

Background Information for **Wisconsin Common Core State Standards Opt-Out Form**

Why are Wisconsin parents increasingly interested in opting their children out of the high-stakes **Smarter Balanced testing** which begins in the 2014-2015 school year? Read on, but first, a little background.

- ⤴ Smarter Balanced testing is a **federally-funded one-size-fits-all testing system** aligned with the Common Core State Standards.
- ⤴ **Common Core State Standards** (in English language arts and mathematics), now in use in your child's school, **were not developed by Wisconsin educators**, our nation's governors, or school leaders, nor was there parent input or legislative oversight. A small core of education elites, often without experience in standards writing and **with millions of dollars** of support **from the Gates Foundation**, produced the standards, and the federal government coerced states to accept them, often sight unseen.
- ⤴ While **Common Core State Standards** may be a step up from current Wisconsin standards, which are old and out of date, they are not rigorous, **do not prepare children for a four-year college experience**, and have been denounced as inadequate and even dangerous by leading educators and child development experts.
- ⤴ Common Core is and will continue to be **expensive for your school district** to implement.
- ⤴ Common Core brings with it high-stakes computerized adaptive testing (CAT). What questions the child is given depend on how previous questions were answered. You and the teacher **will never know what questions the child faced** during the testing session.
- ⤴ There is **no state mandate that school districts adopt Common Core**, although school leaders and school boards often believed they had no choice in the matter.
- ⤴ A small number of **large corporations stand to make millions** of dollars through the implementation of these standards and the sale of curriculum materials and testing which will follow. Corporate-driven educational reform **will not address the real problems schools face**.

How can I as a parent opt my child out of Common Core-related testing?

That's quite simple. Complete the Opt-Out Agreement attached to this informational letter. Follow the simple directions that accompany the form.

Is opt-out legal?

We are not aware of any federal, state, or local law, which would prohibit a parent from completing and submitting the opt-out agreement. Further, various courts, including the U.S Supreme Court, have ruled in favor of parents exercising their fundamental right to direct the education of their children. **Your child is not a mere creature of the State.**

Will opt-out harm my child?

No. Your child will not be held back or penalized. In fact, during the extensive hours of testing, your child should have the opportunity for continued learning.

(over)

Will opt-out harm my school or my child's teacher?

Neither state nor federal funding should be affected by opt-outs. However, **federal bureaucrats want teachers to be evaluated based on the Common Core-aligned testing** – in Wisconsin, that's the Smarter Balanced computer adaptive tests. Teachers rightly object to being evaluated on the basis of their students' standardized test scores, and it is questionable whether such scores provide a sound basis for determining whether a school is failing. Based on early testing results in other states, many **children and schools which were previously recognized as successful will be labeled “failing.”**

How does opt-out help protect my and my child's privacy?

Intertwined with Common Core and the heavy testing that comes with it is the collection of hundreds of points on information about you and your child, sometimes including religion, voting patterns, values-oriented data, and the like. FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974) has recently been amended by the bureaucracy to allow for the sharing of this information with the federal government, its many agencies, and others, all without your knowing or permission. **Opt-out puts a stop to this unnecessary invasion of your privacy.**

Does opt-out work?

The short answer is yes, especially as the opt-out movement gains momentum across the country. Some schools have discontinued the tests because of opt-outs. Parents who use the opt-out option are refusing to allow their children to be used as part of this massive federal experiment. Even a single opt-out serves as an example to others, spreads the movement, and shouts loudly “I love my child, I love my school and I love my teachers! I will not take part in this insanity anymore.” (Quote from Dr. Slekar, Department of Education, Penn State, Altoona.)

Next steps:

- ⤴ **Copy and distribute the opt-out form.** Encourage other parents to become aware of what's at stake. Consider distributing copies at events where parents of school children congregate, such as athletic tournaments and school events”
- ⤴ **Get further informed.** Google “Common Core related testing,” “Common Core corporations,” or something similar. There is a wealth of information available. Be aware, however, that some in the education establishment may attempt to dismiss your findings. A few helpful sites:
<http://www.whatiscommoncore.wordpress.com>
<http://www.fpeusa.org/index.php/about-fpe/common-core-free>
- ⤴ **Get to know your school board president,** board members and board meeting schedule.
- ⤴ **Continue to support your school and your child's teacher.**

WISCONSIN COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OPT-OUT FORM

2014-2015 School Year

As the parent or legal guardian of the child named below, **I have the fundamental and legal right to direct the upbringing and education of this child**, with the state playing a secondary and supportive role.

I believe the following regarding the Common Core State Standards currently in use in this school district:

- The CCSS are an unconstitutional federal intrusion into the education of our children, which should be a state and local matter.
- The CCSS were written with no (or at best minimal) state input.
- The CCSS are a federalization of the nation's elementary and secondary school populations, although evidence is lacking that such federalization will benefit our children.
- The CCSS were adopted by Wisconsin and by this school district without citizen knowledge or input.
- Evidence gathered at hearings held by the Joint Legislative Education Committee indicate that the CCSS are neither rigorous nor proven.
- Children taking tests aligned with Common Core are facing frustration and failure.

I respectfully request the following regarding the Common Core State Standards, the Smarter Balanced testing, and the student data collection aligned with Common Core:

- I do not allow my child to be administered the Smarter Balanced tests or any computerized adaptive tests (CATs) aligned with the Common Core State Standards.
- I do not allow the school to collect personal data about my child or our family beyond that which has been traditionally gathered and which is directly related to the school's educational purpose. Personal data, for the purposes of this document, includes but is not limited to, behavioral, psychological, health, religious, political, and values-oriented data. Examples of data not to be collected are sexual behavior or attitudes, career objectives, family income range, religious affiliation, gun ownership, and voting status.
- I do not allow personal data as noted above to be sold, or shared with the State or Federal governments, any agencies thereof, or with any third parties, without my specific written consent.

Please honor the statements initialed above and keep this signed, written notice on file in my child's cumulative folder.

Name of Child _____ Grade Level _____

Name of Parent (Guardian) _____

Signature of Parent (Guardian) _____ Date _____

Name of School _____

School Year _____

Received by _____

Date Received _____

Instructions for Wisconsin Common Core State Standards Opt-Out Form

1. **Make copies** of both sides of this form **and share** with other parents.
2. Complete two copies of this form for each child. **Do not combine two or more children** on one form.
3. In the top section, initial the blank before each statement with which you agree.
4. In the middle section, initial the blank before each activity which the school must refrain from in regard to your child.
5. Supply information about you, your child, and your child's school in the bottom section.
6. (Optional) **Have both copies notarized** in the space provided in the bottom right corner.
7. Take both completed forms to the school office.
8. **Ask that the school secretary or principal sign or stamp and date each copy.** If necessary, remind them that this is not an agreement, but a statement of your legal rights as parent/guardian.
9. **Keep one copy** for your personal use, and ask that the school's copy be properly filed.
10. **Make and give a copy to your child's teacher.**
11. **Educate your children to report to you any attempts to collect personal information** not related to class work, whether by means of testing, surveys, or polls.
12. Repeat the above steps each school year.
13. (Another option) You may wish to **visit the school** once or twice during the year to inspect your child's records and to discuss with your child's teacher and/or school officials compliance with these signed requests.