

COVER LETTER TO PARENTS:

OPPOSING MANDATORY STAND-ALONE "FIELD TESTS"

Dear Parents,

As you are likely aware, mandatory state testing of school children has increased dramatically over the past decade, with children in grades 3-8 now taking at least 6 days of math and English standardized tests, in addition to state-mandated local level tests. The state now wants to increase required standardized testing by requiring that schools also administer stand-alone "field tests."

Field tests are essentially product development, where the test creator, Pearson, tests out (or "fields") possible questions for use on future exams; they do not help the student or the school. Prospective questions can be embed within the actual exams that count, so students don't know which questions count and which are "field" questions. In contrast, NY also utilizes "stand-alone" field tests, where the tests comprise only prospective questions.

Under current law, districts are not required to give these tests; the contract between NY and Pearson specifically says that "field test participation in NYS is not mandated."

The current law should not be changed. Our children are already subjected to too much standardized, required testing, and the trend must be toward reducing testing, rather than forcing yet another round. Too much testing has lead to stress on students, as well as significant losses of classroom instruction time. In addition, ironically, even the state has admitted that stand-alone field tests produce unreliable data, as the children "are not as motivated if they know the exam has no consequences."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/20/education/to-sharpen-student-testing-another-round-of-tests.html?pagewanted=all& r=0>. And this bad data leads to bad actual tests - bad actual tests that count. (Some of you may recall the infamous "talking pineapple" question -- which had been field tested!)

The state and Pearson have many other ways to test proposes questions, including for example, having all questions embedded in actual tests or paying willing districts to administer.

Please consider sending this letter (or your own) to the Board of Regents, asking that they keep the current law as is, protecting our children from even more standardized testing, and preventing the proliferation of tests based created from unreliable data.