

IKA- Parent Opt Out Letter

Dear Parents, Students and Community Members,

As you may know, Colorado's school districts are transitioning to a new state assessment program this school year: the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), which assesses students' knowledge of state academic standards in science and social studies; and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which assesses students' knowledge of state academic standards in English language arts and math. Both CMAS and PARCC are computer-based tests instead of pencil- and-paper tests.

Within our schools and across Colorado, parents have raised concerns about these new standardized tests, especially regarding PARCC. As a result, some parents are considering opting their children out of these standardized assessments.

Both state and federal law require all students enrolled in public schools to take standardized assessments in the specific content areas of English language arts, math and science. State law also requires students to take standardized assessments in social studies. Student growth and performance on the CMAS and PARCC assessments are then used to measure school and district performance for purposes of state accreditation as well as compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Student assessment results are also helpful to inform: (1) parents about their children's progress on state and district academic standards; (2) teachers concerning classroom practice and student placement; and (3) schools and districts about ways to improve their educational programs in the development of school and district improvement plans. [*Optional language if applicable to the District: Finally, student assessment results are also used for teacher evaluation purposes as one of the multiple measures required by state law.*]

Under the current legal framework, a school or school district with student participation rates below 95 percent on these standardized assessments would have its state accreditation rating lowered. However, at a February 18, 2015 meeting, the State Board of Education adopted a motion to "not hold districts liable for the decisions of parents when parents decide not to allow their children to take PARCC." Therefore, based upon the recent action of the State Board of Education, if parents decide to opt their children out of the upcoming PARCC/CMAS tests, the district will not be held liable or penalized by the state. It remains possible that the state or the school district will be subject to consequences by the federal Department of Education. To be clear, any sanctions for failing to meet the 95 percent student participation rate apply against the district or school, not individual students.

And so, as required by state and federal law, the _____ School District will administer CMAS and PARCC assessments to students beginning _____. The District strongly encourages students and their families to ensure students are present and well rested on testing days. If parents determine that it is not in their children's best interests to take these assessments, we ask that you provide written documentation of this

parental decision. We want to be clear that there will be no consequences or ill feelings towards parents or student(s) who decline to participate in the upcoming state mandated tests.

[Optional language if applicable to the district: Finally, please be aware that in the midst of the public debate regarding standardized assessments, your local Board of Education has taken a stand. By its formal resolution, the Board acknowledged the concerns expressed by the community that students are taking too many standardized assessments and encouraged state and federal policymakers to make all revisions to law, regulation and rules necessary to reduce significantly the assessments required by law. You can read the Board's resolution in its entirety on the district's webpage (insert link here).]

Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

[Superintendent or other Administrator]