

Questions to ask your board of education:

- Will you move to increase the amount of class time devoted to important, but non-tested, subjects like art, music, physical education and social studies?
- Will you institute policies to ensure that students, especially in the elementary grades, do not have unreasonable amounts of homework?
- If recess has been cut, has the board investigated ways to add it back into the school day?
- How much additional time is scheduled for test prep next year at the elementary, middle and high school levels? Will that time cut into any programs currently being offered in our district now?

Want to learn more and join the fight for great public schools focused on the needs of children?

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My children have anxiety that they never had before.

-Lisa M., parent, Jackson

What if?



What could school look like without so much standardized testing?



Priorities



Today's public school students – especially those in schools under the greatest pressure to raise scores – spend a staggering amount of time preparing for and taking standardized tests.

That time has to come from somewhere, and usually it is non-tested subjects that suffer. Art, music and physical education are often offered only at minimum required levels. Recess gets squeezed in favor of more “time on task” in class. Even subjects like history and civics suffer as schools invest more time in tested subjects.

But parents know that all of those things are part of a well-rounded education. Research shows that even recess contributes to academic success.



I feel that my child's educational experiences and opportunities are absolutely limited by the focus on high-stakes testing.

-Kristine M., parent, Millstone

Pressure



Parents see the effects at home as well. Expectations on children outside school hours, especially in the early grades, have increased as teachers struggle to ensure that students are test-ready by spring. Many young children have nightly homework that eats into much of the time that was once available for play and unstructured learning.

Families that can afford it often enroll children in extracurricular activities like sports, music lessons and dance classes to make up for what's been lost at school. But those parents still find there are too few hours in the day to fit everything in.



Between sports, CCD and homework – there is very little relaxing time in our house.

-Kim F., parent, Toms River

A Better Way



Many children feel great pressure to perform well for their teachers and schools. That's unhealthy.

If schools were allowed to offer a more rounded experience designed to ignite a love of learning, imagine how children would benefit.

Field trips. Class projects. Even time to learn through creative play. Things that were once considered fundamental to a great education could return to their rightful place in our schools.

It's up to parents to decide what kind of schools they want for their children, then get to work changing the testing culture in their own districts.



Creativity and actually having fun while learning is gone.

-Lisa M., parent, Jackson