



I Support Standardized Testing, but Not Enough to Send My Kids to Take It During a Pandemic

By Educator Barnes – April 27, 2021

I'm wrapping up year 15 as an educator this school year. Before I moved into the role of a middle school academic dean, I taught English for almost a decade. I had taught a tested content. Although testing time can be stressful, I knew that standardized tests captured a snapshot in time. The data is one piece of the puzzle to help inform instructional decisions. Additionally, this data provides public accountability to show whether or not students are

learning. As an educator, I understand the value of standardized tests, but I am also a parent. When I shift to my parent's lens, I have other areas to consider.

Last school year, my twin sons were in third grade. Third grade was the year they should have been introduced to standardized testing. They were supposed to take IREAD-3 and ILEARN. One of my sons even had the IREAD date in his agenda with the word IREAD circled several times. My other son did not have it written down and was not thinking much about the test. One day, my husband, sons, and I were all watching one of Governor Holcomb's press conferences during the early weeks of the pandemic. He announced that standardized testing would be canceled for the 2019-2020 school year. My sons did not take IREAD-3 nor did they take ILEARN.

This school year, our sons have attended school 100% virtually. When NWEA MAP was given, which is a test some schools use to have additional data points, our boys were allowed to take it at home. That is not the case for the standardized test, ILEARN. They would have to report to the school, in person, three days in a row to take the test. My husband and I discussed if we were going to send our sons to school, and ultimately, the answer was no. For the entire school year, with the exception of one of my sons earning a C during one quarter for one subject, their grades have been As and Bs. Their NWEA data showed they were where they needed to be academically. The Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment showed they were reading above grade level. Currently, with their math tutor, they are working on 5th-grade math skills even though they are in the 4th grade.

Even if none of this was true for my sons, I have a right, as a parent, to opt my children out of standardized testing because multiple data points are collected throughout the year for teachers to know how their students are doing. Missing ILEARN will not cause their teacher to not know how they are doing academically.

Other parents reached out to me stating they heard you cannot opt out, so I reached out to the Indiana Department of Education's assessment department to hear directly from them. This is the email I received:

Good morning, Mrs. Barnes

Thank you for reaching out with this question about opting out of state assessments. The State of Indiana does not currently support (or recognize) an opt-out policy. However, if a parent chooses to keep their child home from testing, there are no consequences or

penalties applied to the student. Schools may request some documentation from parents who make this choice so that they can appeal for leniency from the state with regards to their accountability calculations.

Please let me know if you have other questions, and I'm happy to assist.

Parents can opt out their children from standardized testing in Indiana, but there is not an official way to do so. Parents opt out by keeping their children home. Instead of taking the standardized test, my boys have time to read for leisure and play outside for three days. After their adjustment to online learning and pushing through challenges, they have earned this free time.

Whenever they return to school in person, they will take ILEARN. They had two years without standardized testing and their third and fourth-grade teachers still knew where they were academically. Maybe 5th grade will be their year to finally take the test ... but time will tell.