



**CHICAGO
TEACHERS
UNION**

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Assessment

May 2021

THE GOALS OF ASSESSMENT

From an educator's point of view, the goal of formal assessment is to measure how well students are learning the material being taught or the skills being developed. It can guide teachers on how/when to present or re-present material and is one of many tools that can be useful in determining who needs additional help in what areas.

From a parent's point of view, the goal of assessment is to find out if their child is learning what they're being taught and developing the skills they will need. Parents want to know if their child is struggling and in need of additional support, or if their student is progressing well.

From this, we can see that educators and parents' interests are aligned on assessment. Not so for district administration or government bodies. They mandate the use of standardized assessments to rank and stratify schools, to punish schools that they determine are 'failing' based on their false test-based criterion. They use testing to target and blame teachers, to blame parents, and to punish Black and Brown communities who have been denied adequate resources for generations – not just in schools but in healthcare, recreation, city services, etc. Additionally, they use standardized testing to control teaching by narrowing the curriculum, eliminating time for educator creativity by mandating excessive 'drill and kill', and discouraging the development of culturally sustaining curriculum.

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WHAT CAN WE AS EDUCATORS DO?

CTU fought for and won significant gains in teacher input on assessment. We can vote as a faculty on which, if any, of the tests not required by the state/district we think our students should take. These votes will be coming up later this spring, most likely during May. We encourage you to take several steps.

- Call a Union meeting to discuss assessments. Examine the list of required and optional assessments. Info on this can be found at ctulocal1.org/testing.
- Discuss the impact of over-testing on your students, especially at this time with the added stresses of the pandemic and remote learning.
- Decide as a group what, if any, of the non-required tests you want to give. Do not let admin divide you and pressure small groups in grade level meetings. The teachers and principal will then meet to determine a ballot of assessments to be voted on. The district/network can review said proposal. If the faculty does not vote for the plan and no resolution is reached, the matter can be submitted to Strategic Bargaining for resolution.
- Be aware that the State of Illinois has said that they will not be using standardized testing from this year as they normally do: lfps.org/testing_adjustments_2021

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Parents have ultimate control over the tests their children take. Parents have a right to opt-out their students from any/all of the standardized tests. They must do so in writing, and the child also needs to refuse the test (or test prep) when offered. The child can do this in writing or verbally. The school is responsible for providing an alternative educational activity for the student during both test preparation and actual testing.

This year, due to COVID, many parents do not want their students in the building for test administration or any other purpose. They are not required to send them for the tests.

As teachers, we can and should make sure that parents know their rights. How can we safely do this? We can communicate on our own time, off school property, and not using school email or equipment for this communication. While we must be sure not to pressure parents to 'opt out' their children, we can make it clear to them that they do not have to subject their children to the standardized tests and we can explain how they go about opting out.