

Testing opt-out/refusal guide for MISSISSIPPI

The following is a quick-reference guide for information on opting out or refusing tests in a specific state. We thank our supporters for assisting us in collecting these necessary details to encourage test refusals nationwide. If the reader feels that the information on this form is incomplete or inaccurate, please email unitedoptoutnational@gmail.com with additional details or corrections. Feel free to download and use this form as you see fit.

Form completed by UOO Administrator (CS)

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List of assessments

MCT2 consists of tests in language arts and mathematics that are administered each year in May to students enrolled in grades 3 through 8.

Mississippi Science Test (MST) is taken in 5th and 8th grade.

Mississippi Writing Assessment Program (MWAP), a writing test, is taken in 4th, 7th grade, and 10th grade (English II MWAP).

Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) is taken by high school students in the form of end-of-course exams for Algebra I, English II, Biology and U.S. History.

Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) is a computer-based adaptive assessment for early literacy and mathematics concepts in pre-kindergarten through third grade. It takes about 30 minutes per class and is administered three to six times a year. A patented scoring system uses error analysis to generate instant reports that help educators pinpoint individual needs and differentiate instruction.

The MAAECF is an alternate achievement standards-based assessment designed specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD). Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Committees are responsible for determining whether students with disabilities will participate in the alternate assessment. The IEP Committee, including the parents, should consider the student's present level of educational performance in reference to the Mississippi Extended Curriculum Frameworks. In order to participate meaningfully in the MAAECF, students must meet all three of the following criteria for SCD:

1. The student demonstrates significant cognitive deficits and poor adaptive skill levels (as determined by that student's comprehensive assessment) that prevent participation in the standard academic curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards, even with accommodations and modifications.
2. The student requires extensive direct instruction in both academic and functional skills in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of those skills.

3. The student's inability to complete the standard academic curriculum neither is the result of excessive or extended absences nor is primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities, emotional-behavioral disabilities, specific learning disabilities or social, cultural, or economic differences.

Special considerations for the above assessments

SB 2347's Reading Proficiency Program, **to begin July 1, 2013**, prohibits the promotion of students whose reading deficiency is not remedied before the end of third grade but establishes good cause exemptions for promotion for third grade and students failing to meet academic requirements for promotion.

Does the state provide students with alternate paths to graduation?

Yes. Students who fail a subject area test twice may submit an appeal for a substitute evaluation that relies on other evidence to demonstrate their mastery of the subject, and may be able to receive a regular diploma. Students who do not receive a regular diploma because they fail the SATP can continue to take the SATP until they pass it and receive a regular diploma. Students who have completed all other requirements for graduation and are no longer enrolled in high school remain eligible to retest. These students include those who enroll in a GED program, those who enroll in a community college, and those who join the work force.

Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners

English language learners who qualify to receive accommodations on state tests and who are pursuing a regular diploma may use only allowable accommodations when taking the subject area end-of-course tests to meet graduation requirements.

Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities

Students with disabilities can receive a certificate of completion or an occupational diploma. These students must participate in subject-area testing for NCLB reporting, but these alternate paths do not require that students pass the subject area tests. Students with disabilities pursuing a regular diploma may participate in the High Stakes Alternative Assessment after their initial participation in subject area testing. This alternate assessment is available only for students with disabilities who are pursuing a regular diploma but would need an unallowable testing accommodation in order to take the general assessment.

Procedures for opt-out/refusal

1. Submit an opt out letter to the school site administrator, which includes your rights as the parent or legal guardian of the student (see **Get Tough Guide** on UOO website).

2. Provide your own written statement that you are aware you are not required to keep your child home during the testing window.
3. Secure alternative in school academic assignments/activities for your child during the testing window.
4. Know the legal requirements for high school graduation, but advocate for alternative assessments to be used to determine student proficiency in the required subjects such as a portfolio review for elementary and middle school students, all of which are voluntary and will provide the parent with the student's actual completed work demonstrating proficiency.
4. Be adamant in your resolve to exempt your child from testing, which can include any or all the following:
 - Seeking legal assistance
 - Seeking police protection if your child meets with verbal or physical force in an attempt to have him/her report to a testing area
 - Organizing and attending regular meetings with opt out support groups or consult online groups
 - Contacting any of the United Opt Out administrators for additional support or information

Urgency for opt-out/refusal

Mississippi is well on the way to privatizing public education, as reflected in the laws enacted and the pending bill:

Charter schools (HB 369): This law allows charter schools in D and F districts. A, B and C districts may only have charters with local school board approval. This is the first real charter school law ever passed in Mississippi and will at least open the door to some public school choice. Status: signed into law

Third grade reading/end social promotion bill (SB 2347): This law establishes a program of intensive reading intervention in kindergarten through third grade. Any child who cannot read above the lowest achievement level (in other words, read at "Basic" or above) must repeat third grade and be given additional assistance and intensive tutoring. The law also prohibits social promotion for every grade level. Status: signed into law

Standards for district accountability ratings (SB 2396): This bill provides formal guidance related to the formula used to assign grades (A-F) to school districts and schools. Status: due from Governor

MS Education Works Program (SB 2658 and SB 2188): These laws are part of the governor's education reform package. Among other things, SB 2658 establishes a pilot performance-based pay system for teachers. The pilot will operate in Lamar County,

Clarksdale, Gulfport and Rankin County School Districts. The law also calls for funding of various items ranging from \$1.5 million for the performance-based pay pilot to \$1.5 million for teacher education scholarships. Status: signed into law.

SB 2188 establishes minimum ACT (21) and grade point standards (3.0) for admittance to state teacher education programs. Status: signed into law

All, except SB 2188, facilitate the movement of public money to private corporations whose primary focus is financial gain at the expense of quality and equitable education. The collection of student test data makes it possible to move public money to the hands of a few while compromising quality and equitable education for Mississippi students. The major problems are cited in the sample opt out letter.

Sample language to include in opt-out/refusal

To Whom It May Concern:

Please be advised that our child will not be participating in state standardized testing during the current school year. Furthermore, we ask that no record of this testing be part of our child's permanent file, as we do not wish our child to participate in standardized achievement testing for promotion, graduation, or school/state report cards.

We believe the following of forced, high stakes testing:

- Is not scientifically-based and fails to follow the U.S. Government's own data on learning
- Fosters test driven education that is not meeting the individual/intellectual needs of students
- Presents a racial and economic bias detrimental to second language students, impoverished students, and students of color
- Violates fiscal fairness in funding schools
- Supports complicity of corporate interests rather than democracy based on public concerns
- Fosters coercion over cooperation with regards to federal funding for public education
- Promotes a culture of lying, cheating, and exploitation within the school community
- Has used the achievement gap to foster a “de facto” segregation that has resulted in separate and unequal education for minorities

We understand that federal law provides the parent or guardian the right of choice regarding standardized testing when such testing violates beliefs. In contrast to our beliefs, which are firmly rooted in a moral code that embraces equity and fairness, we believe such testing is not in the best interests of our child since it fosters competition instead of cooperation, contributes to separate and unequal education for minorities, and

belies our child's intellectual, creative, and problem-solving abilities, while presenting a fictitious picture as to the impact of the pedagogy provided by our child's individual educators.

Ultimately, our state is required to provide our child with an education in a least restrictive environment that does not force us to go against our core beliefs. My child should proceed to learn and develop at an individual pace following education standards that are imparted under the guidance of education professionals, not market-based reformers, who are able to provide quality pedagogy without fear of reprisal if students - who mature at vastly different levels and come from diverse backgrounds that may or may not be supportive of intellectual pursuit - do not hit the bulls' eye of a constantly moving achievement target.

Therefore, we request that the school provide appropriate learning activities during the testing window and utilize an alternative assessment portfolio or concordant college testing score to fulfill promotion and or graduation requirements, as our child opts out of standardized testing.

Sincerely,

Child's Name _____

ID# _____

Resources and organizations

<https://www.facebook.com/StopCommonCoreInMississippi>

State specific watch-list

StudentsFirst (Michelle Rhee)

Foundation for Excellence in Education (Jeb Bush)

Teach for America (Wendy Kopp)

Mississippi Center for Public Policy http://www.msppolicy.org/about_mcpp.php

Additional or miscellaneous information

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were adopted by Mississippi legislators in 2010. The standards have been implemented over the course of the last two years. The

standardized Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests that accompany them will be field tested in 2014. Along with the standards and testing changes, Mississippi has agreed to collect data on children and share it with private entities. The data mining is not just centered on educational information. This educational reform also requires personal information on students and their families. This violates FERPA privacy laws as they were originally enacted by the U.S. Congress. Unfortunately, the US DOE has circumvented U.S. Congress to make unlegislated modifications to FERPA. These changes override parental consent in the collection and sharing of student data.

DO NOT EDIT United Opt Out