

Testing opt-out/Refusal guide for Washington DC

Form completed by United Opt Out Administrator

Contact information (email): unitedoptoutnational@gmail.com

List of assessments

DC-CAS, Paced Interim Assessments (PIA), Achievement Network Assessments (A-NET), EOC (for Algebra I only)

EOC: "The EOC Assessment is administered in Algebra I only at this point. The EOC focuses on the DC Algebra I standards as identified in the DCPS Scope and Sequence. All students enrolled in Algebra I will take the End of Course Exam at the end of their course. Students who are enrolled in Algebra I courses that end in January will take the EOC A. Students enrolled in full-year Algebra I or second semester courses that end in June will take the EOC B, which will be administered during the final June PIA window."

See here for info on ANET: "The Achievement Network (ANet) Assessment is another type of paced interim assessment, used at approximately one-third of schools in DCPS. It is aligned to the ANet Schedule of Assessed Standards and administered four times a year to students in 41 participating schools in grades 3 to 8. All four assessment cycles are administered prior to the state summative assessment, DC CAS."

See here for info on PIA:

<http://dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/The+DCPS+Academic+Plan/What+does+this+plan+mean+for+my+child%3F/Paced+Interim+Assessments+-+Every+6-8+weeks>

Special considerations for the above assessments

Students are not retained for poor results on the DC-CAS.

No substantive information is provided in terms of refusing the above assessments. Since PIA and ANET not necessary for AYP and are merely check-ins for DC-CAS, it would seem that they are good points of entry for opting out or refusing testing.

There is a DC-CAS Alt for students with significant cognitive disabilities. From the DCPS website: "The DC CAS-ALT is a portfolio assessment given to those students who have significant cognitive disabilities that prevent them from participating in the general assessment (DC CAS) even with accommodations and/or modifications. It is administered to a smaller number of students in grades 3 to 8 and 10 in Reading and Math. The portfolio is created throughout the school year with submission during the spring."

Procedures for opt-out/refusal

Assessments for DC include the main DC-CAS and also two interim assessments: PIA (grades 2-10, 5x/year) and ANet (41 schools, grades 3-8, 4x/year).

Info on DC-CAS (note, **students are not retained for poor performance on the test**)

<http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/In-the-Classroom/How-Students-Are-Assessed/Help%20Your%20Child%20Prepare%20for%20the%20DC%20CAS.pdf>

This manual states parents can opt out of the sexual health portion of the test (grades 5,8, and high school):

http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2013_TCM_DCCAS.pdf

DC-CAS administered by OSSE and not DCPS. This manual gives very specific information on administration. Cites NCLB law and other legislation that all students must take assessment and have results included

(http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20Testing%20Accommodations%20Manual%20FINAL_13.pdf)

DCPS follows the NCLB mandated 95% rule for participation.

Urgency for opt-out/refusal

DC is a national epicenter for education reform, especially given the chancellorship of Michelle Rhee. There are suspicions of cheating in the District under Rhee that journalist John Merrow has brought to light. See this link for all of his reporting:

<http://shaunpjohnson.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/writing-about-rhee.pdf>

A good tactic would be to demand an investigation of the DC council.

Sample language to include in opt-out/refusal

There are no opt out or refusal provisions specific to the District. But there are also not threats to promotion to the next grade level based on test scores. Refusing testing in DC would be largely uncharted territory.

Sample Opt Out Letter

Please remember to request that your child's grades, class placement, eligibility for a magnet school, etc. not be affected by refusal. Also ask that your child be allowed to read/write silently, work on homework, and/or sit in another non-testing class during testing. (Some students who have refused tests have been forced to sit in class, without access to books or schoolwork, while their classmates are testing. This is why we recommend you make your requests--and get confirmation--in writing.) Make sure that you receive written confirmation that your child will

not be "punished" for the refusal. Also ask for written documentation of what your child will be allowed to do while others are testing. We recommend that you email or hand-deliver your letter to your child's principal, vice-principal/s, guidance counselor, and teacher/s.)

Dear -----,

We do not want our child, -----, to take the DC-CAS, ANET, EOC or any other high stakes standardized tests. We believe that our child's educational progress can best be measured using her daily school work and regular classroom testing.

We believe that a single "snapshot" test, such as the DC-CAS, cannot adequately assess our child's skills. We also believe this testing creates undue stress and anxiety; narrows the curricula; and enforces a culture of teaching to the test which is void of critical, conceptual, and creative thinking. It is for these reasons that ----- will not be taking the (list tests) this school year. I respectfully request that -----'s class grades, class placement, and eligibility to enter the magnet school lottery not be affected by refusal of this test. Please contact me at -----so we can discuss the alternative classwork ----- will be given during test preparation and testing. After our phone call, I would also appreciate a written acknowledgment of this email and our phone call be sent to my email address, -----, or sent home with my child. Please include verification that my child's grades, class placement, and eligibility for the magnet school lottery, etc. will not be affected by this refusal. In addition, please document which activities my child will be participating in while his/her fellow students are testing. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

----- (date)

Resources and organizations

DC is home to many national organizations, like the NEA. But it is also home to many of the "reform" minded think tanks and lobbying groups like AEI, NCTQ, and the Heritage Foundation.

Washington Teachers' Union: <http://www.wtulocal6.org/>

Grassroots Education Project: <http://www.grassrootseducationdc.org/>

Empower DC (working against school closures): <http://www.empowerdc.org/>

Teaching for Change: <http://www.teachingforchange.org/>

State specific watch-list

Become familiar with the current DC city council: <http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/>

There is mayoral control of schools in DC, so here is the mayor's page: <http://mayor.dc.gov/>

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

Chancellor Kaya Henderson (previously second to Michelle Rhee):
<http://www.dc.gov/DCPS/About%20DCPS/Who%20We%20Are/Leadership%20Team/Kaya%20Henderson>

Charter Schools are public in DC and are expanding, so consider the DC public charter school board: <http://www.dcpsb.org/>

Additional or miscellaneous information

None available at this time