**Questions posed to the panel for the Parent Opt Town Hall Meeting**

2/19/2015

1. How does Smarter Balanced testing deal with Delaware’s extremely transient population?
2. What about the teachers adding incentives to taking the test? Is 20 extra credit points on your final exam. What does the child who opts out get? And is that fair?
3. Are there resources to help parents understand the common core state standards? As parents how are we supposed to help our kids with their struggles understanding CCSS? Yes. Each district/school should provide resources and information to help parents understand the new standards. In addition, PTA offers a wide variety of resources and field training for individual schools. The Delaware Department of Education also offers resources on the DelExcels website at [www.DelExcels.org](http://www.DelExcels.org)
4. How long does it take for the students (average student) to actually take SBAC?
5. This is the first year that I feel that teachers are teaching to the test. I never felt that with DCAS. What I wonder is whether my 3rd graders is learning anything besides how to do well on the test.
6. Does this test teach my child what she needs to know?
7. What are “all” the tests that 11th graders have to take that equals 13 hours of testing?
8. Why do we need all the different assessments? Star, measure B’s pre and post, smarter, etc.
9. What was the method of user testing for the new testing system?
10. How can teachers be assessed by a testing program the term of which includes multiple grade levels/teachers?
11. How are these new tests graded if they contain less multiple choice, more essay, and free writing?
12. State DOE wants to ensure standards are being taught. That is why there is a DPAS evaluation. Are you stating that there is a distrust of classroom teachers?
13. How can we expect the kids to answer most of the test in a timely manner when they have not had the technology/typing skills taught throughout the years. Really referring to 3rd and 5th grade. How frustrating for them to sit searching for each letter.
14. In the last 10 years we have had 2 tests DSTP ( lasted about 5-6 yrs) and DCAS (lasted about 4-5 yrs). Now we have SBAC. What is the expected life spam for a test? Why are we changing the test so frequently? Considering teaching is important, why is there so much testing?
15. Why weren’t the common core standards phased in starting with younger grades, instead of trying to change the way older children learn?
16. In regards to consequences; will not taking the test affect another school or charter school?
17. My daughter is in 8th grade made the comment to me “That’s why we go to school, to take the test?” And these tests are not used to benefit my child so why would there be 13 hrs of overall tests for an 11th grader, why not smarter?
18. My daughter’s teacher sent a calendar listing the many hours spent on test prep, practice tests, and the tests themselves. He also said to use the links to let her practice typing since typing isn’t taught at her grade. Is that normal?
19. In order to adequately provide students the opportunity to take the SBAC test, our school is beginning in March (3 full months before EOY). How is this a fair assessment for teachers and students? How does DOE plan to use this information to help the learning process moving forward?
20. It is my understanding that the kids will have practice time to become familiar with the test format. How much time are the kids spending practicing for this new test instead of instruction time? This is determined by the local school districts. Parents should speak with school/district leadership regarding test preparation and testing procedures.
21. Who grades the test?
22. What are their qualifications?
23. How do you keep grading subjective?
24. As an educator, if a parent expresses the desire to opt their child opt out of the test but the official response is no, I feel it is my duty to allow the children to not take the test. Can I get in trouble? Educators should check with their district HR. The State Board of Education and Delaware Department of Education has confirmed they cannot offer any support/recourse for district employees. The Delaware State Education Association recently released a communication instructing employees to contact them with questions.
25. As I am sure you know, there is a House Bill that is being introduced to amend Title 14 of the Delaware Code, when that passes, what are the passes, what are the plans of the state-would they withhold funds from the entire state if more than 6% of the students in each district opt out?
26. How do results impact schools/teachers? The results of the assessment will be used to determine if a school is meeting AYP ( Adequate Yearly Progress) and implement interventions if necessary.
27. Do you hold suburban schools and intercity schools to same standards? Yes, all schools in Delaware are held accountable to the same standard.
28. DOE said the test is a quick check. There is nothing quick about them. Does DOE really know the impact on kids in the real school environment?
29. So here’s the thing. The gov’t can say and do all it wants, if we don’t want our kids to test, what can the gov’t do? Really. There is no process in place to allow the state or federal government to compel parents to agree to allowing their child to participate in the state assessment.
30. Why don’t our kids have textbooks?
31. Shouldn’t we call a spade a spade Smarter Balanced doesn’t really work because Common Core doesn’t really work? Test scores have plummeted –can’t dispute that- News Journal reported.
32. School districts cannot exclude students from the test. There is nothing saying parents can’t exclude their kids. Why are we being threatened about the legality of opting our kids out? School districts are currently responding to opt out requests with guidance from the Delaware Department of Education. However, the Delaware Department of Education has confirmed that there are no state level consequences for a student opting out of the exam. Several districts have since reversed their position on the opt out and are now honoring the parent’s request. Parents should check with the their school district to see how they are handling requests.
33. I have a 5th graders( with Aspbergers) who has an IEP. How will children with unique needs be accommodated? My daughter tends to be a black/white thinker and a lot of these questions ask kids to show how they got their answers (expand) lots of writing. What about kids who are auditory learners? Kinesthetic learners? Kids who are bright but don’t test well. My daughter has high anxiety when it comes to testing. These diagnostic assessments do they take into account different thinkers/learners?
34. How do you get a growth model when the test only is given in the spring?
35. What can we do as parents and educators do to move that the State of Delaware Opt out of Common Core? The Common Core Standards have been adopted under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education and implemented throughout the state under the guidance of the Delaware Department of Education. Citizens should sare their concerns with their legislative representatives.
36. Can someone else answer the questions How can a parent opt out: Brian did not answer the question. Since we do not have an opt out process written in state code, parents have been writing a letter of intent to the building principal and superintendent advising leadership that their child is not permitted to participate in the assessment. Parents should also request alternate instruction for their child during the testing period.
37. If a parent “opts out” their child, will the child still be forced to take the SBCA? Will legal action be taken against a parent since DOE is saying it’s illegal to Opt out? No. It is not illegal for a parent to opt out their child from the state assessment. Neither districts nor the Department of Education can force a student to take the assessment if the parent opts the child out of the assessment. The State Board of Education confirmed that the federal law was written for and in regards to the local education agencies.
38. If only the end of course assessment is required, then how will the school be penalized if students are opting out of the test? Currently federal law requires each local education agency to assess all students in order to remain compliant with the terms of the No Child Left Behind Act. Not meeting these terms could result in possible loss of federal funding.
39. If a parent opts out a student, how is that data represented when presented to DOE?
40. Appo is recording opt-out scores as a zero, which negatively impacts the teachers’ class average and the schools’ averages. How is this allowed? How the assessment data is used in each district is a local level decision.
41. Why did the PTA back of the town hall debate at U of D on Jan 24? PTA was not asked to participate in the town hall until the last minute as a replacement for others that could not attend. Due to the late notice and lack of board members available that weekend, we had to decline the request, but offered to participate in future events.
42. Why are we so focused on high stakes standardized tests when there is a such a technology push? Why not use the technology that is available to track/assess their learning through the year?
43. What is the difference between opt-out vs. invalidating the test? With opting out the student will not participate in the assessment, thus not producing data. With Invalidating the test, a student could provide random answers for the exam, thus producing data that is not valid.
44. What do we have to do to achieve invalid test results?
45. What impact will result for teacher performance after the 1st trail year?
46. Why can’t we go back to taking a national standardized test on just one day?
47. My child has special needs with an IEP he receives many accommodations to help him learn throughout his day including when he takes his quizzes and tests. His teachers and I have come up with what we think is the best way my child learns. At his IEP meeting a couple of weeks ago I was told the only accommodation he would receive was getting put in a smaller setting to take the test. That is far from the accommodations he receives now. Why doesn’t the state test take a child’s IEP and implement what is in it to take the test so that the child might be successful and also not to make the child feel stressful while taking the test?
48. Just cut to the chase. Tell us exactly what we need to do to make it known that our children will not test.
49. For the test that has presumably been administered successfully in other states, how is it that teachers and administration seem to be so in the dark about simple things like “ How to accommodate special needs” and “ How long will the test take” is the DOE not providing adequate information?
50. Why is so important to test across the state? Trust your staff and administration.
51. What do parents have to do to get rid of state testing?
52. How is it determined that high stakes testing motivates students?
53. The year our school offered a picnic with Rita’s, Chick Fila and Inflatables students when from a 1 to a 4. When asked why they claimed they didn’t care before , there was nothing in it for them.
54. How do high stakes tests prove college and career readiness when all they test is ELA and Math?
55. All I hear tonight is how this will benefit the state? Has any group ( PTA,DSEA, or others) considered the effects of high stakes testing on kids? Yes, all groups ( PTA and DSEA) have considered the effects of high stakes testing. This is one of the reasons we are holding public sessions to address concerns and questions regarding the assessment and a parent’s right to make the decisions regarding their child’s participation in the assessment.
56. Why are parents who know their kids the best not given a say? Current state code does not allow for or prohibit a parent for opting their child from the assessment. Delaware PTA believes that it is every parent’s right to make this decision.
57. Has any group tested the school’s ability to support all the computers needed? (Broad Band Width) The Delaware Department of Education has indicated that the band width is sufficient to handle the statewide testing.
58. Is there any IT support within the schools during testing? Yes, the Delaware Department of Education is available for technical support.
59. What are the consequences attached to test scores? No. There is no student accountability with the current testing. There is moratorium on teacher accountability being tied to the evaluation.
60. What if a child takes the test, and does not finish in the allotted time? Do they just stop there? Parents should check with the district/school for clarification on testing procedures.
61. If the child is given extra time would the childe then miss classroom instruction? This will be determined at the local level. Parents should check with their child’s school on testing procedures.
62. If only the end of course test is a requirement, doesn’t that only apply to high school courses? Is this the same things as the DCAS end of course exam or does SBAC have their own end of course exam? The Smarter Balanced Assessment is an end of the year Assessment that is given in addition to any assessments the individual school/district administers.
63. I heard that state employees are not allowed to opt out is this true? No. state employees may follow the same process as any other parent. However, while there are no state level consequences for opting your child out of the assessment. Each district has the ability to administer district level consequences. Employees should check with the district HR for clarification on the district’s position.