

The argument:
THERE'S TOO MUCH TESTING

What's at the heart of it? Parents want their kids to get the maximum benefit from their education, and some fear that testing takes away from classroom learning.

FIRST FIND COMMON GROUND.

Whether or not it's true, most people think it is, so you're fighting a losing battle. It's best to agree.

"You're probably right and there are a lot of reasons for that. The new Common Core tests are meant to improve the situation."

THEN PIVOT TO A HIGHER EMOTION: PEACE OF MIND.

"While there may be too much testing in some schools, we sure wouldn't want to have no way of measuring progress. Parents want to know how their kids are doing, and they need a objective measuring stick. These new tests provide parents with the information they want and need."

DOs ↑

- 1 Do position new tests as a solution, not the problem. Distinguish between adding more tests and replacing old tests.

"We know there are a lot of problems with tests. These tests were designed to address some of them. Many of the old tests being used today don't provide parents and teachers with useful information. The new Common Core tests do. This isn't about adding another test. It's about replacing old tests with something better."

- 2 Do suggest the simple act of talking to the teacher. "Challenging the district" "get involved" can overwhelm parents.

DON'Ts ↓

- 1 Don't overpromise. Don't position new tests as the end all, be all.

"Are they perfect? No. But they're better. Will the problem of too much testing go away overnight? No. But these tests will help."

- 2 Don't overwhelm parents. This isn't a call to action.

"Get involved! Challenge your district! Educate yourself on all the many different kinds of tests your kids are taking and take action!"

DO-DON'Ts ↔

Do use analogies when they can help normalize and simplify complicated ideas. But don't overuse at them the expense of straight talk.

WHAT ABOUT EXTREME EXAMPLES?

Do acknowledge extreme examples and call them out for what they are.

"My child is tested every other week. That's all they do is prepare for and take tests!"

"That does sound like a lot, but it's not what's going on in most schools. Before you throw the baby out with the bathwater, talk to your teacher and learn about the tests your child is taking. Some are part of everyday lessons. Some are state or district tests. Some might provide you with more useful information than others. Don't miss out on the new tests that help you really know how your child is doing at school."



WATCH OUT FOR RABBIT HOLES!

Different tests get introduced by different local, district, and state agencies. Don't pick sides or favorites, or lay blame. Agree that some tightening up is in order, then pivot back to how testing helps parents and kids. There are some legit reasons for using different tests. But trying to explain the technicalities can work against you, reinforcing the belief that it's all too complicated.

AUDIENCE SHIFTS

BUSINESS

Accountability, costs, and ROI are all topics that can be of interest to business groups. But don't forget, business people are parents, too.

"For what we're spending on testing, they're actually a very cheap way of measuring accountability. They're an excellent return on investment. But more importantly, they provide parents with an objective measure of their child's progress."

PARENTS

The closer you get to parents, the more the message should be about "your child."