State by state template created by UOO, http://unitedoptout.com

Testing opt-out/refusal guide for Georgia

Form completed by Meg Norris

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List of assessments

Primary Assessments

- Georgia Milestones Assessment System
- ACCESS for ELLs
- Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA)
- Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS)
- Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)


Special considerations for the above assessments


Special Education and Parental Rights
http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/default.aspx

We recommend reading through the parental rights for parents with special education students and consider the implications for your child – could you include refusal to participate in the state test on the IEP?

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Procedures for opt-out/refusal

According to state law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-282, 283, 284, and 285) if a child does not take the CRCT or fails it they can be retained. This is mandatory in grades 3, 5 & 8 only. There is no specific wording in the law for refusal to take the test. IF a child is to be retained there is a procedure the school must go through, including parent notification. This procedure also offers a procedure for parental appeal of the retention. If the parent appeals the retention a placement committee consisting of the principal, all teachers and parents is formed. The parents must be notified, by the school, in writing, about the committee meeting. Based on the student’s academic achievement the committee will decide if promotion is warranted. The decision must be unanimous. If your child is performing at or above grade level this should not be an issue. If the child is not, the committee can promote the child with the understanding that additional help will be put in place the following year.

This past year we had an 8th grade White County honors math student who failed the CRCT and was retained. The parent followed this procedure and the child was promoted. Frankly, if honor students are failing the test we have a test that is not coming close to accurately measuring the ability of a child.


Urgency for opt-out/refusal

High Stakes Testing:
Is not scientifically-based and fails to follow the U.S. Government's own data on learning.

· Fosters test driven education that is not meeting the individual/intellectual needs of students.

· Presents a racial and economic bias that is beneficial to white middle/upper class students and detrimental to second language students, impoverished students, and students of color.

· Is in opposition to the corrective action in gaps in opportunity and resources sanctioned by the Fiscal Fairness Act.

· Supports complicity of corporate interests rather than democracy based on public concerns.

· Fosters coercion over cooperation with regards to federal funding for public education.

· Promotes a culture of lying, cheating, and exploitation within the school community.

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Has used the achievement gap to foster a “de facto” segregation that has resulted in separate and unequal education for minorities.

Additionally, data collection of student’s private information cannot be guaranteed security or that it will not be abused in some way by third party entities.

Low/poor test scores, which are likely to occur with more frequency with Common Core and PARCC and SBA will be used to fire teachers, create more online learning scenarios even in elementary schools, and close more public schools to be replaced with for profit charter schools.

**Sample language to include in opt-out/refusal**

Other options that have worked in Georgia include:
1. refusal for religious reasons (I am not sure what religious organization feels this way but I am sure there is one)
2. refusal to sign the internet agreement at the BEGINNING of the year (this will work best once PARCC is put in place and all testing moves to computers)
3. withdrawing the child before the test and re-enrolling them once the testing is complete.

I would NOT put it past Georgia to slip some sort of parental permission for testing into all the forms at the beginning of the year. BE AWARE!!

**Sample Opt Out Letter**

(Using religious language since that seems to be a loophole for GA)

The following faiths can use the Ethic of Reciprocity as a religious reason for "opting out" of NCLB testing. [http://www.religionstolerance.org/...](http://www.religionstolerance.org/...)

- Bahá’í Faith: And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself.
- Buddhism: Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.
- Confucianism: Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you
- Hinduism: This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.
- Islam: None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.
- Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. This is the law: all the rest is commentary.

For Atheist it's either just morally wrong or it's the pseudo-science of standardized testing in this country is the intellectual equivalent of intelligent design or creationism.

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But the bottom line is you don't have to say why or what religion at all. However, if you'd like to make a point, as these letters do, about why NCLB and high stakes standardized testing are wrong, then by all means please feel free to adapt either of these letters.

The following letters is from a Unitarian.

**Sample Opt Out Letter**

From: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/...](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/...)

Dear (Insert Administrator's name here)

We are asking that you allow our child to "opt out" of CRCT and GAA testing. There are many reasons that our family has decided to "opt out" of state and federally mandated testing, however, we have been told that there is only one legal exemption -- religion. Since religion is the only recognized legal excuse (that we could find) we will use it. Therefore, we are asking for a religious exemption.

We are (state religion) with values rooted in (state religious principles). Forced participation in state testing violates the following religious principles we value and strive to teach in our home.

"Unitarian Universalists believe in the never-ending search for truth. If the mind and heart are truly free and open, the revelations that appear to the human spirit are infinitely numerous, eternally fruitful, and wondrously exciting." NCLB and GAAs are antithetical to this belief. These tests assume a static truth and train the mind and heart to close to the possibilities of multiple answers or interpretations. They force children to believe in a single correct answer and that there is no need to search for knowledge -- knowledge is given. This contradicts the value we are trying to teach our son concerning curiosity and the endless possibilities available to him as he searches for his own truth.

As followers of the teachings of Jesus, Luke reminds us that Jesus said, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged" also "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. And finally, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. NCLB and GAAs are designed exclusively to judge and condemn children, teachers, schools, and communities. We refuse to continue to take part in this pernicious system. We are also trying to teach our son to be open to the possibilities that "others" sometimes have different values or ways of seeing the world. We do not want him to judge others for their differences. We hope that one day our child will recognize differences in others and value and celebrate those differences. NCLB and GAAs force children, teachers, and schools to devalue differences.

We also believe in the Ethic of Reciprocity or the Golden Rule -- we are to treat other people as we would wish to be treated ourselves. As a family, our belief in the Golden Rule encourages us to help our son learn the value of fairness. We want him to treat others fairly and we hope that he will in turn expect others to treat him fairly. NCLB and

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GAAs have been demonstrated to not treat differences in children fairly. They fail to recognize the multiple intelligences present in all children. NCLB and GAAs discriminate against students from lower socio-economic conditions and unfairly penalize students with special education needs.

Even though the United Nations is not a religious organization we also would like the school to understand that NCLB and GAA’s violate certain articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought. NCLB and GAAs prescribes thoughtlessness and punishes children that experiment with their curiosity or try to explain their learning in ways that can't be measured by standardized tests.

Article 26. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.

NCLB and GAA’s narrow the school's curriculum and therefore deprives children of the right explore the possibilities for learning in the many disciplines that have either been shortened or outright eliminated from the curriculum. For example, if science and social studies are neglected how will children learn about the scientific nature of the world and learn to appreciate and value the vast cultures on this planet?

In summary and respect, we would like you to permit our son to "opt out" of NCLB and all standardized testing this school year for the religious and cultural reasons stated above.

Sincerely,

(Insert your name here).

Resources and organizations

www.stopcommoncore.com
http://americanprinciplesproject.org/preserve-innocence/2013/common-core-is-state-led-hardly/
www.cwfa.org
http://www.empoweredga.org

State specific watch-list

Students First Georgia http://www.studentsfirst.org/pages/georgia-plan-for-education-reform

ALEC http://mediamatters.org/research/2012/05/09/how-alec-is-quietly-influencing-education-refor/184156

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**Additional or miscellaneous information**

**Current Legislation**

**SB 167** Senators Ligon, Jr. of the 3rd, Loudermilk of the 14th, Albers of the 56th, Hufstetler of the 52nd, Hill of the 6th and others. Bill to end Common Core, RTTT and any data tracking system. BILL IS CURRENTLY IN COMMITTEE


**Gov. Deal Executive Orders**

No Federal Standards and No Student Information Gathering