative-district* to get started.

ii. Check *njea.org/issues-and-political-action* to get information on any relevant bills, including *A-3081*.

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A-2: Whom to invite

- Your members
- Parents
- NJEA members who live in the community (Your UniServ office can provide your local association with a list.)
- Parents who have attended recent PRIDE events
- Community groups:
  - PTA/PTO members
  - Churches
  - Civic groups
  - Student alumni groups
  - Senior citizens' homes and groups (AARP)
  - County/local retired education association members
  - Police, firefighters, EMTs, etc.
- Legislators (Work with your NJEA UniServ field representative)

A-3: Ways to encourage participation

- Use social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, etc. to get the message out.
- Create fliers and invitations:
  - How? Hand them out to parents as they attend school events, drop off/pick up students from school, use direct mail/email (from association database), etc.
  - Consider parent conferences, back to school nights, concerts, plays, sporting events, etc.
  - Target established parent groups in your schools (i.e. PTA/PTO, "band parents," preK parents, etc.).
- Make phone calls to parents:
  - How? Each member could contact two parents who might attend a screening (i.e. involved parents, parents who have asked questions related to testing, etc.).
- Place advertisements for a screening in local newspapers, community TV channels, etc.
- Invite parents who have attended your PRIDE and FAST events (added to your association database from sign-in sheets collected at the events).
- Invite 30 members to attend a screening and ask each to invite at least one parent.
- Offer refreshments – even dinner – at a screening. PRIDE can fund these costs (see A-4).
- Buy hot chocolate/coffee for your district's crossing guards and invite them to a screening. Consider other parent volunteers working in the schools who you can invite to the screening.

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A-4: Applying for PRIDE funding

Your showing of ***Standardized*** in a community forum qualifies for PRIDE funding.

First, download the PRIDE forms *here*. Find them on *njea.org* by logging in. Then, select "Parents and Community" and click on "PRIDE in Public Education."

Next, complete the forms. Feel free to use this sample paragraph in the description.

> To support our association's ongoing efforts to organize the community around the issues of evaluation and standardized testing, we will be hosting a showing of the film ***Standardized***. Invitations (paper and electronic) will include the full association name. We will have our PRIDE banner at the theater at the sign-in area. The ticket reservation process will be our built-in contact list. After the event, we will work with our UniServ field representative on planning follow-up activities with the parents that attended.

Place the theater rental fee under "other costs." You do not need to include any licensing fees. Feel free to offer refreshments to your participants, if applicable.

When your form is complete, send it in to your UniServ office: *njea.org/about/who-we-are/regional-offices*.

If you are unfamiliar with how PRIDE works, learn more by logging in at *njea.org/parents-and-community/pride*. Also, check out *this document*.

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B-1: Sample agenda

1. Make introductory remarks (see B-2).
2. Show film (1 hour and 13 minutes).
3. Deliver concluding remarks.
4. Invite the film's producer to speak (if he is present). **NOTE:** Local leaders should conduct the Q & A session, not the producer.
5. Introducing the Q & A session:
   A. Mention any pertinent legislation.
   B. Show the *"Slow Down the Testing Tsunami" comment cards*, indicating that volunteers will collect them at the end of the program.
   C. Provide an overview of three themes: lies, money, and civil rights.
   D. **Lies:** Standardized testing doesn't do what it says it does.
      i. Combat the lies by talking with your local board of education.
      ii. Use *NJ Kids and Families* brochures.
      iii. Raise questions about what are tests used for, who gets the data, etc.
   E. **Money:** Standardized testing is being used by corporations to make money.
      i. Stop the flow of money by talking with your local board of education.
      ii. How much does testing cost? (Again, refer to the *NJ Kids and Families* brochures).
      iii. Be aware of pro-public education bloggers, etc. (show handout D-2).
   F. **Civil rights:** Standardized testing is being overused to target minority students, ELLs, special needs students, behavioral needs students, etc.
      i. Protect civil rights by enacting legislation.
      ii. Handouts (list of state legislators and Education Committee members).
      iii. *"Slow Down the Testing Tsunami" comment cards* (these support specific legislation; fill out and hand-in immediately).
      iv. List of NJEA supported legislation.
   G. **Final element:** Opt-out or refuse the test.
      i. CRITICAL EMPHASIS: This is all about parental choice; no one can ask you to do this. It's up to you to decide.
      ii. Anything done to stop or slow down testing to get it right has to be a parent movement.
6. Encourage participants to write their questions on the index cards and place them in the bucket. Then, host a Q & A session by drawing the cards. This will allow you to screen the cards as your discussion moves forward.
7. Have volunteers collect completed *"Slow Down the Testing Tsunami" comment cards* as participants leave. Give them to your NJEA UniServ field representative.

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B-2: Sample remarks

Introductory remarks used by the Delran Education Association on May 1, 2014

Thank you so much for coming tonight. My name is Michael Kaminski, and I am the president of the Delran Education Association, the organization that sponsored tonight's showing of ***Standardized****: Lies, Money, and Civil Rights: How Testing is Ruining Public Education*. I am so thrilled that you were able to brave the weather and skip the Flyers game to help us fill the theater tonight. That speaks volumes about the level of concern – or at least curiosity – that people from all walks of life seem to have about the increasing number of high-stakes tests that are being forced upon children, teachers, administrators, and boards of education all across the country, and, of course, right here in New Jersey.

Before we get to the film, I need to thank some people for their help with tonight's event. First, my wife Jennifer, who is both a mother and an educator. Without her support for what I do after school hours, my feeble attempts at "saving public education" wouldn't be possible. Like many of your spouses, she often plays the role of both parents for my two daughters. I also need to thank NJEA's PRIDE in Public Education program for helping to sponsor this event, as well as the many local members who assisted with tonight, particularly those who worked the sign-in table, including NJEA UniServ's Tricia Fair. I also need to thank Delran's famous blogger, Ani McHugh – you might know her as *TeacherBiz31*. Truth be told, it's Ani who really did all of the legwork to get this event to happen, and like most organizations, it's the individual members who are responsible for making me look good. Finally, I want to recognize the film's co-director, Dan Hornberger. Thank you both so much for giving of your time.

So, why are we all here to watch a film about standardized testing? Well, it's no coincidence that NJ ASK testing is about to begin and then end and then just as quickly get replaced by PARCC. But, has anyone ever thought to ask the question WHY? I know – it seems like testing is "what students do" – they go to school and they take tests. But, WHY? Why are they taking so many tests? What are the tests being used to measure? Do they really measure what they claim to be measuring? You see, most of us are here tonight because we are concerned about the quality of education that our children receive. We're concerned about how and where our tax dollars are being spent. We're concerned about our children being used as guinea pigs to pilot new tests and to supposedly measure the success and failure rates of their teachers and their public school systems. Many of us wonder if these tests are really necessary.

All across the country, tests are being used to evaluate teachers. I want to be very clear here…the message tonight is not that teachers don't want

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to be evaluated. I'll tell you right now that as a union leader, as a teacher, and as a parent, I want the best possible teacher in every classroom, and I want to know that my children's administrators are doing the best they can to ensure that happens. That means supporting struggling teachers to help them improve, and making the tough decision to use the tools that administrators have always had to remove those few teachers who don't improve. However, I don't understand why our children need to be a part of this process. I fail to understand how days upon days of standardized testing are needed to determine what good teaching looks like. Don't we all know it when we see it? And, if that's true, why are we forcing so many tests upon our kids? The simplest and saddest answer is to follow the money. That's what the push for Common Core standards and new testing is all about – making money through the privatization of public education.

When this film is over, we'll go through some Q & A, and I'll ask you to take some action to get involved in this issue back in your own local school districts. But, if you're like me, you're probably wondering – where are the previews? Half of the reason why I come to a theater is to see what the coming attractions are. Well, in the case of ***Standardized***, you won't see any previews tonight. But, if you've been on Facebook and Twitter, if you get the *Courier Post* or the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, you've already seen them. Just ask the residents of Philadelphia, Newark, and Camden. They'll tell you what the end result of all of this "testing" is – to label public schools as "failure factories" and to have them shut down so that private, for-profit corporations can then move in and take them over and then determine what kind of clientele they would like educate. Once these leeches occupy the buildings of those districts that were the "easy targets" – the large urban ones – there's no doubt that they'll be coming for us, too. That's why the struggles in our neighboring urban communities need to be our struggles too, and that's just one more reason why this film – and this issue of testing is SO critically important.

So, without further delay, here is ***Standardized***.

Concluding remarks of Delran Education Association on May 1, 2014

So, what can you do? Well, there are four things that I'm going to ask you to do tonight…

First, CONFRONT THE LIES.

These tests are not being used to assess our students' college and career readiness. Esteemed NY public school principal Carol Burris said this: "There is no objective science by which we can predict future college readiness using grades 3-8 test scores. To make college readiness predictions for 8-year-olds is absurd."

Confront the lies: These tests aren't needed to place students in honors or remedial classes. Don't you believe that the teachers who work with

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your children every day and the principal who oversees the instructional program in the building know the educational needs of your young child better than some corporate manufactured test?

How do you confront the lies? Follow the Facebook and Twitter feeds that we gave you. Ask your board of education how many tests your children are taking, ask why they are taking them, and ask which for-profit corporations are they sharing data with (inBloom, NJ Smart, Realtime, etc.). Help to educate your boards of education about the lies associated with standardized testing.

Second, FOLLOW THE MONEY.

This morning, I read an article about Willingboro's school budget. They are going to cut 12 teachers and end their prekindergarten program, yet in the same budget they are going to spend over cap (banked cap) for – you'll never guess what – $200,000 in new computers to be ready for the PARCC test. Not $200,000 to keep people who work directly to improve the quality of their children's education – but $200,000 for electronic boxes simply so that tests can be taken that then are used to label the schools and the school children as failures.

Follow the money – our former Commissioner of Education, Christopher Cerf, implemented all of these new tests at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, and yet the Governor refuses to give state aid to the schools in the amounts that they both need and are legally required to have. We can pay Pearson, but we can't fund school budgets. (Or, we can set up an electronic evaluation and testing system, and then quit our job with the state to then work for the company that profits off of all the electronic evaluation and testing. Way to go, Chris Cerf.)

How do you follow the money? Ask your boards of ed how much the tests are costing. Ask your boards of ed how much the computers are costing. Ask your boards of ed how much it costs to retrofit libraries or other common areas. Ask your boards of ed how much new textbooks aligned to the Common Core are costing the district. I'm not asking you to attack your boards… I'm asking you to question, educate, and find a way to come to the conclusion TOGETHER that your LOCAL FUNDS can be much better spent than on standardized testing and related expenses.

Third, PROTECT THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF ALL STUDENTS.

Read Mark Weber and Bruce Baker's research on Cami Anderson's "One Newark" plan. You'll see that the goal of corporate ed reform is to take over school districts, bring in private, for-profit charters, and allow them to then SHUT their doors to special needs students, English language learners, and students with disciplinary issues. Ed reform is the antithesis of civil rights, and it needs to be stopped. According to Weber and Baker, not only does ed reform disproportionately negatively impact

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minority students, but minority teachers as well.

Insist on protecting the civil rights of all students by insisting on local control of school boards, local control of educational decisions, and the rights of individual parents to choose what testing is appropriate for their children. We have a right to a free, appropriate public education – we need to insist on that right. If we allow them to take it away from Newark, and take it away from Camden, they will eventually come and take it away from the rest of us, too.

How do we do that? We must contact our local legislators and insist that they put a stop to the takeover of public schools.

We must insist on legislation that puts a stop to for-profit charter schools. We must insist on legislation that allows local districts to decide how much testing is appropriate and what say parents have in that process.

Lastly, you need to decide what is best for your children in terms of the test. There are organizations that advise parents to opt their children out of the test. We cannot legally advise you to do that. That is a decision that you must make.

Understand that when schools get rewarded for high test scores or punished for low ones, the only focus in education is on the tests and not on the children. We need to insist that this is not right, that this is not what education was meant to be, and we need to do it now.

Simply put, we need your help. This can't simply be a "teacher movement." After all, everyone knows that teachers are whiners who don't work hard enough or long enough and never want to be held accountable for anything. If this movement opposing the emphasis on standardized testing is to have a real impact, it needs to be parents, community members, administrators, and board members together. So, if you're a teacher, great! Get a movement started in your school district… but where you're needed most is actually in your children's district. Stand up as a parent and as a taxpayer and work with your board of education to make sense of all of this testing nonsense. Not a parent? No longer have children in the district? That's ok, too. As long as you are a taxpayer, wouldn't you like to know that your tax dollars are being spent to EDUCATE children and not to retrofit classrooms or libraries for the sole purpose of testing? You have a right to speak up, and we need your help, too.

Thank you so much for coming tonight. Please be sure to contact me directly if you have any questions about the topics we discussed tonight or how we can help your movement to get started!

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B-3: Helpful hints

- Remember to highlight the three *NJ Kids and Families* brochures that were detailed in A-1 above.
- Encourage participants to call their legislators and report how much time their children have lost from academics due to test prep. Also report additional costs to the district, etc. End the call with, "Was this your intent for what should happen under the law?"
- Ask if participants would be willing to meet with legislators to discuss the issue further. Consider using an additional sign-in sheet as participants leave.
- Before the Q & A session, consider showing examples of PARCC test questions.
- Keep in mind that your event may draw participants who may plan to disrupt the event. Work with your NJEA UniServ field representative on a plan to combat this.

C-1: Following up

After the screening, work with your NJEA UniServ field representative on a plan for reaching out to participants (via the sign-in sheets) to further your goals. Consider reaching out to your PTA / PTO for additional support.

You're invited to a special screening of

Standardized

Lies, Money, & Civil Rights: How Testing is Ruining Public Education

"A film everyone needs to see."

"For decades, standardized testing has been a part of public education. Within the last 10 years, however, education reform has promoted even more testing. Test scores, mistakenly viewed as effective assessments of student ability and teacher/school effectiveness, are anything but. Standardized sheds light on the invalid nature of these tests, the terrible consequences of high-stakes testing, and the big money that's involved."

Running time: 1 hour 13 minutes.

Learn more at *standardizedthefilm.com*

Presented by _____

Date & Time _____

Location _____

Introductory remarks by _____

Q & A by _____

For more information _____

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Websites, Facebook pages, & Twitter feeds to follow

Site name	Sponsor or Purpose	Web Address	Related social media sites
NJEA	New Jersey Education Association	http://www.njea.org	FB: New Jersey Education Association Twitter: @NJEA
NJ Kids & Families	New Jersey Education Association	http://njkidsandfamilies.org	FB: NJKidsAndFamilies
@TheChalkFace	Various contributors	http://atthechalkface.com	Twitter: @thechalkface
Bob Braun's Ledger	Bob Braun	http://www.bobbraunsledger.com	FB: Bob Braun's Ledger Twitter: @BobBraunsLedger
Class Size Matters	Leonie Haimson	http://Classsizematters.org	FB: Class Size Matter Twitter: @ClassSizeMatter
Cloaking Inequity	Julian Vasquez Heilig (focus on TFA)	http://Cloakinginequity.com	
Defend NJ Education			FB: Defend NJ Education Twitter: @stopthefreezeNJ
Deutch29	Mercedes Schneider	http://deutsch29.wordpress.com/	
Diane Ravitch	Public Ed Advocate	http://Dianeravitch.net	FB: Diane Ravitch Twitter: @DianeRavitch
Education Law Center		http://www.edlawcenter.org	FB: Education Law Center Twitter: @EdLawCenter
EduShyster	Jennifer Berkshire	http://Edushyster.com	FB: EduShyster
FairTest	Misuse & flaws in standardized testing	http://Fairtest.org	FB: FairTest Twitter: @FairTestOffice
Jersey Jazzman	Mark Weber	http://Jerseyjazzman.blogspot.com	FB: Jersey Jazzman Twitter: @jerseyjazzman
Marie Corfield		http://mcorfield.blogspot.com	FB: Marie Hughes Corfield Twitter: @MarieCorfield
Mark Naison	Fordham; Badass Teachers Association	http://Withabrooklynaccent.blogspot.com	FB: Mark Naison FB: BadAss Teachers Association
Mother Crusader	Darcie Cimarusti – parent BOE member Highland Park	http://Mothercrusader.blogspot.com	FB: Mother Crusader Twitter: @mothercrusader
Network for Public Education	Group led by Ravitch, et al	http://www.networkforpubliceducation.org	FB: The Network for Public Education
NJ Parents Against Cuts			Twitter: @NJParents1
Parents United	Helen Gym	http://www.parentsunitedphila.com	FB: Parents United for Public Education
Russ Walsh	NJ Retired teacher/reading specialist	http://Russonreading.blogspot.com	Twitter: @ruswalsh
Save Our Schools NJ	Parents	http://Saveourschoolsnj.org	FB: Save Our Schools New Jersey Twitter: @SavOurSchoolsNJ
School Finance	Bruce Baker	http://www.schoolfinance101.wordpress.com	Twitter: @SchlFinance101
Steve Danley	Asst. Prof. Rutgers-Camden	http://danley.rutgers.edu/news	Twitter: @SteveDanley
Students United		http://supe.k12newsnetwork.com	FB: Students United For Public Education Twitter: @RutgersSUPE
TeacherBiz31	Ani McHugh	http://teacherbiz.wordpress.com	FB: Ani McHugh Twitter: @teacherbiz31
The Answer Sheet	Valerie Strauss	http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/	Twitter: @valeriestrauss
United Opt Out – NJ	Part of Unitedoptout.com	http://unitedoptout.com/state-by-state-opt-out-2/new-jersey/	FB: Opt Out of State Standardized Tests – New Jersey

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D-3: Sample opt-out letter

NOTE: It is recommended that a parent group present at the screening distribute this letter and speak to its contents. This letter does not address the pre-tests that will be a part of PARCC. It would be prudent to cut and paste the text onto a blank document.

Dear [Superintendent & Principal],

Thank you both for all that you do for our children and school district. It is an extremely difficult job – especially these days!

We are writing to respectfully inform you that our family will conscientiously boycott the state standardized tests (NJASK) this April/May because we have many, many objections to this type of HIGH STAKES testing and the damage it's doing to students, teachers, schools, and public education as a whole. We believe that, if the current trend continues, good teachers, good schools, good public education, and a child's innate love of learning will be sacrificed in the quest for data and profit. For this and many other reasons, our family has decided to boycott the NJASK in April/May 2014. Please understand this is a protest against the political and corporate hold on public education, and our actions should not be construed as a negative statement against the excellent teachers or other staff of our school.

Please consider this letter a notice of our family's refusal to allow our child, [name, grade, team], to participate in the NJASK testing. We would very much appreciate it if a real educational activity could be provided instead. We understand, however, that resources may not be available for alternative activities. In that case, we'd be very happy if you could utilize the provision described in the NJ Parent, Student, and Teacher Information Guide (3-5) which, on page 6, states, "*If you finish a test section before the time is up and you have checked your work to be sure you have done your best, you can sit and quietly read your book.*" Reading quietly in the library would be a great alternative!

We understand that this school district is proactively providing for cases of students "refusing" the test and will not administer the tests to those students. For this, we are most grateful. If this is not the case, please let us know. If our wishes as parents cannot be proactively accommodated, our child will, under our instruction, respectfully refuse all state standardized tests administered to him/her. If you allow the test to be administered to our child away from other students (e.g. in the resource room), the test refusal can be done quietly and respectfully with minimum disturbance to the rest of the students. Again, reading quietly in the library would be the preferred alternative and would minimize any disruption to other students being tested.

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We understand that our child's test will be scored as "Void" (or V2) per the NJASK Score Interpretation Manual 3-8 on page 33 and again on page 69 of Appendix A. We further understand that our child will NOT be permitted to take the test during the makeup period per the NJASK Technical Report Grades 3-8, where it is explained that, "Students whose answer folders were voided during testing were considered to have attempted the test section. They were not allowed to retake or resume taking the voided test section during the make-up." We, therefore, expect our child to be in his/her regular classes during the administration of the makeup test period.

We sincerely hope you understand that our objection is to the madness of the high-stakes testing culture that has taken over public education and it is not a reflection of how we feel about our child's school or teachers. **We have been thrilled with our child's transition to _____ School and his/her teachers have been excellent!** We take this position in support of teachers and public schools and of education as a profession.

We would very much appreciate an email or call to assure us that our wishes can be accommodated. Thank you very much for your time, consideration, and dedication to public education. We look forward to a great end of the school year!

[signatures]

Addendum (if needed)

Please note that the decision of the Supreme Court supersedes any state laws regarding parents' rights in education. It is our right as parents to refuse to allow our child to take the state standardized tests because our parental rights are broadly protected by United States Supreme Court decisions (*Meyer and Pierce*), especially in the area of education. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that parents possess the "fundamental right" to "direct the upbringing and education of their children." Furthermore, the Court declared that "the child is not the mere creature of the State: those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right coupled with the high duty to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations" (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 534-35). The Supreme Court criticized a state legislature for trying to interfere "with the power of parents to control the education of their own." (*Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 40). In *Meyer*, the Supreme Court held that the right of parents to raise their children free from unreasonable state interferences is one of the unwritten "liberties" protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (262 U.S. 399).

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D-4: How to talk to parents about standardized testing

Share stories about how standardized testing has affected your classroom.

- How much time do you have to spend on direct and indirect test preparation?
- What are some topics, projects, courses, etc. that are no longer possible because the district requires more time to be spent on preparing for or taking more tests?
- Does it seem that things need to be rushed at the end of the year because it has been difficult to cover the curriculum with testing and test prep?
- How do these changes affect the atmosphere/morale in your classroom?
- Are you forced to teach curriculum that is developmentally inappropriate because "it's going to be on the test?"

Share stories about how standardized testing has affected your school.

- What programs or subjects get less attention, or have been eliminated, to focus on testing?
- Have financial resources been diverted to testing and test prep that could have been more useful elsewhere?
- How is the atmosphere of your school different now? Does that change during test season?
- Have your colleagues shared interesting or instructive stories related to testing and test prep?

Share stories about how standardized testing affects students.

(**Important:** *Be careful not to violate privacy or identify individual students when talking to anyone other than that student's legal guardians.*)

- Do you see behavioral changes in students throughout the year that are attributable to testing or test prep?
- Have students said anything to you that indicated stress or frustration related to standardized testing?
- Do you see behaviors or reactions by students during test season that concern you?
- Do students seem less interested and engaged that before?

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Questions to anticipate and suggested answers:

Should I opt my child out?

- I can't advise you one way or the other on that.
- It's a decision you have to make in the best interests of your child. There are a lot of great resources online that can help you decide what to do.
- I can assure you I'll support whatever decision you make and will not treat your child any differently either way.

Is it legal to opt out in New Jersey?

- My understanding is that the law doesn't address that issue.
- Parents have a lot of rights when it comes to their children's education.
- There are places online that can tell you more about what other parents in New Jersey have done.

Will my child be penalized if I opt out? Will she be kept out of honors classes or maybe even held back?

- I can assure you your child won't face any consequences or discrimination in my classroom no matter what you choose to do.
- If you choose to opt out, I'd raise that concern with the principal.
- There are a lot of ways to determine the appropriate placement for a student. Test scores can be used, but if they aren't available, there are certainly other ways to make those decisions.

Will the school lose funding if I opt out?

- I'm not aware of anything in the law that says schools can be penalized financially or otherwise if parents opt their children out of standardized testing.
- Your only concern should be what is best for your child.

Standardized

Notes

D-5: Sample questions for a board of education

- How many standardized tests (PARCC, HSPA, Biology, etc.) will be administered at each grade level next year, including diagnostic and mid-year tests?
- How many days will each test take to administer?
- How much money was spent over the last three years to purchase computer hardware or software, improve bandwidth, upgrade facilities, etc. in order to participate in PARCC testing?
- What programs and extracurricular activities were cut in the last two years?
- How many additional personnel or contracted services are brought in to oversee and maintain the technology and/or prepare for and administer standardized testing throughout the district?
- What is the district policy going to be to accommodate families who choose not to participate in standardized testing?

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