

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW About Opting Out Of State Tests

Why might I want to opt out?

Public school parents consider opting their child out of high-stakes standardized tests for a variety of reasons:

- Valuable class time is lost to preparing for and taking tests.
- Tested subjects – literacy and math – are prioritized while science, social studies, art and music are shortchanged.
- High stakes create undue stress and anxiety for children.
- Many tested benchmarks are not age appropriate, especially for young children.
- Special needs students face detrimental testing conditions and sometimes miss mandated services because of tests.
- English Language Learners are often expected to take exams in English before they're ready.

What should my family know before we decide whether to opt out?

Deputy Chancellor Polakow-Suransky of the Department of Education (DOE) has confirmed that **parents have the right to opt out.**

Based on the experiences of parents who opted out last year, **Change the Stakes** suggests you consider the following:

- The consequences of opting out vary by school, so you need to work with teachers and administrators to advocate for your child's promotion to the next grade.
- Opting out a child in 4th or 7th grade may have repercussions for applying to middle or high school.
- Standardized test scores make up a large component of school grades. If a lot of children opt out, the school and individual teachers may be affected.
- Unlike some other states, New York does not have a standardized legal procedure for opting children out of state testing.

What steps should I take if I decide to opt out?

1. Notify the principal in writing with a short explanation of your decision ([see example here](#)).
2. Talk to the teacher(s) and administrators about a plan to accommodate your child on testing days. You should not have to keep your child home.
3. Offer teacher(s) support in developing a portfolio of representative work (see below) to support an end-of-year decision to promote your child without state test results.
4. Join or build a network of supportive parents and education activists in your neighborhood. Remember that your family is taking a principled action to secure a better education for your child and that you are not alone!
5. E-mail changethestakes@gmail.com to get in touch with parents who have opted out or visit our website for [additional resources](#).

How will my child be assessed without state test scores?

“Portfolio assessment” is a [longstanding alternative to testing](#) that can provide a more comprehensive evaluation of your child.

- A portfolio is a collection of work across subjects that demonstrates the range of a student’s abilities and accomplishments. It might include writing samples, science labs, research reports and math assignments.
- *Portfolio assessment is not just for kids who opt out of standardized tests!* Students whose test results do not meet DOE cutoffs for promotion can move to the next grade based on a portfolio of work that documents their readiness.
- Ask the educators at your child’s school how portfolios can be used to enhance student assessment and learning.

What else can I do to challenge high-stakes testing?

- Demand information from the DOE or your Community Education Council (CEC) about the amount of school resources dedicated to testing and test preparation.
- Contact your elected officials and political candidates to demand education policies that support learning and limit the amount of standardized testing.
- Visit changethestakes.org to learn more about high-stakes testing, actions you can take and upcoming events. Like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter!](#)

Change the Stakes is a group of parents and educators who support public education. Our primary focus is high stakes-testing and the harm it causes our children and their schools. We believe high-stakes testing must be replaced by valid forms of student, teacher, and school assessment.