

Pearson in the US Myth + Fact

MYTH: Pearson, as a for-profit corporation, has no business operating in the education sector.

FACT: There is a clear role for private businesses-Pearson included-to invest in research; encourage innovation; and increase choice and competition in education. Learners and educators rightly demand that this involvement comes with accountability and transparency – as do shareholders. We’ve even made a public commitment to report on the learning outcomes of our products and services by 2018.

MYTH: Pearson has a near monopoly in education with everything from textbooks to assessments to college materials.

FACT: The education industry today is incredibly diverse, complex and competitive. Pearson is just one of many companies, both for-profit and non-profit, serving public K-12 and higher education institutions. The education industry also includes hundreds of edtech start-ups, philanthropies and other large companies like Apple and Google. The global education market was valued at \$4.5 trillion in 2013 and will hit \$7 or \$8 trillion by 2017. Pearson represents only a fraction of that industry.

MYTH: Pearson spends tens of millions on lobbying, exerting excessive influence on policy.

FACT: We are among the thousands of U.S. organizations- labor unions, corporations, colleges, churches and charities-that engage in political activities. In 2015, Pearson spent less than \$2.5 million on lobbying and political activities. We are vastly outspent by others in the education sector. In comparison, conservative estimates show that the American Federation of Teachers spent more than \$37 million on lobbying and political activities in 2015.

We use our lobbyists to share research and information with policy makers and advocate for equity in education. We do not set policy; rather, our role is to help our customers implement the decisions that come from policy leaders.

MYTH: Pearson supports the Common Core.

FACT: We support high education benchmarks but we also recognize that each state has the right to choose its preferred way to do that-using Common Core standards or not. In fact, we are proud to provide products and services to states that have implemented the Common Core and to those that haven’t.

MYTH: The implementation of the Common Core has been great for Pearson’s business.

FACT: It’s well documented that the implementation of Common Core has been rocky for nearly everyone involved. The assessment market has been up and down, education technology companies have come and gone and it’s hard to know if schools replaced their curriculum materials because of new standards or as part of a regular cycle of updates.



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MYTH: Pearson wins contracts absent a competitive bidding process and fails to meet performance targets.

FACT: Pearson welcomes an open, public and competitive bid process for any contract that we pursue. Each and every state contract is accompanied by a thorough and rigorous review to verify that Pearson meets all of the qualifications needed to create the specific program. We are expected to meet rigorous deadline and implementation targets, and if we fall short in our mission to help our customers achieve their education priorities, then we are held accountable.

MYTH: Pearson spies on students' social media activity.

FACT: Pearson does not monitor the online social media activity of individual students. Like most testing vendors, we do monitor the broader Internet to ensure that test questions are not posted publicly online before all students have taken the test. This is a common sense measure to ensure the fairness of tests while they are in progress.

MYTH: Pearson collects huge amounts of data on students and sells it.

FACT: We do not-and never will- sell any personally identifiable student data or use it to market Pearson's products or services. The data is entrusted to us as a part of our work with schools and is guarded by federal and state laws. Ultimately, states retain control of all student information, including assessment results. We understand that parents and educators take this issue seriously, and so do we. In fact, we consider the protection of education records and personal student information to be a public trust and want to live up to that responsibility.

MYTH: Pearson encourages student over-testing to increase profits.

FACT: At Pearson, we embrace the move to fewer, better assessments. We've been researching and developing better, more effective alternatives to traditional tests for years. In fact, we spend nearly \$1 billion worldwide developing new products and services. We welcome the debate about the appropriate amount of testing, and we think parents, educators and policy makers on the frontlines have valuable insight into this discussion.

MYTH: Pearson imposes gag orders on teachers.

FACT: Unequivocally, there are no "gag orders" in any Pearson contracts. This was an erroneous myth spread by teacher unions and other critics of standardized testing. There is, however, language in many contracts that prevents people from posting test information online or talking about specific test questions while the test is ongoing-a common sense measure to ensure the fairness of the test for all teachers and students.

MYTH: Pearson is not supportive of teachers.

FACT: We believe that teachers play the single most important role in education-globally and in the US. We engage with teachers and school leaders through our daily work. Together, we discuss and develop educational materials, including test questions. We also provide teachers with many resources and services to support them in their classrooms and for their professional development.



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MYTH: Pearson's tests have technical difficulties and have been difficult for students to use.

FACT: We administered approximately 50 million high stakes tests last year in the U.S. and nearly half of those were online. With that volume occasional mistakes will occur, but however rare, it is unacceptable to us. When mistakes do happen, we take immediate responsibility; work to fix the problem quickly and analyse what went wrong so it doesn't happen again.

Myth: Online assessments aren't as effective as paper versions.

FACT: In this digital age, all students deserve access to technology and the advantages that brings with it. Online assessments are effective and necessary because instruction increasingly incorporates the use of technology. We must ensure all students have the experience of computer based learning and assessment. It's a matter of fairness and being college and career ready.

Myth: Pearson relies on assessments for most of its profits.

FACT US student assessments comprise less than 10% of Pearson's global business. While assessments are important for our company and the students who take them, the majority of Pearson's work in the U.S. supports courseware and other education services for K-12 schools, higher education institutions and adult learners.

MYTH: Pearson tests scorers have been hired from places like Craigslist.

FACT: We find applicants through a variety of channels—including traditional job websites and social media sites. Our professional test scorers meet rigorous qualifications, experience a thorough training process, and undergo continuous checks and balances to ensure they're scoring accurately and fairly.

MYTH: Pearson price gouges college students by inflating the cost of college textbooks and course materials.

FACT: We understand students often struggle with the cost of college and are looking for more affordable course materials. That's why Pearson is working very hard to have materials available in multiple formats-including digital and printed loose-leaf formats –so they are more affordable. Right now, materials also are available in a number of different price points to help students.

MYTH: Content in Pearson textbooks and school curriculum is influenced by special interest groups.

FACT: Pearson texts are written by expert author teams, that well regarded in their fields of study and are reviewed by independent, academic reviewers. We are committed to presenting balanced, unbiased, and accurate coverage of all subjects-without influence from outside sources.