

Good Morning, my name is Deanna Chappell Belcher. I am the mom of two children in 4j, a second grader and a seventh grader. I also have worked in education in some capacity my whole adult life. In third grade I wrote an essay about why I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to be a teacher because my own teacher was amazing. School was magical, Mrs. Krieg was the magician, and I wanted to be just like her. Standardized tests can't measure that magic, and our misplaced faith in them is sucking the magic out of our classrooms.

I do not allow my children to take these tests. They can't measure my child's newfound interest in Chinese calligraphy; they can't measure how hard she tries to solve algebraic equations or if her Spanish accent is on point. No amount of filling in bubbles will tell me how creative she is or if she's a critical thinker or if she has a gift for public speaking, or drawing, or music, or anything else that matters. The only thing tests like Smarter Balanced measure is how well she takes a test. That's not what I care about. That's not what Mrs. Krieg cared about and it's certainly not what made me want to be a teacher and a mom.

There is a lot I want to say about this opt out form, but I am going to focus my comments on the box on the top right corner Here the DOE makes four statements regarding the tests. All four are misleading and manipulative.

- * First, to the statement that the state tests "challenge your child to think critically and apply his or her knowledge to real-world problems": Nothing about standardized tests taken on a computer in isolation has anything to do with critical thinking nor with the real-world.
- * Next, you claim that the tests "go beyond multiple choice and ask your child to explain his or her answers." Please note that this is exactly what classroom-based formative assessments do, but in the classroom it is done by a real teacher who knows my child well, not a part-time temporary worker in a warehouse somewhere.
- * Third, this form depicts the test results as a "snapshot" of our children's progress. How useful is the snapshot if it only gets developed many months later? As my 12-year-old noted, "Your teacher doesn't even get to see it until you're out of her class!"
- * The final, and most egregious, is the claim that the test scores help identify schools and districts that need additional supports. We do not need more data to point out these schools and districts. We know where they are. We knew where they were even before NCLB, but now we have over 10 years of NCLB data confirming what we already knew. And very very few of those schools that need support are getting it.

I urge you, as our state education leaders, to use your own critical thinking skills to re-examine testing policies that have little to no benefit for kids, and plenty of unforeseen negative consequences for all of us, then get creative about better ways that we can teach our kids and measure their learning.