**IF I REFUSE THE TESTS, WILL MY SCHOOL LOSE FUNDING?**

One of the first questions that usually comes up when considering refusing the end-of-course exams, the SBAs, or other “growth measure” assessments, is, “Will my child’s school lose money?”

It’s also an indirect threat to parents. When parents ask PED officials about refusing, the typical response is to scare the parents with consequences to their children, teachers, and school.

First of all, there are no consequences for the kids **in grades K through 8\***. If parents let the schools know of their intent to refuse, then kids can’t be penalized. If a parent of a high school student wants to refuse the EOCs and SBA, there are alternative assessments available. ***We strongly encourage you to speak to your child’s school administration and school district administration about your options.***

Second, there is no clarity about the consequences to teachers. Despite repeated requests for clarification, PED has not offered any information about that. However, most teachers recognize that even if parent refusals count against them, it’s not going to make much difference.

Finally, the schools. It is documented in the school A-F grading policies that if a school falls below the 95% test participation rate, it is at risk of its letter grade falling by one letter. This sounds scary and, unfortunately, the local media is happy to boost the importance of the school grades, which shouldn’t be boosted. The school grading system paints an extremely skewed version of the realities within our schools.

So, what’s the big deal, other than Skandera’s simplified view of “good” versus “bad”? Well, it’s money.

PED will no doubt start spreading the rumor that opting out or refusing will affect a school’s funding. They probably won’t flat-out say that a school will lose money, since that would be a lie. However, if a school receives Title I funding, and is or becomes a “Focus” or “Priority” school, then funding will be affected in an almost unnoticeable way.

When a school is in priority or focus status, it is required by Federal statute to allocate 20% of Title I funding to intervention plans, which have already been planned, and most districts have already put aside that money, including APS and LCPS.

*Can parent refusal turn a “good” school (a Reward school) into a Priority school?*

Not necessarily. Even if over 5% of a school’s kids refuse the state tests and it drops the school from, say, a C to a D, it is not automatically a Focus school. Focus and Priority schools must meet other conditions other than simply grades, such as low graduation rate and low growth rate.

Also, it can be validly argued that growth measures are rendered completely invalid (as if they weren’t already) when over 5% of students do not participate. This is important. The people who created this system KNOW that the tests must have 95% participation to be statistically valid. If we drop that rate, we effectively “break” the system.

If you have further questions, please email: klnielsen74@gmail.com or find NM Refuse the Tests on Facebook.