



The 12 Reasons We Oppose the PARCC Test

1. PARCC is poorly designed & confusing

"For many of the sample released questions, there is, arguably, no answer among the answer choices that is correct or more than one answer that is correct, or the question simply is not, arguably, actually answerable as written."

Why?

"The tests consist largely of objective-format items (multiple-choice and EBSR). These item types are most appropriate for testing very low-level skills (e.g., recall of factual detail). However, on these tests, such item formats are pressed into a kind of service for which they are, generally, not appropriate. They are used to test "higher-order thinking." The test questions therefore tend to be tricky and convoluted. The test makers insist on answer choices all being "reasonable." So, the questions are supposed to deal with higher-order thinking, and the wrong answers are all supposed to be plausible, so the test questions end up being extraordinarily complex and confusing and tricky, all because the "experts" who designed these tests didn't understand the most basic stuff about creating assessments—that objective question formats are generally not great for testing higher-order thinking, for example." ⁱ

2. PARCC's online testing format is very problematic, particularly for younger students

"In the early grades, the tests end up being as much a test of keyboarding skills as of attainment in [English Language Arts or Math]. The online testing format is entirely inappropriate for most third graders." ⁱ

3. PARCC is diagnostically & instructionally useless

"Many kinds of assessment—diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, performative assessment, some classroom summative assessment—has instructional value. They can be used to inform instruction and/or are themselves instructive.

The results of [the PARCC] tests are not broken down in any way that is of diagnostic or instructional use. Teachers and students cannot even see the tests to find out what students got wrong on them and why. So the tests are of no diagnostic or instructional value. None. None whatsoever." ⁱ

4. Taking and preparing for PARCC & other high-stakes standardized tests is replacing learning

Administrators at many schools "report that they spend as much as a third of the school year preparing students to take these tests. That time includes the actual time spent taking the tests, the time spent taking pretests and benchmark tests and other practice tests, the time spent on test prep materials, the time spent doing exercises and activities in textbooks and online materials that have been modeled on the test

questions in order to prepare kids to answer questions of those kinds, and the time spent on reporting, data analysis, data chats, proctoring, and other test housekeeping." ⁱ

5. PARCC will further distort curricula and teaching

"The tests drive how and what people teach, and they drive much of what is created by curriculum developers...Those distortions are grave. In U.S. curriculum development today, the tail is wagging the dog." ⁱ

6. PARCC & other high-stakes standardized tests undermine students' creativity and desire to learn

The research on motivation and creativity is very clear: externally imposed punishment and reward systems, like those associated with high-stakes standardized testing, suppress our intrinsic motivation, dramatically undermining creativity and love of learning.

High-stakes standardized tests also suppress motivation and creativity because the endless test preparation narrows the curriculum and creates a boring learning environment, filled with anxiety and fear.

7. PARCC & other high-stakes standardized tests have an enormous financial cost

"In 2010-11, the US spent \$1.7 billion on state standardized testing alone." With the Common Core State Standards tests, this cost increases substantially.

The PARCC contract by itself is worth over a billion dollars to the Pearson [Corporation] in the first three years, and you have to add the cost of [the Smarter Balanced Common Core Assessment] and the other state tests (another billion and a half?), to that.

No one, to my knowledge, has accurately estimated the cost of the computer upgrades that will be necessary for online testing of every child, but those costs probably run to 50 or 60 billion.

This is money that could be spent on stuff that matters—on making sure that poor kids have eye exams and warm clothes and food in their bellies, on making sure that libraries are open and that schools have nurses on duty to keep kids from dying. How many dead kids is all this testing worth, given that it is, again, of no instructional value?

IF THE ANSWER TO THAT IS NOT OBVIOUS TO YOU, YOU SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED ANYWHERE NEAR A SCHOOL OR AN EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKING DESK." ⁱ

8. PARCC is completely experimental. It has not been validated as accurate & yet it will be used to evaluate students, schools and teachers

"Standardized test development practice requires that the testing instrument be validated. Such validation requires that the test maker show that the test correlates strongly with other accepted measures of what is being tested, both generally and specifically (that is, with regard to specific materials and/or skills being tested).

No such validation was done for [PARCC and Smarter Balanced common core] tests...So, the tests fail to meet a minimal standard for a high-stakes standardized assessment—that they have been independently validated." ⁱ

9. PARCC & other high-stakes standardized tests are abusive to our children

Reports of students throwing up during high-stakes standardized tests or inflicting harm to themselves as a result of test stress are already common.

PARCC is an intentionally much more difficult test that will increase students' anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.

PARCC is extra-frustrating to our children because it is entirely on-line, creating additional test-taking challenges not related to the test content.

The combination of the more brutal PARCC tests and the more stressful on-line PARCC testing experience will result in more of our children feeling abused, anxious and afraid.

10. PARCC will worsen the achievement and gender gaps

"Both the achievement and gender gaps in educational performance are largely due to motivational issues, and these tests and the curricula and pedagogical strategies tied to them are extremely demotivating. They create new expectations and new hurdles that will widen existing gaps, not close them."

PARCC and other Common Core exams "drive more regimentation and standardization of curricula, which will further turn off kids already turned off by school, causing more to tune out and drop out." ⁱ

11. High-stakes standardized tests fail to improve educational outcomes

"We have had more than a decade, now, of standards-and-testing-based accountability under [No Child Left Behind]. We have seen only miniscule increases in outcomes, and those are well within the margin of error of the calculations. Simply from the Hawthorne Effect, we should have seen SOME improvement!!! And that suggests that the testing has actually DECREASED OUTCOMES, which is consistent with what we know about the demotivational effects of extrinsic punishment and reward systems. It's the height of stupidity to look at a clearly failed approach and to say, 'Gee, we should do a lot more of them.'" ⁱ

12. PARCC and Smarter Balanced Common Core aligned tests are designed to brand the majority of our children as failures

We expect more than 60% of all children to fail both tests. And that failure is quite intentional and predictable.

Diane Ravitch explains why:

"Both of the federally-funded testing consortia [PARCC and Smarter Balanced] agreed to align their cut scores with those of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, so that "proficient" would be the same as NAEP proficient."

"NAEP proficient is a very high standard....fewer than four in 10 children reached the "proficient" level on the 2013 NAEP in reading and math."

By aligning with NAEP proficient, the two consortia assured that the majority of students would not pass either test." ^{iv}

Consistent with this, the Smarter Balanced test consortium announced in November 2014 the very high cut scores it was setting for the test, which would result in more than half of all students labeled as failures. In third grade, for example, only 38% of students taking the Smarter Balanced test are expected to achieve a proficient score in English and only 39% in math. ⁱⁱ

As numerous testing experts have pointed out, a "cut score" is "NOT an objective measure. It is a judgment call, a matter of group opinion, shaped by assumptions, and it can be manipulated to make scores appear higher or lower, depending on what" those in control want. ⁱⁱⁱ

The PARCC test will set its cut scores next summer and is very likely to follow the same pattern, creating a false narrative of failure and causing great harm to our children and our public schools.

ⁱ Source: <http://dianeravitch.net/2014/11/30/bob-shepherd-why-parcc-testing-is-meaningless-and-useless/>

ⁱⁱ Source: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/11/17/13sbac.h34.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: <http://dianeravitch.net/2014/07/31/how-pearsons-common-core-tests-are-designed-to-fail-your-children/>

^{iv} Source: <http://dianeravitch.net/2015/01/13/peter-greene-who-sets-the-passing-marks-on-standardized-tests/>

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