

To Whom It May Concern:

On March 30th to April 2nd, 2012, the grassroots education reform organization United Opt Out National (<http://unitedoptout.com>) will be holding an event in Washington, DC called Occupy the DOE. As a collection of teacher educators, K-12 teachers, students and parents from around the country, we ask for your participation and support.

For more than a decade, the reform narrative in education has been dominated by test-based accountability, competition, and punishment. Large foundations and other corporate entities have propagated market-based principles like school choice, pay-for-performance, and for-profit management of schools. Consequently, large amounts of private wealth go towards influencing legislators and other public officials to dismantle public education, ultimately in favor of a private system that can be run for profit.

The key lever is the vaunted score on high-stakes state standardized tests, used to justify a slew of controversial decisions. As a result of ten years of this kind of reform, we are experiencing schools just as segregated by race and social class as they were in the 1950s. We in the United States are also experiencing a teaching profession that is constantly undermined and under attack. The culture of punishment and competition created under No Child Left Behind and now Race to the Top has proven to be a massive failure. Yet, private entities still push for test-based accountability measures despite near-universal opposition from educators and the pile of evidence against it.

In order to grind this failed reform climate to a screeching halt, we at United Opt Out National feel that an ultimate act of civil disobedience is all that we have left. We therefore call upon educators, leaders, parents, and students across our vast public education system to withhold the data by opting out of their state's standardized tests. If policy-makers, legislators, and other officials cannot make responsible decisions based on quantitative data, and if they refuse to appreciate evidence to the contrary, then the only arrow left in our quiver is to simply refuse to hand over the data.

We at United Opt Out National certainly understand the potential consequences of refusing state standardized tests. We appreciate the reluctance of teachers and administrators to engage in an opt-out measure. Various state departments of education and their officials falsely claim that parents do not have the legal right to opt-out, that their refusal to concede to the tests will unfairly punish their children and their schools. While officials might be able to fire teachers, they cannot fire parents. If school systems wish to continue their obsession with test scores, then they must also be prepared to offer alternatives for the growing wave of parents who see test preparation violating their consciences and robbing their children of meaningful educational experiences.

Our Occupy the DOE event will include numerous teach-ins, social events, and actions in protest against test-based and corporate driven education reforms. In preservation of a free and equitable public education, and to support a new direction in education reform, we ask that you strongly consider participating in our event. If you would like any other information, feel free to

contact any one of our administrators through our site at <http://unitedoptout.com>, which provides direct links to our myriad social media accounts, endorsements, readings, and other documentation.

Thank you for your consideration,

United Opt Out National
<http://unitedoptout.com>