

Testing opt-out/Refusal guide for Missouri

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List of Assessments

MAP: Missouri Assessment Program (End of Course assessments in high school and Grade Level tests 3-8)

MAP-A (alternative assessment for students with disabilities)

ACCESS for ELLs (English Language Proficiency tests)

Personal Finance Assessment

NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress)

More information can be found here: <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/>

Re: EOCs (found here - <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/sia/dar/index.html>)

School districts and charter schools are now required to administer the English I and United States History end-of-course (EOC) assessments to all non-MAP-A students beginning with the cohort graduating in spring 2016. English I and United States History represent a new assessment requirement approved by the State Board of Education in August, 2011. They will be administered in addition to Algebra 1, English II, Biology, and Government. They are intended to serve as final exams in these content areas.

Students graduating in Spring 2016 who completed the English I or American History course prior to the 2012-2013 school year are not required to take the EOC assessment retroactively.

Special considerations for the above assessments

<http://dese.mo.gov/se/compliance/documents/TAB-StateDistAssessment.pdf> includes the following Q/A:

Can parents request that their child not participate in the Grade-Level, MAP-A, and the EOC Assessments? What about nonparticipation requests by parents for district-wide assessments?

All students enrolled in a public or charter school are expected to participate in the state's assessment program. Missouri does not have a procedure for a parent to request that their child be exempt from the MAP Grade-Level, MAP-A, and the EOC Assessments. If the

district has a policy and procedure for parents to request that their children not participate in district-wide assessments, then that same procedure must be available to parents of children with disabilities. If no policy exists for parents to request nonparticipation for nondisabled students, then districts may not have a policy for students with disabilities.

They state that Missouri has no policy for opt out/refusal. Please keep in mind that this is very typical as they do NOT want you to opt out/refuse the tests. They are obliged to provide the test and administer the test. The student ultimately should not be forced to take the test if the parent requests to opt out. We believe that there is potential for refusing the test in Missouri. For students with disabilities, parents should consider having refusal of tests included within the IEP; this has been done successfully in other states.

*We have received information stating that EOCs may or may not count towards GPA and it may not be necessary to pass them - you must determine the accuracy of this information in your district. We are told that they are part of the accreditation process and the ultimate goal behind EOCs is to hold teachers accountable should legislation pass which ties student test scores to teacher evaluation (which will guarantee more teaching to the test). EOCs may count for part of the grade - but they may not. **Check in your district.** There seems to be potential for refusing the EOCs.*

Each district has additional district tests (many are low stakes) that parents should consider refusing. Many are corporate tests and do not inform teacher instruction. Several examples of these tests include DIBELS, Acuity and the MAP.

Procedures for opt-out/refusal

There are no procedures for opt out in Missouri, however, this is pretty standard across the states. The EOCs serve as final exams. Districts have the right to include the EOCs in the final grade, but our understanding is that they typically count for only 10% - check with your district to find out your district's guidelines.

Re: MAP, we have not found any connection to class report card grades, however they do have retention mandates in place for grade 4 - which may or may not be linked to the test scores, find out your district's procedure for retention.

<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/commarts/SB319.html> states, "Retention of students in grade 4 if they are reading below the third-grade level. (Several exceptions to this requirement are specified in the law)."

Education Statues for consideration:

(revised August 28, 2012)

#1. Inspection by the public of instructional material, research and experimentation programs or projects.

170.231. The school board of each school district shall provide that all public school instructional material intended for use in connection with any public school classroom instruction, or any public school research or experimentation program or project, shall be available for inspection by any person. For the purpose of this section, "classroom instruction" shall mean any public school instruction involving teachers and students or peers and students; "research or experimentation program or project" shall mean any public school research or experimentation program or project designed to explore or develop new and unproven teaching methods and techniques.

For consideration: the common core standards have never been field tested, therefore, they should fall under the category of experimentation project. Did parents sign permission for their students to take these experimental tests and participate in this experimental curriculum?

see link <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/C100-199/1700000231.HTM>

#2. Statewide assessments, policy on student participation, effect on graduation requirements.

160.570. 1. Nothing in this section or section 105.1209 shall be construed to affect or limit any state agency's authority regarding professional registration, licensing or issuance of professional certificates, nor shall this section be construed to limit or affect the authority of the state board of education to examine applicants and issue high school equivalency certificates.

2. The school board of each school district shall establish a written policy on student participation in statewide assessments. The policy shall be provided to each student and the parent, guardian or other person responsible for every student under eighteen years of age at the beginning of each school year and a copy of the policy shall be maintained in the district office and shall be available for viewing by the public during business hours of the district office. A school board may establish a policy designed to encourage students to give their best efforts on each portion of any statewide assessment established pursuant to section 160.518 which may include but is not limited to incentives or supplementary work as a consequence of performance.

3. In no case shall the state board of education or any other state agency establish any single test or group of tests as a condition or requirement for high school graduation or as a requirement for a state-approved diploma.

see link here: <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/C100-199/1600000570.HTM>

Urgency for opt-out/refusal

It is our belief that mass refusal of these tests will halt the harm to our children and will allow parents, students, teachers, and communities to redefine what public education means to our individual communities. One thing is for certain - the corporations that make money off of these tests will continue to devise ways to profit off of our children via public education if we do not stand up and reclaim what is ours. Refusing the test takes down their "house of cards." Without our children's data, the current test-driven model of public education fails. Refuse the tests and we can reclaim and improve our community public schools with the input of real educators, parents, students, and communities. Our public tax dollars should not be used to profit corporations via corporate tests. Our teachers know how to assess. Allow our teachers to teach and allow our students to participate in creative, critical and conceptual thinking, rather than continued testing and test prep.

Sample language to include in opt-out/refusal

Sample letter

Dear _____:

I am writing on behalf of _____ to opt him/her out of the (test name). He/she is neither permitted to take the exam during mandated testing days nor during designated make-up sessions. Additionally, I am requesting that the school make accommodations for meaningful alternative activities or assignments that will continue to promote his/her academic and intellectual growth. My child will not be in attendance if academically viable alternatives are not available. Furthermore, I must be guaranteed in writing that whatever option is taken, either alternative assignments or absence, my child will not face any negative consequences to, for example, course grades, social or behavioral evaluations, workload, promotion, or future classroom assignments.

Strict adherence to state and federal high-stakes standardized testing, including the extensive classroom preparation that occurs prior to test administration, prevents my child from receiving a well-rounded and engaging educational experience. Until focus on testable skills diminishes to a reasonable extent, I will continue to withhold my child from participation in the testing program, and I ask that you honor that decision.

I do apologize in advance for the inconvenience or scrutiny that this decision may cause the administration, the school, and staff.

Sincerely,

Resources and organizations

www.unitedoptout.com

<http://unitedoptout.com/united-opt-out-national-toolkit-opt-out-of-high-stakes-testing/>

<http://unitedoptout.com/opt-out-letters/>

Save Our Schools March Missouri

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/222607574420393/?fref=ts>

Missouri Public School Advocates

<https://www.facebook.com/mopublicschooladvocates?fref=ts>

State specific watch-list

http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Missouri_ALEC_Politicians

<http://www.studentsfirst.org/state/missouri>

<https://www.teachforamerica.org/search/node/missouri>

Additional or miscellaneous information

Memo re: EOCs <http://dese.mo.gov/am/ccr/documents/CCR-12-004.pdf>

Parent Q/A: <http://dese.mo.gov/ccr/MAP-info-4-parents.html>

We suggest demanding that National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) be used for those who feel a need to administer a standardized test. Read here to find out more: http://www.sdkrashen.com/articles/NUT_No_Unnecessary_Testing.pdf

Additionally, if your school is participating in any field tests, these can easily be refused. Field tests are created to determine which questions to use on future tests, and, in essence, place students in a position of working for the corporations who develop these tests. We suggest refusing them.

If your child brings home homework in the form of test prep booklets, consider refusing these as well. Ask your child's teachers to provide alternative activities or creative projects in place of test preparation.