

[Teacher Blogs](#) > [Work in Progress](#)

## Why I Opt My Son Out of State Testing

By Starr Sackstein on April 12, 2018 5:00 AM

Share 0



"Mommy, can you write a few addition and subtraction problems with like, lots of numbers and maybe some multiplication facts too?" He stood there, looking up at me, wide-eyed, little homemade book of blank papers stapled together in the middle like he saw me do with one of my classes once.

Logan is very good at taking tests. In fact, when he was younger, he used to ask me to make him math tests before bed because he loved doing math so much.

I always preferred to read to him and then talk with him about magical places before he went off to dream; he has a brilliant imagination never fails to make me laugh.

By the end of fourth grade though, the year after [state testing begins](#) in New York, Logan began to have a different relationship with testing and I became more aware of the [opt-out movement in our home](#)

### district.

Of course, I had been teaching for many years already and never understood the point of testing in this capacity anyway. In fact, I resented having to do it to my students in terms of how disruptive it was to learning and how little it impacted future learning. Now add on top of that the accountability measures placed on teachers and we have a recipe for disaster.

However, this isn't the core of why I chose to opt Logan out. The real reason is the undue stress and anxiety it started to cause him. He is the kind of student who worries. He wants to do well and usually does, but the anxiety is just not necessary, especially for young kids. So there really was no reason for him to take the tests, as they don't adequately show what he knows (his teachers have a better understanding of that with the assessments they provide based on classroom learning) and the stress just isn't worth it.

Students today experience so much. The world is different. There are cruelties and injustices that they see on a regular basis and although we work harder with character education and social-emotional learning, kids are more stressed.

My son, who is currently 12 is already worried about getting into an Ivy League school. Just the other day, he was freaking out because he was worried that he wasn't getting into the advanced level courses in 8th grade. He was inconsolable.

Now that fewer and fewer students on Long Island are testing at all, the numbers aren't even relevant. I was never allowed to tell my students to opt-out, even though I knew it was in their best interest. Too many parents in the city are unaware of their rights and so they force their kids to take the [exams](#) despite it working against them and their teachers.

We have an obligation as educators, to make sure we are responsibly assessing students and then using the assessment data we gather to effectively adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students, so they all show growth by the end of a school year. There are far more useful ways to do assessment that better suit the students and the teachers than a [standardized state exam](#).

Let's start investing in our teachers and our schools and move to those forms of assessment, like [portfolios](#) for example. Using alternative assessments as a means to show growth is a winner for everyone and provides a level of equity that testing will never be able to provide.

*Do you opt your own children out? Why? Please share*

*If you lived in a perfect world, how would you assess students in lieu of state exams? Please share*

**Categories:** [School/Life Balance](#) [achievement](#) [growth mindset](#)

**Tags:** [assessment](#) [learning](#) [opt-out](#) [state testing](#)

