



## Opting Out of School Tests Makes No Sense for Kids

### **CABL Commentary**

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It is almost unthinkable that today in our state we're being forced to have a manufactured discussion about whether parents should be encouraged to opt their children out of taking tests at school – tests designed to measure how well their children have progressed over the course of the school year.

Some of the things that have been said or proposed are so off point that they hardly bear mentioning. But there is a need for at least some clarification.

First, LEAP tests have been a longstanding part of our school accountability system for almost two decades. Why? Because only through tests like LEAP can we get a true picture of how our students are performing and hold schools and districts accountable for helping children succeed.

So now a handful of parents don't want their children taking the current version of the LEAP test because the questions related to our Common Core standards were developed by a consortium of states – including Louisiana – called PARCC.

Apparently fueled by that, the governor now wants BESE to somehow offer this very small number of offended parents some kind of alternative test. What it would be and how we would pay for it we don't know.

Logically speaking, none of this makes a bit of sense.

Louisiana educators helped develop the current PARCC questions. Louisiana teachers have been preparing for this test for at least two years. Some 50,000 Louisiana students took this as a practice test last year with no real glitches or controversies reported. It's aligned to what we're teaching our kids in the classroom.

So now here we are in February and we want to come up with an alternative test to give our kids in March? Did anyone catch the fact that the state is broke and there is no time or money to come up with a new test that is aligned, as state law requires, to what students were taught in the classroom?

Let's be honest. Sure, this is really all about Common Core standards. But refusing to take the test doesn't change the fact that we're still teaching to those standards. In fact, it means nothing except that we won't know whether those students actually learned what they were taught. In the old days, that's what tests were about.

Yes, current state policies allow for parents to opt their child out of a test, but it comes with consequences for schools and districts if they do. And for good reason. If there were no consequences, as some are now promoting, we'd see school districts telling parents of low-performing students, "Sorry, little Johnny isn't doing very well in school. So why don't you just sign this and then he won't have to take that bad old test."

Is that really where we want to go? It has been a quiet year in our schools. Teachers are doing their jobs, the early implementation issues are behind us and kids are learning the new standards. Wouldn't it be best to quit kicking this political football and let our children get on with their educations?