



DATE: January 14, 2015
TO: Hutto ISD stakeholders
FROM: Brandy Baker, Executive Director, School Support Services
SUBJECT: Standardized Test Exemptions

It has been brought to Hutto ISD's attention that some parents have voiced concerns about their children taking standardized tests and have inquired about the law requiring students to take State-mandated standardized tests and corresponding benchmark tests. While we and others might be empathetic with some of their feelings, by law there is no opt out for students. Please be directed to the applicable law from the Texas Education Code pertaining to statewide accountability testing for your review and consideration:

Sec. 26.010. EXEMPTION FROM INSTRUCTION. (a) A parent is entitled to remove the parent's child temporarily from a class or other school activity that conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs if the parent presents or delivers to the teacher of the parent's child a written statement authorizing the removal of the child from the class or other school activity. A parent is not entitled to remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity to avoid a test or to prevent the child from taking a subject for an entire semester. (b) This section does not exempt a child from satisfying grade level or graduation requirements in a manner acceptable to the school district and the agency. (Emphasis added).

Parents may not opt out of testing of any kind. Additionally, it is not an appropriate expectation that an alternate activity be provided for their child in lieu of the test. The only reason a student would not participate in required testing on the day of testing is if the student is absent from school. If a student is absent for a reason other than those listed in District policy for which a student may be excused, then an unexcused absence must be recorded for that student. The law requires the District to file paperwork with the court for any student with 10 unexcused absences within a six month period or three or more unexcused absences within a four-week period. An unexcused absence includes days or parts of days.

For parents who believe the standardized tests place undue pressure on their students, we encourage these parents to meet with their child's school counselor to develop solutions tailored to their child's needs. Unexcused absences, particularly on test days, can have adverse consequences on individual campuses and on the District as a whole. State assessments also allow parents to monitor their child's progress from year to year and provide valuable information on their child's performance relative to others in the school, district, and state.



First-time 9th graders and middle school students enrolled in high school courses are responsible for end-of-course exams in core subject areas that count for graduation requirements. Additionally, the state's Student Success Initiative (SSI) grade advancement requirements will apply to the STAAR reading and mathematics tests at grades 5 and 8.

As specified by these requirements, a student may advance to the next grade level only by passing these tests or by unanimous decision of his or her grade placement committee. In addition, schools and districts count on the performance of all of their students in order to accurately measure their progress in meeting state and federal accountability requirements.

We appreciate your passion for your child's education. We strongly encourage you to share your thoughts on the state accountability system with your state legislator. If you have any questions regarding state testing, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Educationally,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brandy G. Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brandy Baker
Executive Director
School Support Services