

The argument:
IT'S JUST MORE TEACHING TO THE TEST

What's at the heart of it? Parents want what's best for their kids, and some fear that testing doesn't provide any real value.

FIRST FIND COMMON GROUND.

"You're right. Teaching to the test is a waste of time. It's not at all helpful—for kids or for teachers."

THEN PIVOT TO A HIGHER EMOTION: **WHAT'S BEST FOR MY KIDS.**

"Parents want what's best for their kids, and a good test helps them get that. The new tests are an improvement, and finally provide parents with valuable information."

DOs ↑

- 1 Do explain how the new tests are a solution to the problem.

"The new tests are better aligned with what kids are learning in the classroom. They're designed to measure if your child actually understands what she's been learning all year, not what she memorized last week."

"Because the new tests measure what kids are learning, preparing for these tests is actually time spent teaching. And good tests—just like good classroom and homework assignments—help students learn by asking them to apply their knowledge to new problems."

"Kids won't just fill in the blank, they'll have to demonstrate that they understand the material. So it's finally an accurate check on how kids are progressing. With the information these tests provide, parents can really know if their kids are where they should be, and if they're ready for the next grade."

- 2 Do talk about how a broader approach helps minimize teaching to the test.

"Teaching to the test is more likely to happen when tests are disconnected from what's actually being taught in the classroom."

"Teaching to the test happens when teachers haven't been provided with a teaching strategy that's aligned with new learning goals."

- 3 Do talk about other strategies in play that help teachers manage this change. Be prepared with specifics.

- 4 Do connect new tests to new standards.

"Today there's more agreement on what kids should master in each grade. And these tests measure what parents and teachers (and colleges and employers) say will be needed for future success, like writing and problem solving."

DON'Ts ↓

- 1 It's okay to compare, but put the emphasis on how these tests are an improvement, not on how the old tests are bad. Nobody wants to feel like they've wasted time and money. And if you start bashing tests, your audience may not know which test you're bashing.

- 2 Don't overpromise. The new tests are an improvement, a step in the right direction. Don't sell them as a fix for everything.

WHAT ABOUT EXTREME EXAMPLES?

"In my kid's school there's a class where all they do is work on test questions."

"Thankfully that's not happening in most schools. It's an extreme example and frankly it's just bad teaching. The new tests won't fix everything, and they can't make a bad teacher a good one, but they are a big improvement, and they've been designed so that "teaching to the test" is next to impossible."



WATCH OUT FOR RABBIT HOLES!

While it's true that some teachers do "phone it in" and take shortcuts, it's probably not productive to throw teachers under the bus.

AUDIENCE SHIFTS

TEACHERS

The new tests free teachers to do what they love: create a classroom environment that's about real learning, teaching kids how to get to the answer, not just memorize it.

PARENTS

The new tests create less stress for kids because they're part of the natural flow of the learning process. There's no cramming, no test prep.

BUSINESS

What gets measured gets done!