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National resolution against high-stakes tests released



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By Valerie Strauss April 24, 2012 [Follow @valeriestrauss](#)

A [national resolution protesting high-stakes standardized testing](#) was released Tuesday by a coalition of national education, civil rights and parents groups, as well as educators who are trying to build a broad-based movement against the Obama administration's test-centric school reform program.

This is the [latest in a series of recent initiatives taken](#) around the country by academics, educators, parents and others to protest the use of student standardized test scores for high-stakes decisions, including teacher and principal evaluation, student grade promotion and high school graduation.

The high-stakes testing era started with the advent of No Child Left Behind in 2002, and though NCLB has largely been discredited, the Obama administration's policies have expanded the use of test scores as assessment tools not only for students, but also for teachers and principals.

Many researchers in the assessment field have warned against using standardized test scores for high-stakes decisions, saying they are unreliable for such a purpose. High-stakes standardized testing, they say, has led to the narrowing of the curriculum; classrooms where "teaching to the test" is paramount; and unfair evaluation of students, teachers, principals and schools.

The resolution (see text below) is modeled on one passed in recent months by



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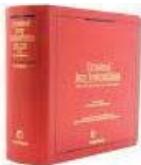
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more than [360 school boards in Texas](#), where the Republican state education commissioner, Robert Scott, made news in February by saying the mentality that standardized testing is the “end-all, be-all” is a “perversion” of what a quality education should be, and calling “the assessment and accountability regime” not only “a cottage industry but a military-industrial complex.”

The organizers want organizations and individuals [to endorse the resolution](#), which asks officials in every state to “reexamine public school accountability systems” and to “develop a system based on multiple forms of assessment which does not require extensive standardized testing” and “more accurately reflects the broad range of student learning.”

The resolution also calls on Congress and the Obama administration to rewrite the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal education law known in its current form as No Child Left Behind, in a way that reduces the mandate for standardized tests, promotes multiple forms of evidence that students are learning and does not mandate that student test scores be used to evaluate educators.

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“Parents are fed up with constant testing,” Pamela Grundy, of Parents Across America, was quoted as saying in a statement. She helped lead a community revolt against expanding testing in Charlotte, N.C., last year. “We want our elected leaders to support real learning, not endless evaluation,” she said.

The national resolution was written by Advancement Project; Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund; FairTest; Forum for Education and Democracy; MecklenburgACTS; Deborah Meier; NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.; National Education Association;

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Already a number of other organizations and individuals from around the country [have signed on to the resolution](#).

In recent months, protests by parents and educators have been increasing in a number of states in addition to Texas, including New York, California and Illinois. This resolution is an effort to make a national statement about the dangers of high-stakes testing that gets the attention of policy makers at the state and federal levels.

Here's the text of the national resolution:

WHEREAS, our nation's future well-being relies on a high-quality public education system that prepares all students for college, careers, citizenship and lifelong learning, and strengthens the nation's social and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, our nation's school systems have been spending growing amounts of time, money and energy on high-stakes standardized testing, in which student performance on standardized tests is used to make major decisions affecting individual students, educators and schools; and

WHEREAS, the over-reliance on high-stakes standardized testing in state and federal accountability systems is undermining educational quality and equity in U.S. public schools by hampering educators' efforts to focus on the broad range of learning experiences that promote the innovation, creativity, problem solving, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and deep subject-matter knowledge that will allow students to thrive in a democracy and an increasingly global society and economy; and

WHEREAS, it is widely recognized that standardized testing is an inadequate and often unreliable measure of both student learning and educator effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, the over-emphasis on standardized testing has caused

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considerable collateral damage in too many schools, including narrowing the curriculum, teaching to the test, reducing love of learning, pushing students out of school, driving excellent teachers out of the profession, and undermining school climate; and

WHEREAS, high-stakes standardized testing has negative effects for students from all backgrounds, and especially for low-income students, English language learners, children of color, and those with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the culture and structure of the systems in which students learn must change in order to foster engaging school experiences that promote joy in learning, depth of thought and breadth of knowledge for students; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that [your organization name] calls on the governor, state legislature and state education boards and administrators to reexamine public school accountability systems in this state, and to develop a system based on multiple forms of assessment which does not require extensive standardized testing, more accurately reflects the broad range of student learning, and is used to support students and improve schools; and

RESOLVED, that [your organization name] calls on the U.S. Congress and Administration to overhaul the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently known as the “No Child Left Behind Act,” reduce the testing mandates, promote multiple forms of evidence of student learning and school quality in accountability, and not mandate any fixed role for the use of student test scores in evaluating educators.

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Valerie Strauss covers education and runs The Answer Sheet blog.

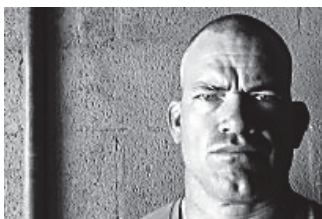
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