



UTLA Periodic Assessment Boycotts

Excessive testing hurts our kids and our classrooms

Beginning Tuesday, January 27

Don't turn in the tests!

Questions & Answers

On Tuesday, January 27 we will begin a boycott of periodic assessments. Here are answers to some commonly asked questions.

Q Why are we boycotting periodic assessments?

We are boycotting periodic assessments because they:

- waste instructional time and have little or no instructional value
- waste teachers' time to collaborate
- contribute to student over-testing

In the face of a huge economic crisis, the focus must be on what is best for students. Testing is not teaching and is a drain on the educational program, thus on student learning. Teachers are finally saying "enough is enough" and are taking action on behalf of our students. Teachers know best how to assess student learning. We can no longer afford to let the District spend valuable resources on extra tests that don't help students learn or help teachers teach. If they can't get rid of these tests, together we will!

Q What type of assessments are we boycotting?

UTLA is calling for a complete boycott of all periodic assessments, Open Court assessments, and all other district-mandated tests that are not required by state or federal law, or that aren't needed to determine appropriate placement for a student, such as CELDT tests.

Q How do we participate in the boycott?

We are boycotting submission of the tests. There are two ways to participate in the boycotts. 1) You may choose not to give the periodic assessments at all or 2) You may choose to give your periodic assessments and not turn in the data. UTLA recognizes and respects that some teachers may find some parts of the periodic assessments useful in helping them understand what their students are learning. It is up to teachers and individual departments to decide upon whether to administer the tests.

Q How long will the boycotts last?

The periodic assessment boycotts will begin on January 27. This boycott is in addition to the boycotts introduced in December & January (boycotts of after school meetings, and Solidarity Tuesdays - signing out together at contractual time). The boycotts will continue until further notice.

Q What would the District save if they eliminated periodic assessments?

The tests cost millions of dollars in contracts with publishers and involve valuable teacher time. Add on the extra out-of-classroom administration to run this program and the cost could be as high as \$150 million when all costs and personnel time are included. These resources should instead be devoted to students in the classroom.

Q What are the risks of participating in the boycotts? Can an administrator write me up?

As boycott activities intensify, it is possible that you could be written up or have your pay docked. Sometimes risks need to be taken for progress to occur. Our greatest protection comes from every one of us participating in the boycotts. Rest assured that UTLA will not sign a contract with LAUSD without a "no reprisal" clause, which

protects all members against any adverse action, including reprimands, suspensions, or termination of employment. UTLA and LAUSD signed off on a “no reprisals” agreement in our most recent contract (2006-2009).

Q What should be my response if my principal asks whether I have given the assessments?

To provide a uniform response, we suggest that both teachers who have not given the tests and those who have opted to give the tests refer the principal to the UTLA Chapter Chair. The Chapter Chair will let the administrator know that UTLA’s position is that “Assessments should be between students and teachers.”

Q As an out-of-classroom member, should I join the boycotts?

Absolutely! You are a member of UTLA and we need every member to join the effort to send a strong message to the District that we will not allow the District to threaten our health care, salaries and working conditions.

Q I am a probationary teacher. Can I participate in the boycotts?

Yes. No UTLA member has ever been terminated or not rehired for participating in UTLA actions. This includes provisional, intern and probationary teachers.

Q Won’t these kinds of actions hurt my students?

Many teachers feel strongly that periodic assessments are actually harmful to students because they:

- Waste instructional time and have little or no instructional value
- Waste teachers’ time to collaborate
- Use valuable resources that could be used for other, more critical needs

Q I have a good relationship with my administrators. Won’t these actions harm our relationship?

The periodic assessment boycotts are not actions against any individual principals or administrators. We encourage Chapter Chairs to meet with principals so that they understand that the action is not directed at them.

Q I am not scheduled to give periodic assessments until late February. What should I do?

We recognize that periodic assessment schedules vary by subject. Members should participate according to your school / department schedule.

Q How do we prepare for the boycott of Periodic Assessments?

Before the boycotts begin, have a chapter meeting to develop a school-wide strategy. Check with your Chapter Chair if you have any questions about the boycotts.

Q How should I explain this boycott to parents?

It is important to communicate with parents, so they understand the issues involved. Explain to parents how you view District periodic assessments. Explain that there are multiple ways to assess student learning and that our boycott of periodic assessments should not interfere with student learning.

Q What should we do if some faculty members don’t observe the periodic assessment boycotts?

In the event that some members do break ranks and do not participate in the boycotts, it would be counterproductive to hassle them. The point is to win them over rather than polarize and divide our members.