



# The Testing Resistance and Reform Movement: A FairTest Report

By Monty Neill, with Lisa Guisbond

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# FairTest

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## Executive Summary

Across the nation, resistance to test overuse and misuse reached unprecedented heights in the spring of 2014. The rapidly growing movement built on significant test opposition [unleashed in 2013](#). This year, resistance erupted in more states with far more participants, and it won [notable victories](#).

To understand how parents, students, educators, community leaders and other allies built the movement, FairTest interviewed more than 30 activists, primarily parents, from across the nation. We also tracked news stories, read research reports and blogs, and talked with policymakers. Here is a summary of our findings, which are explained in more detail in the [full report](#).

### *The Resistance Grows*

In New York, 60,000 children and their parents refused to take federally mandated state tests in grades 3-8 – up from a few thousand in 2013. More than 1000 opted out in both Chicago and Colorado, as well as in smaller numbers in other regions. Teachers boycotted at two schools in Chicago and one in New York City, while high school students in several states walked out on tests.

Opt-outs and boycotts were two of many strategies used by resistance and reform campaigns. The Providence Student Union held creative demonstrations (dressing as guinea pigs, for example, to protest being used in testing experiments) and with allies launched effective legislative work that led to a moratorium on Rhode Island graduation exams. Baltimore teachers wore circus garb and demonstrated at street corners on testing days, holding signs telling officials to “stop clowning around with our kids’ educations.” Across the nation, assessment reformers organized public forums, community meetings and house parties that helped grow the movement. Activists made powerful use of social media – Twitter, Facebook, websites, listservs – to communicate internally, build a base and educate the community. In some places, petitions proved useful tools to inform the public, expand support and pressure public officials, while rallies brought people together in highly visible ways.

The growing resistance was reflected in expanded, often sympathetic mainstream media coverage, from major national papers to local news outlets. FairTest’s weekly compilations of [significant stories](#) helped local activists see they were part of an expanding national movement. The media attention also began to influence policymakers.

Unions stepped up. The National Education Association (NEA) launched a national campaign against [“toxic testing.”](#) The American Federation of Teachers and the NEA are leading [the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools \(AROS\)](#) which involves dozens of national, state and local organizations uniting across a range of issues, including testing.

Some state unions have taken strong steps. The Oklahoma Education Association allied with parent groups to soften grade 3 test-based promotion and helped defeat the pro-testing state education secretary. Oregon and Massachusetts NEA affiliates called for three-year moratoria on all testing consequences to allow time to overhaul state assessment systems. Both support the right of parents to opt out. The Massachusetts Teachers Association is holding testing forums with teachers across the state, and the Oregon Education Association is designing, with state officials, a possible new assessment system. The Chicago Teachers Union helped organize boycotts and opt outs. Parents reported that as they organized, local unions increasingly joined with them to resist the testing onslaught. In many cases parents did not think state unions were very helpful, but they would like to see state unions get involved.

School boards are also resisting test overkill. In Texas, 85% of districts passed a resolution condemning testing for “strangling” education. That set the stage for a 2013 parent-led legislative campaign that rolled back the number of graduation tests from 15 to 5. In New York, about 20 districts refused to administer tests used for the sole purpose of trying out items for the next year’s state exams. Parents prodded the districts and provided legal backing. This fall, the Lee County, Florida, school board voted to opt out of all state-mandated standardized tests. Though it later retreated, that school board and others across the state, together with parent and teacher allies, are pursuing strategies to slash state test requirements, making it easier for districts to reduce their own testing mandates. Lee County’s Board also voted to drop all district-required exams (districts often add many tests to state and federal requirements). Parent groups, anti-common core activists and progressive educators all contributed to this victory.

The first wave of tangible “wins” included many significant steps forward. In the past two years: seven states dropped, reduced or delayed graduation tests; four ended, softened or blocked proposals for grade retention tests; and many states implemented moratoria on the use of student tests to judge teachers and sometimes to judge schools. Moreover, candidates began winning elections on platforms calling for test reduction. (For details, see [Testing Reform Victories: The First Wave](#)). Even Education Secretary Arne Duncan acknowledged test proliferation is “sucking the oxygen” out of classrooms, though to date he has done nothing to alter the situation he helped cause. In many cases, the most important result of the spring actions has been a stronger movement that will keep growing.

## Obstacles

Activists often encountered hostile bureaucratic responses, which tended to be more harsh in lower-income schools and communities, particularly ones that are heavily black or Latino. Chicago authorities bullied parents into rescinding opt-out letters, then interrogated children without parents present when they refused to take the tests. School district officials threatened to fire teachers who boycotted but did not follow through.

Across the nation, some schools and districts forced children who refused the test to “sit and stare,” to remain at their desks doing nothing, sometimes for hours. Parents forced many to back down. Initially, more than half the districts on Long Island, NY, used sit and stare, but parent and union activism pressured all but one into allowing students to read or engage in other learning activities. Some states, including North Carolina, encouraged such humane behavior, and when necessary, parents made sure districts responded properly. But news reports show that sit and state continued in some districts in New York and other states.

Graduation exam requirements are a strong deterrent to high-school opt-outs, because young adults need diplomas, but coalitions of students, parents, educators and civil rights groups have won victories using other tactics, as did the Rhode Island campaign. Similarly, parents whose children risk not being promoted to the next grade must negotiate the threat of test-based retention. In New York City, some middle schools use student test scores to admit students. Some have agreed to halt this test misuse, while pressure continues on others. Ending that requirement makes it easier for parents to opt out.

A year ago, it seemed leaders and parents in many locales were disproportionately white and middle class, though students of color often took the lead in cities and there were active parents of color. This racial imbalance has begun to change. A New York City alliance found that parents and students named testing as the second biggest education problem, after funding. Parents of color stepped forward in leadership roles. These parents participated in boycotts as well as community meetings, house parties and other actions in growing numbers. Other locales continue to report the movement includes relatively fewer lower income/working class parents or parents of color.

Part of the problem is fear of sanctions. Parents and educators are led to believe that their schools will face punishment or lose funding if many students opt out, particularly in schools that receive federal Title I funds, though such claims are mostly [not true](#). Finally, the belief that test-based accountability will help persists in some areas. Parent activists across the country report that this perception is changing, however, as parents in general increasingly see the destructive consequences of test mania.

Finally, in what is both an opportunity and a challenge, the testing resistance and reform movement pulls in parents and community members coming from widely varying political perspectives, from Tea Party to Bad Ass Teachers and United Opt Out. These groups share opposition to test misuse and overuse, but must negotiate

how to prevent differences on other issues from undermining assessment reform campaigns. In some places, alliances that cut across normal political lines are functioning well. In others, groups are working in parallel, at times uneasily.

### ***What next?***

The assessment reform movement needs to expand. At the same time it must focus its momentum to win more tangible victories. The ultimate goal remains dramatically reducing the amount of testing, ending high stakes uses, and overhauling assessment systems. While progress has been made, much more must be done. Several bills in the U.S. House would [cut back NCLB-mandated testing](#). More states could drop graduation tests. Grade promotion exams need to be challenged. Some districts are reducing the number of required tests, though many test most grades a dozen or more times a year. Parents across the country are also pushing for laws protecting the right to opt their children out of tests, as California law already allows.

Activists know assessment is valuable for teaching and learning. Limited use of no-stakes standardized exams could be acceptable as one part of a comprehensive system. But tests alone are too narrow and provide too little information about the full range of student learning and school performance that parents and the public need. There are [better ways to assess and evaluate](#) schools, educators and children. To move beyond testing overkill, activists will have to win major changes in federal and state law as well as local policy. FairTest has called for an [indefinite moratorium](#) on accountability testing to allow time to develop new assessments that build from the classroom out.

Those wins will not happen without a greatly expanded movement. Local groups are developing strategies and implementing plans for the 2014-2015 school year. Many have already launched fall actions such as forums, petitions, and school board resolutions. Having more office-holders who support the test reform movement will help. Some who are campaigning on test reform platforms will win office, but it is essential to persuade more politicians to alter their positions. Activists know that large numbers of opt outs can render testing data unusable as well as intensify pressure on politicians to act. Many people, however, cannot opt out, so organizers are developing more ways for people to become involved. These include school board resolutions and petitions, as well as rallies and community meetings.

FairTest is confident that the testing resistance and reform movement will expand in size, reach and power. The road will not be easy. Our allies face well-funded, deeply entrenched forces. Though test-and-punish proponents are engaged in tactical retreats in some jurisdictions – supporting brief suspensions of testing requirements, for example – they will doubtlessly try other strategies to control education through testing.

We cannot afford to relax the pressure on policy makers. By building larger, stronger, grassroots campaigns, assessment reformers will remain on track to win many more victories in the coming years.

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## INTRODUCTION

The relentless expansion of testing, coupled with high stakes, and the resulting damage parents see inflicted on their children has fueled the rapid rise of campaigns to roll back the overuse and misuse of standardized tests. Saying “Enough is enough!” a national movement erupted across the nation over the past two years. Its core demands are simple and clear:

- Sharply reduce the amount of standardized tests;
- Eliminate high-stakes uses of those tests; and
- Implement educationally sound assessments such as performance assessments.

FairTest has supported and tracked the growth of the movement. Last year, we issued a [brief report based on interviews with 11 activists in 8 locales plus news stories and other documents](#). This year, we interviewed more than 30 people in more locales, primarily parents but also teachers and students, who have built campaigns in their community or state. We monitored the voluminous quantity of news stories (we compile a [weekly summary](#)) and obtained many flyers, announcements and other pieces of information by and about the movement.

The primary goal of this report is to help activists learn from one another, to strengthen the movement by summarizing and sharing the experience and knowledge gained by parents, teachers, students and other community members from across the nation. We hope this report will be valuable for people who are organizing testing resistance and reform campaigns.

The report has three main sections and attachments:

- I. A description of what the movement has done to grow so rapidly. We discuss the wide range of actions employed while focusing particularly on “opt out/boycott/refuse” campaigns.
- II. A discussion of obstacles and problems the movement has encountered and how activists are addressing these issues.

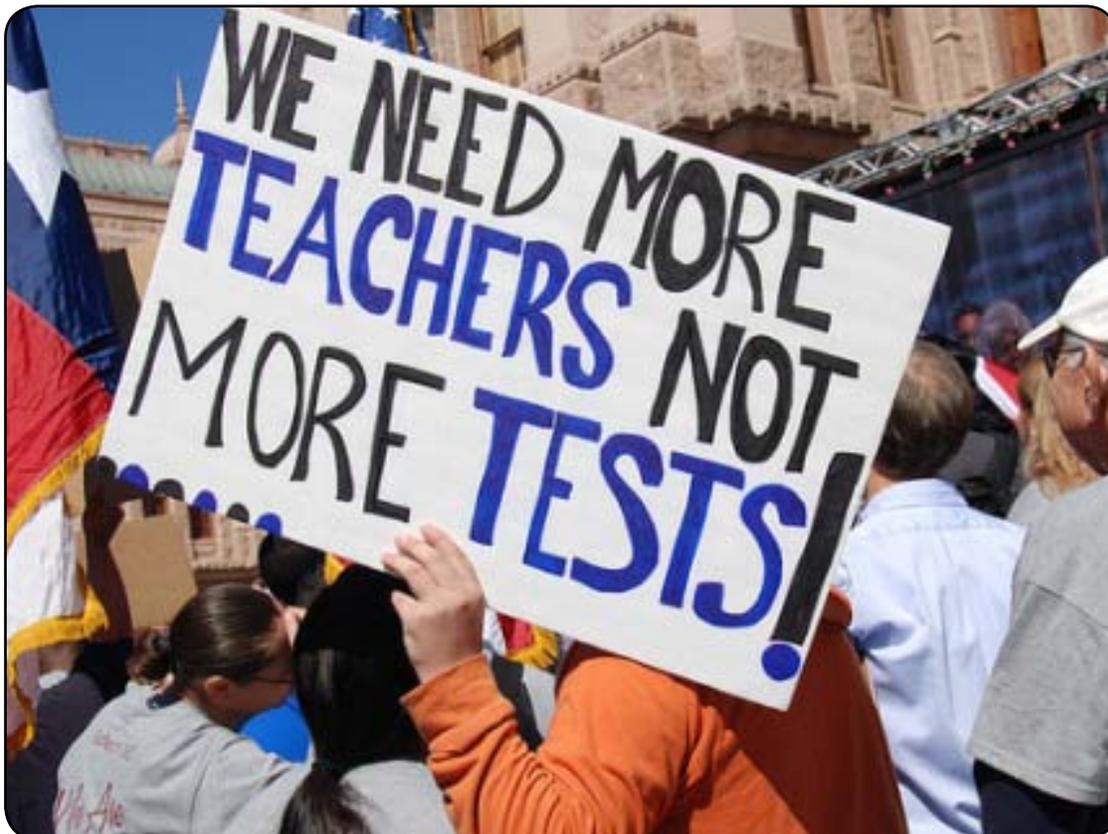
III. A look at concrete victories (which we discussed in more depth in our report [Testing Reform Victories: The First Wave](#)), followed by a discussion of what activists see as their next steps and their paths to victory.

IV. An attached list of interviewees, their organizations, web and Facebook pages.

V. References and links to websites and articles cited in this report.

The summary version of this report is [available separately](#).

FairTest and the many activist groups across the country believe the movement will continue to grow rapidly. We recognize that only strong campaigns can roll back the excessive, destructive use of standardized tests. We need new state and federal laws, so we look for allies and supporters in state legislatures and in Congress, as well as among Governors. But they are unlikely to win major changes without a mobilized populace. FairTest also calls for [an indefinite moratorium on accountability testing in order to design and implement educationally sound assessments](#) from the classroom out rather than top down.



Teachers rally in Texas to put resources into education, not tests. Photo Credit: National Education Association

## I. THE MOVEMENT BUILDS

In the spring of 2014, an estimated 60,000 parents refused the tests in New York (5% of the state's students in grades 3-8), more than 1000 opted out in Chicago, and across Colorado more than 1400 boycotted. Parents and students opted out in many other states. Meanwhile, people organized to roll back testing in more than half the states, using public forums, social and traditional media campaigns, rallies, petitions and legislative efforts, as well as boycotts. This represents a major expansion from spring 2013; for example, there were 10 times as many refusers in New York this year compared with last.

Awareness of the extent and impact of testing propelled people into action. Jeanette Deutermann from Long Island, NY, said, "Last February (2013), I started looking into high stakes testing. I was having trouble with my own son, seeing first-hand what all this does to a fourth grader. In that grade, test prep started in the beginning of the year. Then the elementary school offered early a.m. test prep classes for ages 7 and up. We were supposed to come in for an hour on Tuesday and Thursday. It started in January for the test in March. The test prep was the



Lobbying for testing reform in Colorado. Photo Credit: Victoria Cantor.

straw that broke the camel’s back. I stumbled on a Refuse NY Facebook page talking about refusing the test. I started researching and it turned into a complete obsession.”

Eric Mihelbergel, from western New York, similarly said, “In September 2012, my kids came home telling me they were taking fill-in-the-bubble tests in art, music and gym. My head started spinning.” This contradicted his beliefs about education. “It’s not what I want for my kids.” He began talking to everyone from local authorities to staff at the U.S. Department of Education, discussions that made him more, not less concerned. He too became an activist.

The sheer volume of testing propelled many parents. Chicago’s Nellie Cotton said, “All the testing and test prep leaves about 10 days a month to actually learn at my school, and those aren’t all whole days.”

***“People won’t travel. Bringing it to them was really important. We did over 50 events over 6 months.”***

***- Jeanette Deutermann***

Though often newcomers to organizing, dedicated parent leaders quickly learned how to forge

effective organizations. Deutermann and her close colleagues built a powerful network that led to a refusal rate of 10 percent on Long Island. Her organization’s work combined community forums and use of media leading up to the boycott.

She explained that, using a Facebook page, “I started to meet with parents. I said I would come to your house. I’d be invited for a wine and cheese thing. A friend who was a teacher would come with me. I’d talk to 10 or 15 parents. They would immediately tell a bunch of their friends.

“I asked for liaisons, one or two people from each district. Go-to people for ideas. I created a separate Facebook page with those people. Now it’s up to 110, 120 liaisons. This is a secret, closed page. Best thing I ever did. It really launched Long Island into ridiculous numbers. They started all their own FB pages.”

Around the nation, activists are using similar forms of networking for their own situations.

She added, “People won’t travel. Bringing it to them was really important. We did over 50 events over 6 months. At one point, two months before the test, we were doing three a week. Go out and get list of speakers. Set a date. Set up the panel. We used town halls, libraries. There are all sorts of free places you can have meetings. Knights of Columbus. Firehouses. Nice places. \$50 fee. Minimal. Everybody chips in a little to pay for the place.”

“House parties” were sometimes viewed as safer spaces than public forums. Chicago parent Nellie Cotton said, “We have had house parties in the southwest. Even when people attend forums, they mostly don’t want to speak or ask questions for fear it will get back to the principal. They are cautious. At one forum, some spoke, other parents called afterwards and wanted to talk in small groups, over coffee and such. That is how we built the opt out. People are afraid to talk beyond their small group. The forums are more to show people we are out there. We encourage and support them and offer resources.”

Meeting in private spaces and developing as a group creates the support to act more publicly. Thus, the two forms can support one another. Brooklyn, NY, parent Janine Sopp with the organization Change the Stakes, observed, “We brought teachers, parents and principals to present at forums, inform parents on issues and of their right to opt out. We also used forums to identify potential activists to work with. But we are doing additional informal meetings this summer and fall.”

Advocates commonly emphasized that they must go into the communities, they cannot expect people to come to them. Jane Hirschmann from New York City’s Time Out from Testing said, “Organize where people live, not just in schools.” She described being called in late spring by parents in a Queens housing project. “They were just beginning to organize parents from the project where their children attend many different schools. A forum is being planned for the fall at a nearby church.” In Chicago, where parents and educators began with citywide forums, parent-led More than a Score (MTAS) is now holding smaller gatherings in communities across the city.

However, in more rural or small city areas, one central location may work, particularly if parents and teachers see it as a safe place. Plattsburgh, NY, organizers used the state university, where some of them worked, because it was away from specific schools and towns. Plattsburgh itself had a supportive superintendent and a 50% refusal rate.

Local New York organizers were able to rely on key activists from other communities to help them. Long Island Principal Carol Burris explained, “In the fall and spring, we sponsored a series of forums for parents all over the state. I focused on the tests themselves, achievement gap, poor construction. Jeanette would talk about how to opt out. Other presenters each took a piece of the pie.”

***“Almost 4000 people like our Facebook page, but we reach another 20,000 to 30,000 people a week on Facebook because those who like the page share our messages with their networks.”***  
***- Julia Sass Rubin***

Plattsburgh organizers used videoconferencing to enable NYSAPE leaders from other parts of the state, as well as FairTest, to help local people at a public forum see they were not alone and to obtain action ideas they could consider.

Together, forums and house parties were utilized in most states and localities across the nation, but some people relied mainly on social media. Edy Chamness from Texas explained, “Community forums and meetings don’t attract people. We organized largely via social media, Facebook and Twitter, plus our website.” Indeed, social media, especially Facebook, was a key tool. Julia Sass Rubin from Save Our Schools NJ (SOSNJ) said, “Almost 4000 people like our Facebook page, but we reach another 20,000 to 30,000 people a week on Facebook because those who like the page share our messages with their networks.” United Opt Out NJ (UOONJ) added 1100 new people to its Facebook group this year. Opt Out Orlando said, “Most of what we do has been on Facebook. We also started a blog for those not on Facebook.” Nationally, the Bad Ass Teachers Association (BATS) began as a Facebook group, then grew into also supporting local and state actions on the ground. Seattle activist teachers found BATS to be well organized in Washington state.

***“We brought teachers, parents and principals to present at forums, inform parents on issues and of their right to opt out. We also used forums to identify potential activists to work with.”***

***- Janine Sopp***

Using social media has its complications. Establishing ground rules and closely monitoring pages can be essential, advocates said, to ensure discussions stay on target and avoid nastiness that can drive people away. Jeanette Deutermann: “This is political, but I worked to keep it as nonpolitical as I could. I set up rules for the page. No teacher bashing. I would take down attacks.” Organizers also have used private Facebook pages for internal communications, as well as listservs and other media.

Activists employed additional social media tools. UOONJ “created a google form so those who did opt out could post about their experience. We got 300 parents to participate.” A New York activist had access to school listservs of parents through her job, and had a supportive superintendent, so she used that list to disseminate information.

Parents who are teachers often played a vital role. “At schools where, say, 150 kids turned in opt out letters, it was usually due to teachers organizing,” explained

Chicago parent Cassie Creswell. “Teachers who are also public school parents can speak with authority, and they can speak as parents even if they feel threatened as teachers.”

***“Parents had Time Out From Testing meet with teachers during lunch break and won them over.”***

***- Jane Hirschmann***

According to Jane Hirschmann of TOFT, “In one school, parents had Time Out From Testing meet with teachers during lunch break and won them over. At parents night, we had a table peopled by the parents in the school and two representatives from TOFT (one Spanish speaking). Teachers asked the parents to stop by the table for information. We got nearly 100% opting out.”

Jeanette Deutermann explained, “Union people are parents. In forums, you have teachers in the audience who will speak out, teachers who stand up and say, ‘I’m telling you this is what’s happening in my classroom. This is not good for your kids.’ Teachers are being silenced in their classrooms, but can they speak out in their own districts. Half of our liaisons are teachers. The more that do speak up, the more that will.”

“Teachers are involved because they are parents and because they are sick of it,” added Florida’s Sandy Stenoff. “They can’t speak out publicly so we speak for them if they ask us or allow it. We’ll put stuff out anonymously.” This can be particularly important in states where teachers lack union protections, though even in stronger union states teachers fear retaliation in an era of high stakes.

Both parents and teachers often need safe places to talk. Teachers sometimes want to talk with one another first. Parents may take the lead in reaching out, or the reverse. The Massachusetts Teachers Association, led by new President Barbara Madeloni, is helping union locals organize meetings of teachers to safely discuss testing. In some communities, teachers are already prepared to reach out to parents and others.

Parents can support teacher actions. In her [report on the Chicago teachers’ test boycott](#), Michelle Gunderson quoted teacher Erin Franzinger: “Most of the students were opted out even before teachers voted to boycott. This wasn’t teachers working in isolation – this was a whole community effort.”

Students too can help organize. Plattsburgh organizers explained, “Kids circulated

info, especially eighth grade leaders. One from middle school lives in the projects and distributed letters to parents. But the main vehicle was high school students.” In Chicago, representatives from student groups organized support for the teacher boycott. Students in a few high schools organized walkouts in 2013 and 2014.

Administrators also matter. Janine Sopp observed, “Schools with large numbers of opt outs have had supportive principals. Even where we have had strong parents, repressive principals keep numbers down.”

***“Teachers who are also public school parents can speak with authority, and they can speak as parents even if they feel threatened as teachers.”***

***- Cassie Creswell***

There were many other actions, such as:

- “Last summer, we designed and printed lawn signs that say, ‘Parents: Refuse NY State Tests,’” said Eric Mihelbergel. Each region puts its own web site address on the signs. We sold them at cost. It really caught on. People on LI, Albany, Syracuse, it circulated across the state really fast and helped jump-start the movement. I was the distributor for western NY. I set up one night a week when people could pick up the signs.”
- For nearly a decade, Colorado’s Coalition for Better Education has purchased billboards opposing test misuse and calling for opt outs. This year they hope to raise funds for three, in different parts of the state. (*For examples, see [Colorado Coalition for Better Education](#).*)
- Baltimore teachers stood on street corners this spring wearing circus garb and holding signs that said, “Stop clowning around with our kids’ educations.”
- Organizers on occasion used petitions as a means to inform people, gather contact information, and convey views to authorities. A 2012-13 resolution adopted by more than 85% of Texas school boards marked an important step forward for that state’s testing reform movement.
- Organizers used rallies and demonstrations effectively to provide support to boycotters or pressure authorities. Janine Sopp reported, “In NYC, parents and teachers held a cascade of rallies at their schools following the ELA exam to protest the poor quality of the tests.”

Virtually all groups made use of mainstream media as one tool to educate the public. Providence Student Union’s Zack Mezera observed, “Actions - like having adults take a sample of Rhode Island’s exit exam - were fun, but their

primary point was to get the issue of high-stakes testing into the news so more and more people talked about it. As PSU's 'More than a Test Score' campaign progressed, one could see a sea change in public perception of high-stakes testing, including in the comments in *The Providence Journal* other media outlets. When our campaign started, people often complained about how young people needed to just work harder, needed to 'man up,' needed to stop protesting and start studying. A couple of years and a diligent strategic advocacy campaign later, most comments are in favor of students and performance-based assessments. The public now sees how high-stakes testing is both unjust and ineffective. So students used traditional media to chip away at the policy, action after action, press release after press release, speech after speech."



Providence students rally. Photo Credit: Providence Student Union.

A press conference by opting out Harlem parents showed that opting out was not simply a "white" thing, as did a near universal test refusal by diverse parents at Castle Bridge elementary in northern Manhattan.

Blogging was also a valuable tool. The indefatigable [Diane Ravitch](#) reaches 20,000 people. Long Island Principal Carol Burris blogs regularly for [The Washington Post's Answer Sheet](#), on which host Valerie Strauss publishes test reform activists from across the nation. Providing a fast, often efficient way to circulate information, engaging and informative bloggers are cropping up in states across the nation.

United Opt Out relied heavily on its website, which contains opt out guides for many states. Peggy Robertson explained, "Our [50-state guide](#) changed everything this past year. People felt able to refuse because they had the specifics for their state. Now, we're updating all of them. Seventy people helped us in various states with the guides to prep for an onslaught of opting out next year."

FairTest disseminates [a weekly compilation of stories, Testing Resistance & Reform News](#). Advocates said this was a valuable way to stay abreast of developments, to see themselves as part of a larger movement and thus lift their spirits.

### ***The Chicago Teachers Union Boycott***

In 2013, Seattle teachers boycotted the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests at a series of schools. The administration dropped the test from the high schools, and no teachers suffered punishments.

In 2014, teachers boycotted tests at two Chicago schools and one in New York City. Again, there have been no consequences, despite Chicago authorities threatening to fire boycotters.

Norine Gutekanst, a Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) organizer and long-time teacher, described the boycott:

***“We positioned the CTU as promoting letting our teachers teach, and not just spending time doing test prep and administering tests.”***  
**-Norine Gutekanst**

*In September and*

*October 2013, we met with MTAS and the union agreed to do a mini-campaign on testing. District CEO Barbara Byrd Bennett had claimed CPS [Chicago Public Schools] had reduced amount of tests, but the number was still astronomical [e.g., up to 20 in grade 2], so we exposed that.*

*Then at end of the first term, CPS dropped the benchmark tests on schools. They already had administered the REACH teacher evaluation testing. CTU said publicly that CPS had not reduced testing and had imposed another meaningless test.*

*We launched the “Let Us Teach” campaign and promoted opting out. We could not shut the benchmarks down, but gave members ideas. Some principals did drop the benchmarks, but mostly that effort was not successful.*

*Through the launch of this campaign we began to raise awareness of the excessive tests — among our membership and outward to the general public. We positioned the CTU as promoting letting our teachers teach,*

*and not just spending time doing test prep and administering tests. In strategic terms, we want parent opt outs and teacher boycotts. Inside CTU, members were willing and ready to talk. Our president, Karen Lewis, said, 'It would be good for teachers to boycott.'*

*In January, we saw CPS would give ISAT [Illinois Standard Achievement Tests] in March. We ramped up the rhetoric about how it is a useless test [the state was no longer requiring it]. Saucedo teachers voted unanimously to boycott, and Drummond had a majority. There were 2000-2500 signed opt out letters from parents. We encouraged CTU members to pass out opt-out letters. A lot of them were going out. Area superintendents resisted, so CTU told teachers to do it before and after school.*

*It was tumultuous and divided some schools, such as Drummond. Saucedo is united and strong. A few probationary teachers did not boycott, so they would not lose their jobs, as they lacked tenure protection. The other teachers said, 'Protect yourselves.'*

*Principals were told to call their parents to get them to rescind their opt-out letters. There was harassment of parents and students. Some students were coerced into taking the test. Parents were talked out of opting out their children.*

*The more working class schools had the screws put to them; middle class schools were more likely to allow opting out.*

*[Note: Parent activist Nellie Cotton said, "The school in my area with the most opt-out sign-ups was 47. Each parent was called by the principal and asked why. Teachers were told to persuade parents, and if the teacher failed it was held against her."]*

*[Note: CPS estimates 1000 children opted out across some 90 schools. Parents and teachers also reported that staff from the central office went to schools. They talked to children without parents present, trying to get them to say the teachers talked them into boycotting.]*

*We launched into protection mode. We had a rally to support Saucedo. There has been no retaliation to date. It is a big victory that our members were not disciplined – we were credibly able to show that they were really fighting for more instructional time for their students. Also, the large*

***"There were 2000-2500 signed opt out letters from parents."  
-Norine Gutekanst***

*number of opt-outs was another big victory. We raised a lot of awareness among parents, the public, students, and teachers.*

*After that, we felt that we could not do another boycott right away. We had to protect the teachers who had boycotted. So CPS schools all administered MAP tests. The MAP tests are high stakes for teachers, schools and students.*

(For another valuable story on the boycott, see [Gunderson's blog.](#))

## **Statewide Organizing**

The 2013 Texas victory illustrated the power of parents to win legislative changes. Already inundated with high-stakes testing, the state planned to expand to 15 the number of end-of-course tests used for graduation. This pushed parents and educators over the edge. School boards across the state approved a resolution charging that testing was “strangling” education. A group of mothers formed Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA), which came to be known as “Mothers Against Drunk Testing.” Working nearly full time for 18 months, they spearheaded statewide organizing that culminated in a law rolling back the amount of tests to five – which they view as five too many. They built an alliance that included education groups, some of which worked mainly behind the scenes.

Dineen Majcher described their work: “TAMSA has had hundreds of meetings with Texas legislators and key policy makers such as the Governor’s staff, and Texas Education Agency staff. TAMSA has testified before both the Texas House Public Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee on many occasions. We also coordinated parents and students from across the state to come to testify and meet with members. TAMSA leaders have given many public presentations to school, parent and education groups explaining the current education system and making proposals for a new system. We have met with many stakeholders across the state. TAMSA also



Chicago rally, May 20, 2010. Photo Credit: Sarah Rhee.

organized several all-day policy meetings with key stakeholders to work together throughout the legislative session to develop consistent policy positions. In addition, we drafted many policy papers, conducted research on testing in other states, and met with editorial boards. We utilized social networking extensively including a [web page](#), Facebook and Twitter.”

Testing reform efforts have already won important victories in some states, particularly over graduation and grade promotion exams (see below, and [Victories](#) report). Increasingly, legislators recognize they will have to respond to growing parent and educator resistance to the overuse and misuse of standardized tests. These gains are the largely result of organizing and lobbying. Groups in New York and New Jersey, for example, raised funds to purchase systems to automatically send emails to authorities.

As New York experienced a surge of test refusals in 2013, local activists saw the need to create a state alliance. Lisa Rudley described New York State Allies for Public Education (NYSAPE) as “an umbrella of 50 groups with a parent-driven steering committee, some education organizations, from all over the state – local school parents, local unions, other groups like FairTest or Class Size Matters. The aim is to centralize state-level actions while encouraging local autonomy.”

***“The aim is to centralize state-level actions while encouraging local autonomy.”  
- Lisa Rudley***

The statewide effort had an impact. When the terms of four Regents (the state board of education) expired, NYSAPE launched a state campaign to block their reappointment. Carol Burris: “They were shocked with our throw out the Regents campaign. One described it as brilliant. No one had paid attention before.” The group also gathered media attention when it called for the removal of the State Commissioner, John King, as did the state teachers union. While the efforts did not produce immediate victories, they raised the profile of the movement. Another statewide action that organizers view as a breakthrough moment was when nearly 20 New York districts refused to administer “field tests” whose sole purpose is to try out questions for next year’s state exam. Lisa Rudley emphasized, “In five years, looking back, we will see it as key moment in the pushback.”

This step was also largely a result of parent organizing. Jeanette Deutermann: “We told all liaisons to put in requests to districts to do this. We had legal teams

working on whether they were required to administer this field test, four parents who were lawyers. They compiled info and sent out to the districts saying, you don't technically have to give it. There is no statute that says this. All we needed was a handful to agree, then could get more on board. Got my district, my sister's district, it grew and grew, including some big districts across state. Ossining sent the PARCC field tests back. The state made threats and a few backed down, but the rest called their bluff." Thus far, the districts have suffered no consequences.

Local groups were at times able to move their state government. The Providence Student Union played a central role in winning a three-year state moratorium from the about-to-be-implemented graduation exam. Over several years, explained Aaron Regunberg and Zack Mezera, PSU students engaged in research, held teach-ins at schools, and, said Zack, organized a "zombie march to bring attention to the zombifying effects of the tests and teaching to the tests, with the implication that not being allowed to graduate is like taking away their life." PSU also conducted a take-the-test day for 50 prominent adults, 60% of whom failed. Among other rallies, they dressed as guinea pigs demanding not to be treated as lab animals, and "in classic PSU style, wore graduation robes in the legislature as a dramatization of what would happen if they did not pass the bill." PSU engaged in ongoing work with legislators to win them over. They had state organizations as allies, particularly the RI Civil Liberties Union (which has regularly taken up testing issues). State Education Commissioner Deborah Gist led the fight against the moratorium, but when it won, she changed her tune and proposed extending the delay until 2020.

Colorado activists in the counties around Denver likewise have built vehicles for coordinated activities in the region or targeted at state government. Other states seem more loosely networked, such as Florida, where local groups are rapidly gaining strength.

In Florida, the movement leaped forward in late August as the Lee County School



The PSU held a "zombie" rally to dramatize how graduation testing kills educational and life opportunities. Photo Credit: Providence Student Union.

Board became the first in the nation to vote (3-2) to opt out of state testing. Days later, under great pressure from the state, the district Superintendent, and the media, the board reversed itself (also 3-2). Lee County teachers and parents acted in force to support the opt-out resolution, such as by packing school board meetings. Allies included the parent-led Teaching Not Testing, as well as anti-Common Core groups and progressive educators. Attention then shifted to the Florida School Boards Association and a resolution calling on the state to allow students to opt out of tests without penalty, which FSBA first passed then retracted for reconsideration. A set of urban districts then approved a strong resolution. Meanwhile, [Orlando Opt Out](#) helped build 15 chapters in other school districts. Then the Lee County Board took the important step of halting all the district-mandated tests. In many cases, districts mandate many additional tests as they strive to ensure their students do well on the state exams.

The Vermont State Board of Education also approved a resolution against federal policy. Vermont had sought a waiver that would allow them to test less, but Secretary Arne Duncan denied it. Some activists wonder whether additional state boards might do the same, starting a reform alliance among them, while others think they are unlikely to do so.

In some instances, state organizations with local chapters provide the main organizational structure. SOSNJ has more than 21,000 members as well as nearly 90 volunteer organizers, who live all over the state. The volunteer organizers formulate policies, take part in actions, and communicate regularly via conference calls and email. United Opt Out NJ also has a statewide network; the two groups communicate with each other and with a broad network of other grassroots groups across the state.

In other cases, however, local groups had trouble moving to the state level despite intentions to do so. Chicago's More Than a Score had a legislative strategy, including an opt-out bill, but that work stayed on back burner as they focused on priority battles in Chicago.

## **Unions**

FairTest's review of the growing movement finds that parents have played the primary role, particularly around opting out and building community-based power, but local and sometimes state teacher unions have often provided important support. The Chicago Teachers Union took a leading role (as in the Chicago boycotts described above). In general, national, state and local unions are

increasingly stepping forward.

The Oklahoma Education Association illustrates a union actively collaborating with education and civic groups on testing reform. Its core goals include “Eliminating high stakes tests for students, teachers and/or school districts.” OEA led successful campaigns to halt the use of tests to determine promotion from the third grade and to defeat the re-election effort of state Superintendent Janet Barresi.

According to President Linda Hampton, they allied with VOICE (Voices Organized in Civic Engagement, affiliated with the community organizing network Industrial Areas Foundation), co-founded the Oklahoma Education Coalition, a statewide coalition of nine organizations, and “have developed great connections with some parent groups in the Tulsa area and the Oklahoma City area called PLAC – Parent Legislative Action Committee.”

Many unions are only beginning to build activist, organizing relationships. Seattle teacher Jesse Hagopian said, “We [the union] need to deepen our relationships with parents in more formal, ongoing meetings, something like that. I think the unions being so timid is a big problem. Instead of our energy being used to organize campaigns against testing, energy is spent trying to get the union to do something. I do see a real opportunity to knit together the dissident union factions and have more sustained work.”

As Hagopian has pointed out, it takes consistent effort over time to unite education and community organizations on common issues. The current leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union simultaneously built unity within the union and with the community, leading to large majority support for its 2013 strike and then the testing boycotts this spring.

Several New York activists described how they steadily built relations with



Seattle teachers waged a successful boycott against MAP tests.  
Photo Credit: Scrap the MAP.

local unions so that by spring the union supported parent refusals. Plattsburgh organizers said that, at the start, the union was on the sideline, but became steadily more engaged and provided some funding. Jeanette Deutermann explained that she grew close with local presidents. “It really, really helps. They help spread word.” Bianca Tanis noted that the positive relations on Long Island are “off the charts.” She said the leader of the local union in New Paltz (not on Long Island) wrote a letter in support of parents, and the vice-president opted his kids out.

Meanwhile, teachers organized within unions. Colorado teachers created RAVE. And in Massachusetts, Educators for a Democratic Union (EDU) helped Barbara Madeloni win an upset race for president of the NEA affiliate in large part due to her opposition to the overuse and misuse of tests.

Parent activists generally did not see state teacher unions as important supporters; most said their primary relationships were with locals. One parent concern is that state actions such as deferring the use of student scores in judging teachers, which the parents support, does not however reduce the over-testing and high stakes for children.

Parents are looking for a strong union presence on the issue, even where they seek to maintain separate identities to avoid accusations of simply being union pawns. In some cases, parents said, state unions are now taking stronger positions. Both the Oregon Education Association and the Massachusetts Teachers Association passed resolutions this spring that explicitly support parent resistance. Both also called for a three-year moratorium, not to then impose new state tests but rather to use the time to create new systems that support high-quality teaching and learning.

Finally, the national unions are stepping up. In late 2013, the American Federation of Teachers, with support from the National Education Association and other nation, state and local groups, launched the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools ([AROS](#)). In July 2014, the NEA voted to launch a campaign against “[Toxic Testing](#).” Both condemned Education Secretary Arne Duncan for escalating the use and consequences of standardized tests. Both unions have explicitly supported the right of parents to opt out and are increasing their support for state and local actions. This is fueled in part by strong opposition to the use of student scores to judge teachers, but union efforts now clearly oppose the overuse and misuse of tests in general.

## II: GROWING PAINS AND OBSTACLES

Building a movement is not simple. Not only is the learning curve steep for new organizers (many of whom are succeeding brilliantly), but there are various obstacles and complications. Parents often lack information. They and teachers fear opposition and repercussions from authorities. Moreover, as testing reform movements build, they have to confront entrenched race and class isolation and social divisions, making it at times difficult for parents of one group to connect with another. Repression hits low-income schools most harshly. Nonetheless, people are finding ways to overcome obstacles and advance the movement, providing important lessons for the next phase of growth.

### *Lack of Information, Disinformation and Fear*

“Just getting other parents to take a little time to look at what’s happening... Everybody’s so busy. All have kids, jobs, activities,” noted Eric Mihelbergel. Jeanette Deutermann added, “It’s scary. Parents are not used to fighting. Not used to being activists.”

Cassie Creswell from Chicago said, “For many young parents and teachers, testing is the air they grew up in, so they accept it: ‘have to have tests’ and ‘how do we know what is happening?’ They don’t know about alternatives and think having a number (a rating) is important.” Still, union activists say that young teachers have in places been leaders in opposing the tests and wanting the union to take a stronger stance.

***“My school tells parents the school will lose a lot of money. It’s not true, but the principal says it and parents believe it.”  
- Nellie Cotton***

And Texas parent Edy Chamness observed, “Parents are usually horrified when they hear what’s going on.” When Chicago More than a Score launched a petition in spring 2013, parent organizers approached parents as they dropped their kids off at school. Parents had little idea of the testing situation. They typically were unhappy and angry when they were informed, and signed the petitions, providing MTAS with a growing list of contacts.

Janine Sopp from New York’s Change the Stakes observed, “Many parents, especially lower income and of color, have or had no idea they could opt out. In those schools, there also may be awards for doing well on tests. Parents don’t want to take that away.”

It is not just lack of information, it is also disinformation: “My school tells parents the school will lose a lot of money,” said Chicago’s Nellie Cotton. “It’s not true, but the principal says it and parents believe it. Also, they say that we won’t know how well we are doing and we won’t know how to help the students. We need to figure what to do so parents don’t follow it.”

Bianca Tanis said, “If schools are Title I, it is very threatening to be told, ‘you will lose Title I money’ if you boycott.” Lisa Rudley added, “Districts are afraid of losing money, of sanctions. Getting a bad report card scares administrators.”

***“Parents are not used to fighting. Not used to being activists.”***

***-Jeanette Deutermann***

In response, NYSAPE posted a detailed explanation of why the fear or threat of losing funding is incorrect because New York has a federal waiver from No Child Left Behind. In essence, most schools no longer face sanctions. In non-waiver states, a school which does not test 95% of its students in each countable demographic group automatically fails to make “adequate yearly progress.” Those schools may have to spend some federal Title I funds on after-school “tutoring” and could face additional sanctions in future years, but their Title I funds are not cut. In any event, nearly 100% of schools are now “failing” in non-waiver states, so that opting out does not worsen the situation. (For more details on this issue, see [“Why You Can Boycott Standardized Tests Without Fear of Federal Penalties to Your School.”](#))

Threats extend to parents and children directly. New Jersey activist Jean McTavish said, “I got threatened with being reported to the Division for Youth Services for ‘educational neglect.’” It did not deter her.

Nellie Cotton from Chicago described her experience. “They know how to keep people in line, but it did not work on me. The Network superintendent threatened to call DCFS [Department of Children and Family Services] because I called her out at the Board of Ed. I later found out that this is a common threat at schools. They did call. At first I thought I would just drop everything. But then I got angry. If it happened to me, it can happen to anyone, and what of the parents that aren’t as vocal as I am? So I told lots of people. It was all over social media and some local independent papers, but big media did not pick it up. I was investigated. The case worker agreed they were crazy, that the call and the case were unfounded. There are lots of threats. People are scared.”

Cassie Creswell, also from Chicago, added, “Schools with more ELLs and poor kids were more likely to try to block opting out, though some schools with that composition were OK to opt out. We saw just as many cases of misinformation being spread at schools with demographics of higher income, fewer students of color, but we didn’t see the cases of widespread coercion, threats, bullying, and retribution.”

Schools and districts have at times administered tests to children despite parent opt-out requests and do not necessarily inform the parents ahead of time. When schools agree to allow a refusal, they sometimes mandate “sit and stare,” in which children who refuse testing are forced to sit with nothing to do in the testing room.

***“Schools with more ELLs and poor kids were more likely to try to block opting out, though some schools with that composition were OK to opt out.”***

***-Cassie Creswell***

Parents fought to have their children treated with dignity and respect, pushing for policies that would halt sit and stare. Deutermann reported that initially more than half the districts on Long Island, NY, used sit and stare, but parent and union activism pressured all but one into allowing students to read or engage in other learning activities. In Erie County, another hotbed, media reported that the results were more checkered. Activists in various locales noted that the situation can be worse in charter schools as parents have fewer rights and administrators can more readily push students out.

Winning proper treatment of children at the local level required persuasion. New York organizers emphasized first approaching authorities cordially, if possible. Plattsburgh activists explained, “We made it clear to superintendents and principals this was not a move against schools but in support of schools. Administrators came to trust us and our positions.” Many administrators themselves oppose the tests. Deutermann said, “Don’t go after people unless warranted. I email them first, saying I am putting this up on the page unless this changes, and I will tell the media this is going on. They’ll act on that.”

State education departments also had to decide what to do. In New Jersey, where there is no official policy, activist Stan Karp reported that the state Department of Education left it up to districts and county offices to craft specific responses to parents. Some were accommodating and others punitive. According to Pamela Grundy, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction had independently decided to change its testing policy to allow children to read after finishing state tests. As a result, activists could focus on local districts, which could no longer

claim that state regulations prevented them from letting children read after refusing a test. “We worked with school districts to explain that this means if the child is refusing the test, they could hand their paper back in and read. It took more work in some districts than others,” she explained.

Many states lack clear policies. State laws are apt to say tests must be administered, but commonly do not say students must take them, allowing for refusals and opt outs. California law allows opting out. New York has a “refused” category, meaning the test is not scored, so students do not receive a zero. Even in states that say students must take the tests, parents have successfully boycotted.

Authorities also may seek to suck activists into time-consuming, unproductive meetings. Cassie Creswell from Chicago explained, “We met with administrators, but they had no intention of doing anything. It was a complete waste of our time and possibly damaging in that CPS would use them as an example of having listened to parent concerns while actually using them as opposition research to work against us.” MTAS activists ended up doing extra work for the meetings, reported activist Julie Woestehoff. Still, when invited, it is hard to refuse since authorities will use that against the movement. Perhaps a way out of this is to refuse to do extra free work just for the bureaucrats, work that is not otherwise useful for the movement.

### ***High Stakes for Students***

The high stakes for students that are attached to standardized tests can be a serious deterrent to opting out, though not to other forms of action. “The fact that our state legislature linked achievement tests scores with student grades and teacher evaluations” is a major issue, explained Jennifer Smith from Tennessee.

Florida and Texas are among some 14 states with test-based grade promotion, as is Chicago and as was New York City. These requirements are a major target of test reformers. Oklahoma repealed and North Carolina rolled back grade 3 mandates, as Texas had done previously after a statewide campaign (in which Governor Rick Perry blocked repeal of grade 5 and 8 promotion tests).

New York City had test-based promotions. In 2013, some principals or area superintendents moved to hold back students whose parents had refused the test. A rapidly organized campaign blocked that move. In 2014, the legislature said test scores could only be one part of a decision. The City Council passed a resolution

***“We worked with school districts to explain that this means if the child is refusing the test, they could hand their paper back in and read. It took more work in some districts than others.”  
-Pamela Grundy***

against high-stakes testing organized by Time Out From Testing. Under new Mayor Bill de Blasio and schools Chancellor Carmen Farina, the city went a step further by allowing principals to decide whether they would use test scores at all.

But in NYC, tests are also used to determine entry to a set of “top” high schools and for entry into some middle schools. Litigation and a campaign are being waged against the high school entrance exams, which keep out all but a few Black and Latino students. Parents have pushed to end the use of test scores for middle school enrollment, and a number of prominent schools have already pledged to do so.

Time Out From Testing’s Jane Hirschmann said, “We worked with a Harlem elementary school, Hamilton Heights. The parents decided to reach out to their local middle school. Both schools joined the boycott. And the middle school principal promised not to use the test scores for incoming elementary school students.” These victories will make it easier for parents to boycott, particularly those seeking to have their children admitted to more prestigious schools.

Graduation exams also present a major obstacle. A growing boycott in Massachusetts more than a decade ago ended at the high school level when graduation requirements went into effect. But student boycotts have occurred in cities such as Portland, Oregon, Denver and Chicago (mainly in 2013), states that do not have exit tests. Even then, some students were threatened with not participating in graduation – but boycotted anyway. After a long trend of more states adopting graduation exams, at least four states have started to drop them. Four others have reduced or delayed them.

[Victories](#) in many states show that testing reformers can win. New Jersey advocates helped win a suspension of graduation testing as part of the transition to PARCC, and are now working to make that permanent (though state officials have recently moved to make PARCC the graduation test in 2016).

However, it is often difficult to win major changes because progress can be blocked by any one of the Senate president, the House speaker, a chair of an education committee, or the governor – regardless of the wishes of the majority



Students protest testing overkill in Los Angeles.  
Photo Credit: Progressive Educators for Action.

of the legislature or the public. “[North Carolina Senate President] Phil Berger, he’s the king,” said Pamela Grundy.

“Read to Achieve (the grade 3 promotion test) is his baby. Apparently, he does not want to budge.” Still, advocates were able to soften the law this year. In Rhode Island, it appeared the House Speaker would block the bill postponing the graduation test, but extreme unevenness in districts awarding waivers (as they were allowed to do) and the case of one special needs student finally persuaded him. The Governor let the bill become law without his signature.

***“However, the massive parental pushback against high-stakes standardized testing is not going away, and the commission is not going to enable the Christie Administration to avoid this issue for very long.”***

***-Julia Sass Rubin***

In New Jersey, an omnibus bill that would have initiated a review of the costs and role of standardized tests and looked at alternatives to high-stakes testing had overwhelming popular and legislative support. The bill sailed through the State Assembly and was poised for an equally large win in the State Senate. However, the threat of a veto from Governor Christie led the senate president to make a backroom deal with the governor. Julia Sass Rubin of SOSNJ said, “The resulting compromise is weak – a temporary reduction in the percentage of teacher evaluation based on PARCC and a commission appointed entirely by the governor to review testing, but with what looks like a pre-determined conclusion that it’s just a matter of using standardized tests well. However, the massive parental pushback against high-stakes standardized testing is not going away, and the commission is not going to enable the Christie Administration to avoid this issue for very long. Among the many related things for which we’re advocating are bills to ban standardized testing in grades K-2; to provide parents with more information about the uses and costs of district and state-mandated tests; and to ensure student data privacy. These bills have been introduced and are working their way through the legislature.”

### ***Left and Right Unite?***

Movements emerge to overcome obstacles and fight entrenched opposition. But movements also have to wrestle with internal issues. Interviewees discussed several, including disagreements in political viewpoints and issues of race and class.

The activists we interviewed often see themselves as progressives and as allies of public schools. Sometimes they also work on issues such as privatizing control over public education. However, testing has never been an issue that neatly followed right-left or party lines. For example, national test proposals by Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton were defeated in Congress by votes from both parties, just as members of both voted in favor. In some ways it was right and left versus the center.

With many states adopting the Common Core State Standards, some conservatives began organizing in opposition and increasingly realized that the Common Core rubber hit the road with the tests. Beyond that, many conservative and Tea Party parents also concluded their children are over-tested. Thus, the mushrooming opposition that moved Florida's Lee County School Board vote to opt out of state tests united parents, educators and organizations from across the political spectrum.

Still, activists have to sort out the boundaries of their organizations and activism. Some groups make support of public education a requirement. Jeanette Deutermann closely monitors her Facebook page to keep discussion focused on testing. "I have seen a real political divide for the first time with the upcoming November gubernatorial elections. A month ago, active members of my organization were removed due to intolerance for other political views. Issues of unions, charters, teacher tenure and party politics are things that come up." She added she does not allow "teacher bashing." Arguments over other issues can erupt and people on opposite sides interject these topics into their shared space against testing (e.g., a Facebook page), leading organizers to take those posts down.

SOSNJ is non-partisan but generally takes progressive positions on public education issues. It has been able to work with conservative organizations on testing, which led to a strong, bipartisan vote on the bill to freeze all the punitive aspects of PARCC for two years while an expert commission examined high-stakes standardized testing and looked at alternatives (which Christie was then able to derail).

In Douglas County, CO, the situation has become complicated. An alliance of community groups from across the political spectrum is fighting a very conservative board. Stefanie Fuhr said the district threatened opt-outers – but the district also has been fighting the state's tests. However, Voices for Public Education (co-founded by Fuhr and Amy DeValk) issued a statement charging

that the district seeks “to get out of state requirements they do not agree with, ultimately giving them the ability to implement their own agenda and testing with little to no oversight from the state.”

Many staunch test resisters support funding equity, desegregation and other issues of deep concern to communities of color. Some progressives fear that Tea Party members and the conservative agendas will cause parents and communities of color to back away from testing reform.

### ***Race, Class and Disability***

When FairTest conducted interviews in 2013, many white, middle class groups were grappling with how best to connect with communities of color or lower income. We wrote, “The perceived race or class composition of the movement



New York City “funeral procession” to protest looming school closings and honor the history and students of those schools. October 2013. Photo Credit: Pat Dobosz.

is another issue. Urban, activist student groups are quite multiracial. However, in some places parents’ boycotting or opting out is seen as mainly ‘white’ or privileged. In other communities, activists say it is the privileged who are less likely to act together with others. To win, this movement must find ways to bridge these social gulfs.”

This year we find that the issues remain challenging, but multi-racial unity has clearly taken hold in some places. Groups in Florida, Tennessee, Texas and Colorado indicated they were largely white and middle class and said that is who was opting out. Class differences also remain an obstacle, particularly for opting out where, as described above, parents in schools serving low-income communities are more likely to face repression.

It is often observed that communities of color are more likely to support standardized testing because they have a stronger impetus to monitor schools that have not served their communities well and to use testing data to hold systems accountable or as evidence in lawsuits. It is, said Plattsburgh organizers, “the belief that tests prevent bad education for some kids.” Civil rights supporters of NCLB have argued that the data would pressure systems into treating their students more equitably, though [the law has failed on its own terms](#) as it has not led to improved test scores while narrowing curriculum and instruction.

However, evidence is growing that communities of color, too, are angry over the misuse of tests. Jean McTavish from New Jersey said, “We have found that activist urban parents used to think that testing was a way for them to see if their children were progressing in school. Given the crappy quality of many urban schools, I completely understand that. Over the past two years, we have heard the narrative change. As parents in New York City and Newark learn about privatization and the abuse of high-stakes tests, the idea of resistance sounds appealing.” Boston activists are increasingly finding a similar growing negative perception of testing.

Billy Easton of New York’s Alliance for Quality Education said, “The New York City coalition did an open process to craft a vision for schools under the next mayor. We took ideas from workshops and experts, put them together, and took a bus around. We used that to interview 1800 parents and students, mostly of color and poor. Too much testing was the number 2 issue. One was funding, three was lack of art and music.” The third issue is largely due to the convergence of first two.

In New York City, Time Out From Testing has built connections in low-income communities of color in areas such as Harlem, East Harlem and Queens. Change the Stakes started out by doing more outreach in whiter or more middle class communities, but last year met with a number of Community Education Councils and schools in districts that represent communities of color. So while observers think refusals in NYC have disproportionately involved white parents, parents of color opted out and otherwise participated.

***“We have found that activist urban parents used to think that testing was a way for them to see if their children were progressing in school. Given the crappy quality of many urban schools, I completely understand that. Over the past two years, we have heard the narrative change.”***

***- Jean McTavish***

“Long Island,” said Jeanette Deutermann, “is one of the most segregated places in the country. All black districts and all white. There are only two or three black kids in my district. Such a clear divide makes it tough to work and collaborate.” She shared data showing that districts with high percentages of blacks had lower percentages of refusers. However, echoing observations from other locales, she said some of the wealthiest districts also had low opt-out rates.

Other pressing issues can keep testing off the agenda, particularly in communities of color. Buffalo is largely black, while surrounding Erie County, a hotbed of resistance, is mostly white. Eric Mihelbergel reached out to some Buffalo groups. He spoke to the District Parent Coordinating Council, 100 people. “They were engaged,” he observed, but, “Testing was not a priority at all.” He also attended another meeting where the president of the group said, “In the city of Buffalo, it’s a big day if the parent gets the student on the bus and he shows up at school.”

***“Long Island is one of the most segregated places in the country.”  
- Jeanette Deutermann***

In North Carolina, Pamela Grundy said issues such as school funding, teacher tenure, privatization and re-segregation were absorbing most of the attention of other groups, though her group was finding agreement with the state NAACP and other organizations on issues such as test-based grade retention.

In Chicago in 2013 the most explosive issue was the plan to close 50 schools in communities of color, though some students linked testing to closings and walked out of schools on test day in protest. Now, according to Norine Gutekanst, “Some black and brown parents in Chicago believe that their schools are being set up for failure, for closure, privatization – and that the tests are part of this plan.”

Interviewees also regularly cited class differences. One Plattsburgh activist said the area has “Big issues of poverty. In most districts it is over 40%, ranges from 20% to 75%. Probably not enough working class or poor people are involved. Actions tend to involve those more intimately involved in schools, such as teachers with kids in schools. But parents and grandparents are saying things like, ‘My kid does not want to go to school.’ As best we know, our forums were more middle class. Many likely to refuse come from the upper-middle, but as they mostly score higher, that made teachers feel vulnerable. That so many refused lessened that worry.”

On the other hand, the Providence Student Union is “95% low income, 90% people of color,” though with “two straight white male staffers,” a disparity the recently founded organization is actively working to eliminate. Yet, as

Zack Mezera explained, PSU has deliberately built their structure “so that students make the vast majority of decisions, which allows students themselves to push the conversation in directions that address issues of race and class across the city. And ultimately, we

are moving in the direction where I say – and students understand – that I (and PSU staff generally) work for them.” The students also work on issues other than high-stakes testing, such as student discipline, and actively draw connections across their issue campaigns and the



Brooklyn parents refuse testing for their children. Photo Credit: James Lane.

racist and classist origins that usually necessitate those campaigns. Thus, PSU finds that creating a platform for students to sincerely lead the decision-making process – to listen and to be listened to – is key to building bridges across race and class for students in relation to each other and to adults.

SOSNJ’s Rubin explained, “We are very diverse, with volunteer organizers and a large membership across the state. For example, we have many volunteer organizers in Camden as well as in Princeton. One of the issues on which we advocate is reforming New Jersey’s charter school law, to give all communities the ability to decide if they want a new charter school to open in their midst. A few years ago, the State Senate leadership offered us a deal – give only wealthy communities the option of a local vote before a charter school could open in their community. We rejected that offer. This can’t be about just my child. It has to be about everyone’s children. If it’s right for Princeton, it has to be right for Camden as well.”

Jean McTavish of UOONJ added, “Sue and I make sure we reach out to the urban districts in New Jersey because that is where our hearts are as educators. [Both work in urban districts.] We know, first hand, what a devastating effect school reform has had on our schools and on our colleagues’ schools. We are not comfortable only working for our own privileged children.”

Cassie Creswell said Chicago had “a pretty good mix. Schools with more lower middle class Hispanics and Blacks were pulled in by having a teacher organizing at their school. So not so much a white middle class phenomenon here; it’s a pretty good array. Once people are aware, there’s not much difference in appeal by race and class. Also, for families with kids who are directly negatively impacted by testing – like being extremely stressed out or special needs but being given tests at an inappropriate level – it is much easier to explain to them why standardized testing is harmful and why opting out is beneficial.”

In 2013, activists like Julie Woestehoff were concerned about the mostly white composition of More Than A Score.

Julie noted that this year, “Opt outs included many from black and Latino communities.

Saucedo School is mostly all Latino, the parents were enthusiastic.” The rapid growth of activism likely has a great deal to do with involvement of the Chicago Teachers Union which has many teachers of color and deep community roots, and which participates in MTAS.

***“Schools with more lower middle class Hispanics and Blacks were pulled in by having a teacher organizing at their school.”  
-Cassie Creswell***

Julie said that some African Americans and Latinos were part of “Bad Ass Moms – they identify that way. At Local School Council fairs last summer, folks knew each other outside of testing, so some integrated into MTAS.”

Marla Kilfoyle of the national network Bad Ass Teachers Association (BATS) said, “We have worked very, very hard since day one to move BATS in a direction that represents diversity. I feel like we’re definitely much more diverse than when we started. It is hard because we are involved in a profession that’s mostly white women. It is hard to get teachers of color in, there aren’t that many, and they are being pushed out of the profession at a horrible rate.” A subgroup, DREAM, exists to discuss issues of race in relation to testing and privatization. BATS did go through some issues of racial animosity in the group, which they address in several blogs ([here](#) and [here](#)).

Parents of students with disabilities represent another powerful force within the emerging movement. In many places, those parents are in the forefront of organizing against the tests.

Ilana Spiegel from the Denver area said, “We are strong with parents and students with disabilities. Are there obstacles with them? Yes and no. They fought for being counted, for high standards, for school accountability. We do need to keep shining a light. But we point out, tests don’t help – and they join us.” To meet their needs, as with students of color and in low-income communities, Ilana said, “We need alternatives.”

In addition, teachers who work with students with disabilities are often among the most active organizers. They see the great stress often inflicted on students faced with tests they cannot perform well on, that are long and difficult and even incomprehensible.

### ***Time, Money and Burnout***

Parent-led resistance groups have little money and operate entirely on a volunteer basis. Many leaders have told us the lack of funds and huge demands on their time makes the work hard. A few groups have paid staff, such as Providence Student Union and FairTest itself.

***“We are strong with parents and students with disabilities.”  
-Ilana Spiegel***

One parent said, “Almost everyone everywhere is a volunteer at this, usually with a full-time job. That is amazing but makes it hard, so people often are very aware of limits of what they can do. Money is really all on other side. What can be done about this, how can a movement support itself?”

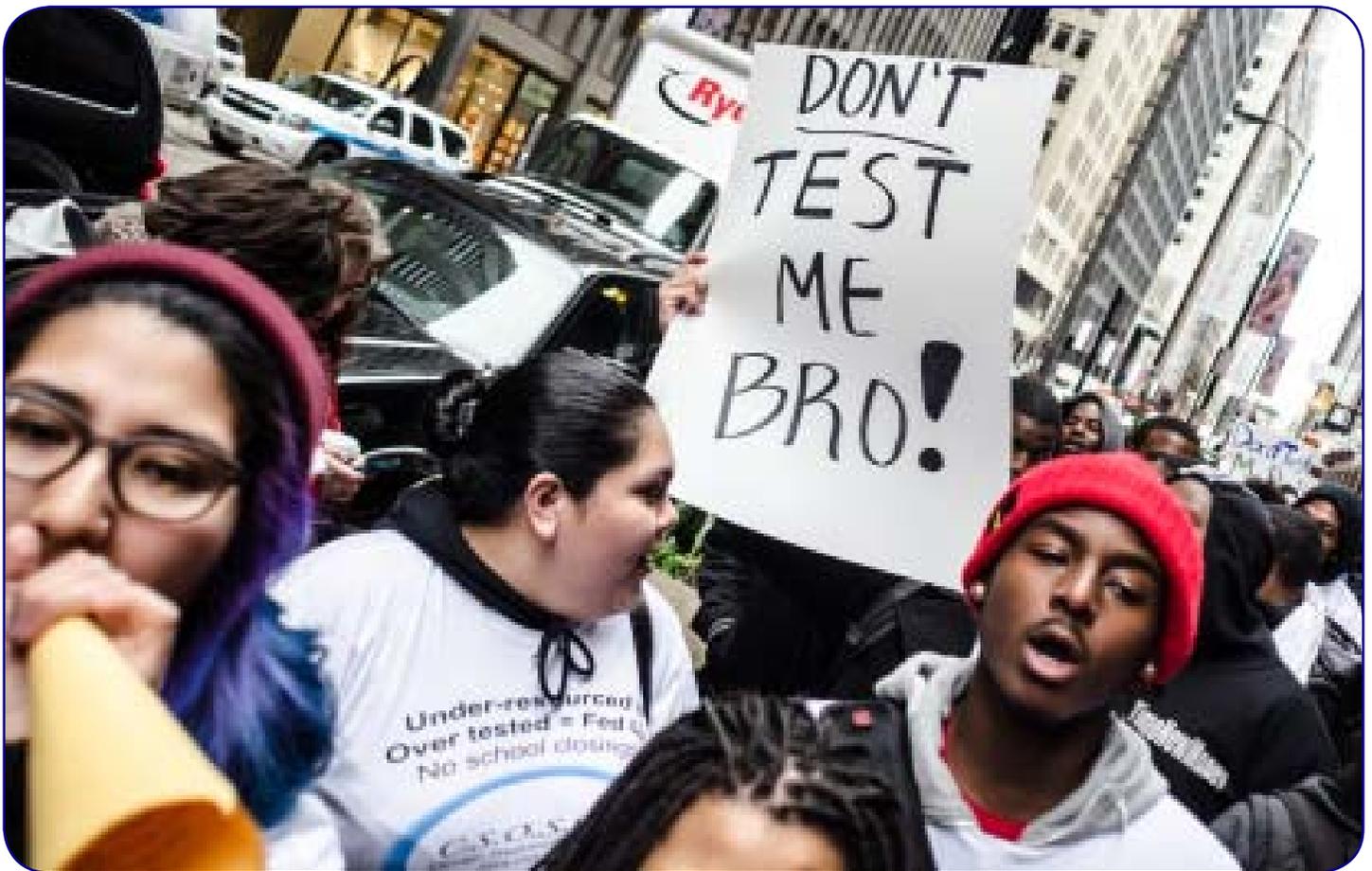
UOONJ’s Jean McTavish said, “As we organize ourselves better, we are able to draw on volunteers who have the expertise the reformers must pay for. We have videographers, social media consultants, academicians, angry parents, etc. What we need to do is to continue to build our coalition.” United Opt Out is strengthening its network of state contacts so they can quickly respond to requests for help.

Battling the system, as in Chicago, takes its toll, said Cassie Creswell. “That work left us exhausted. It was horrible the way some people were treated by CPS. What could we do to help parents and teachers? Legal solutions don’t look promising, such as to stop system bullying. But legislative strategies might. We really want to get the right to opt out put explicitly in law here in Illinois. We are now much better prepared to help because we know what

techniques CPS and schools will use to prevent parents and students from opting out.”

It can be hard for people to remain energized and active and not burn out. Edy Chamness said, “People run out of enthusiasm for hopeless battle.”

Fortunately, the battle is not only far from hopeless, the tide is turning. Difficult as it can be, our interviewees and their organizations continue in the fight for fundamental change.



Chicago students and teachers protest. Photo Credit: Chicago Teacher Solidarity Campaign.

### III. FROM INITIAL VICTORIES TO OVERHAULING ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Over the past two years, [the testing reform movement has won its first victories](#).

They include:

- ending, delaying or rolling back graduation tests in Minnesota, South Carolina, Alaska, Nevada, Arizona, Rhode Island, New Jersey and Texas;
- ending or easing test-based grade promotions in Oklahoma, North Carolina and New York City while blocking an effort to implement such a requirement in New Mexico;
- delaying or limiting the use of student test scores in teacher evaluation in a growing number of states; and
- electing candidates who oppose the overuse and misuse of tests in a wide range of states for a variety of offices.

This first wave is just a beginning of the political journey leading to a thorough overhaul of assessment. This section addresses the need for better assessments and accountability, overhauling federal law, and perspectives on next steps on the road to greater victories.

#### ***Better Assessments***

While activist groups have focused on halting and rolling back the damage, most grasp the need for new laws, policies and practices that properly use high-quality assessments and replace punitive accountability with transparency and support for improving schools. Janine Sopp of New York City said, “If we chip away at testing, so what? If there is empty space, they will fill it again with tests. So I want to talk about alternatives.”

Some are taking up the issue locally. Plattsburgh activists, for example, will hold an October forum at which participants can discuss what they want from schools and thereby start to shift the discussion about assessment.

But for the most part, defining and fighting for alternatives has not yet emerged as a major aspect of the movement, locally or at the state level. There are some exceptions. The Oregon Education Association is collaborating with the governor’s office, the Oregon Education Department, and a non-profit to develop alternatives to state tests. They report making good progress. Their proposal would allow local diversity in assessments, as well as promote performance and formative assessing.

In 2013 the Texas legislature passed a bill authorizing a consortium of districts to make important changes to state testing and accountability provisions. Governor Perry vetoed that bill. This consortium is expected to return to the legislature in 2015, and other districts may also seek waivers to implement different approaches.

***“To this day it is very helpful that our parents can point to an alternative to testing that works.”***

***-Jane Hirschmann***

This effort was modeled in part on the New York Performance Standards Consortium, a network of high schools, mainly from New York City, that have [a waiver from four of the five required graduation tests](#). Instead, students must successfully submit and defend extended tasks in English, math, science and history. Students identify their own projects, which are scored using teacher-created rubrics. Teachers also review samples of tasks from across the Consortium to provide feedback to schools and help ensure consistency. The results have shown the schools succeed far beyond most City schools [while working with a demographically identical population](#).

Jane Hirschmann said, “Parents in Time Out From Testing started 20 years ago because their children went to Consortium schools. We came together to fight for the Consortium to keep its waiver. And to this day it is very helpful that our parents can point to an alternative to testing that works. Saying NO to tests is important, but equally important is demonstrating another way. When we go out to parents, we can explain this alternative in detail.”

Jesse Hagopian from Seattle explained that in the year following the successful boycott, “Garfield High has formed an important relationship with the Consortium schools in New York. Three delegations went there in the past year, including principals and teachers. They have come back and done trainings for Garfield teachers. One of the most important ways to build movement is to show the alternative. Our partnership was reported on in *Seattle Times*, so we got mainstream news coverage. It was an important follow-up story to our boycott last year of the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) tests, showing we are not just against testing but have a vision of what to do differently. Train teachers and publicize. That was an important part of resisting.”

There are other models in the US and internationally showing that [high-quality assessment](#) contributes to improved student learning and that schools can show how well they are doing without relying on standardized tests.

Both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers are now on board with the need to win these sorts of fundamental changes in assessment. They are, however, just beginning to figure out what that means for them.

### **Federal Policy**

Federal law (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESEA, now titled No Child Left Behind, NCLB) is in many ways the linchpin of the testing machine. However, state and local groups were not very

active on federal issues, though all were aware of the role of NCLB and the Obama administration's waivers play in testing. Congress clearly was not going to reauthorize ESEA in 2014, while the Obama-Duncan administration continued to defend high-stakes testing, despite Duncan also saying that too much testing is "sucking the oxygen" out of classrooms. In those circumstances, there seemed little reason to devote attention to Congress.

However, the need to overhaul federal law was discussed at the Network for Public Education and United Opt Out national conferences. They and Bad Ass Teachers Assn. worked on federal issues, and BATS organized an August rally at the US Education Department. FairTest continued to lead the national Forum of Educational Accountability, which has developed [alternative assessment, accountability and school improvement proposals to replace NCLB](#).

Many local organizers pointed out the role of the federal government as they informed parents and community members. Eric Mihelbergel explained, "I relate back to NCLB and RTTT frequently. We would like to reach out to federal legislators and are working on that." NYSAPE has a committee on federal and state legislation they plan to make more active this year. They have met with Rep. Christopher Gibson, who co-sponsored a bill with Rep. Kyrsten Sinema ([H.R.4172](#)) to return ESEA-mandated testing to once each in elementary, middle and high school, and plan to meet with other federal legislators. New Jersey activists have reached out to members of Congress and expect to continue doing so.



Rally in support of Chicago teachers and parents boycotting the Illinois State Achievement Test. Photo Credit: More Than a Score.

In Chicago, Cassie Creswell said she regularly raised the issue of Common Core testing. Nellie Cotton added, “If a person gets it about the testing, I go beyond the local, talk about state and federal. Most parents want to keep it local and do what can be done. As we progress through actions, people learn more.”

### ***Steps Toward Greater Victories***

The interviewees recognize that much more must be done to build a movement strong enough to win fundamental change at federal, state and local levels. Those active in opting out see it playing an essential role. One goal is to have so many refusers that the system cannot function.

Jean McTavish and Sue Schutt from New Jersey said, “We connected all the dots and came away being able to articulate clearly that if we deny them the test data, the whole house of cards falls down.” If, for example, 20% of students do not take the test (the target for some New York activists in the next year or two), the credibility of results will be greatly diminished. Some superintendents in New York districts with very high refusal rates have said they cannot use the school-level scores.

Peggy Robertson added, “Our belief is if we can get mass opt out it will require legislators to listen and change things.” Opting out plus other forms of resistance can ratchet up the stakes so that politicians will be compelled to approve meaningful changes.

Many people cannot opt out, whether because they do not have children in school or because they justly fear the consequences (e.g., grade retention, non-graduation). Thus, groups across the nation have employed multiple forms of action. Victories over graduation tests in the past two years were won not with opting out but with other organizing and mobilizing strategies.

***“We connected all the dots and came away being able to articulate clearly that if we deny them the test data, the whole house of cards falls down.”***

***- Jean McTavish and Sue Schutt***

Stefanie Fuhr from Colorado observed, “70% of people in Douglas County do not have kids in school. We need to get them into schools, build stronger community-school ties.” A good basis for such unity already exists: The 2014 [PDK/Gallup poll](#) found that a majority of the general population thinks standardized testing is not helpful, as do more than two-thirds of public school parents.

As activists have observed, legislators, boards and governors are apt to promote weak or non-solutions, to buy time with “studies” or short-term moratoria that delay rather than remove test misuses. State and local officials are also proposing modest reductions in the number of tests, while rarely beginning to address whether those tests foster high-quality teaching and learning or the ways in which high-stakes forces educators to turn schools into test-prep programs. That is, thus far, most are beating a tactical retreat in hopes of maintaining the test-and-punish regime.

In New Jersey, groups say that their unsuccessful effort to win legislation still educated many and built support for the movement. They plan to use Christie’s task force to further their own goals, though the task force itself will probably be a dead end.

However, not all task forces merely ways to defuse pressure. For example, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe formed a group to look into reducing testing, and he supported testing reductions approved by the state legislature in 2014. A few locales are beginning to look beyond tests to evaluate and portray their schools, including California’s [“Community Based Accountability”](#) law. However, thus far this has meant standardized tests plus other components, rather than replacing tests with rich assessments and adding in other important elements of a high-quality school.

Looking ahead, local and state groups are moving strongly with the resources they can bring to bear. Continuing to build the movement remains the primary emphasis for most groups. How that relates to attempts at more immediate, concrete victories varies. For example, changing legislation or policy was the primary focus with TAMSA in Texas and the Providence Student Union. They built movement capacity through such efforts.

But Jeanette Deutermann pointed out, “You can’t start with legislation. The first stop is not the senator.” In this line of thinking, actions such as boycotts build the movement whose strength will subsequently be able to win policy changes. In New York, NYSAPE will be a vehicle for such efforts while local groups concentrate on refusal and related strategies. Lisa Rudley said, “We need more field troops and our own legislators.”

United Opt Out NJ leaders said, “This year we are planning better events locally, sequencing the learning. We will have a movie in September, a panel of experts to look at the national picture and background on the Common Core in October. In

November, we are holding a panel on how school reform affects urban and suburban districts so that we can all better connect the dots of privatization, profiteering, and test obsession. December will be another movie, and in January we hope to engage teachers to inform parents about how testing is hurting our children with the hope of building to a large statewide opt out this spring.”

***“Our belief is if we can get mass opt out it will require legislators to listen and change things.”  
- Peggy Robertson***

Similarly, groups across the nation have been actively planning their next steps. Their growing savvy and capacity, deepening public support for testing reform, and policymakers rethinking their positions all bode well for continued rapid growth and success.

FairTest is proud to have helped grow the testing resistance and reform movement. In the coming year, we will:

- publicize the movement and the test overuse and misuse that give rise to it;
- link people together and facilitate sharing knowledge and ideas;
- write and update fact sheets, reports and other materials that activists can use;
- promote high-quality assessment and educationally sound “accountability”;
- support local and state activists when they seek our assistance; and
- work with policymakers to strengthen those who support us and win over those who currently do not.

## IV. INTERVIEWEES, THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, WEBSITES & FACEBOOK PAGES

*Interviews with activists* were conducted by Monty Neill and Lisa Guisbond in the summer of 2014, with follow-up questions into September.

**Note:** for listings of state contacts for testing resistance and reform, see:

[http://fairest.org/get\\_involved/state\\_resources](http://fairest.org/get_involved/state_resources)

<http://unitedoptout.com>

### Chicago, Illinois

- Nellie Cotton, Cassie Creswell, and Julie Woestehoff, More Than A Score

<http://morethanascorechicago.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MoreThanAScoreChicago>

- Norine Gutekanst, Chicago Teachers Union

<http://www.ctunet.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ctulocal1>

### Colorado

- Stefanie Fuhr, Voices for Public Education, Douglas County, outside Denver, parent and teacher activist <https://www.facebook.com/VoicesForPublicEducation>

- Peggy Robertson, United Opt Out, Denver area; teacher activist

- Ilana Spiegel, Denver area parent activist, former teacher, author, SPEAK for Cherry Creek

[www.speakforcherrycreek.blogspot.com](http://www.speakforcherrycreek.blogspot.com)

[https://www.facebook.com/pages/SPEAK-for-Cherry-Creek/188731611321629?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/pages/SPEAK-for-Cherry-Creek/188731611321629?ref=br_tf)

[@SPEAKforCCK](#)

[speakforcherrycreek@gmail.com](mailto:speakforcherrycreek@gmail.com)

- Alex Kasch, Student (2013 interviewee)

### Florida

- Sandy Stenoff, Opt Out Orlando

<http://optoutorlando.wordpress.com/>

### New Jersey

- Julia Sass Rubin, Save Our Schools NJ (SOSNJ):

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurSchoolsNJ>

Website: [www.saveourschoolsnj.org](http://www.saveourschoolsnj.org)

Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/SavOurSchoolsNJ>

- Jean McTavish and Susan Schutt, United Opt Out NJ (UOONJ)

Choose to Refuse NJ - <https://sites.google.com/site/choosetorefusenj/>

Opt Out of State Standardized Tests - New Jersey

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/optOutNewJersey/>

Jean McTavish – [isola8@gmail.com](mailto:isola8@gmail.com)

Susan Schutt – [sue.schutt@gmail.com](mailto:sue.schutt@gmail.com)

- Stan Karp, Education Law Center NJ

<http://www.edlawcenter.org/>

Also with Rethinking Schools:

<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml>

<https://www.facebook.com/rethinkingschools>

## ***New York***

- Mark Beatham, Margarita Garcia Notario and Doug Selwyn, Plattsburgh
- Carol Burris, Principal, Long Island; NYSAPE
- Jeanette Deutermann, Parent, Long Island;  
Long Island Opt Out; NYSAPE  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Longislandoptout/>
- Billy Easton, Alliance for Quality Education
- Jane Hirschmann, Time Out from Testing, New York City;  
<http://timeoutfromtesting.org/>  
also contact Dani Gonzalez at [info@timeoutfromtesting.org](mailto:info@timeoutfromtesting.org)
- Eric Mihelbergel, Parent, NYS Refuse the Tests, Erie County; NYSAPE  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/633360133390634/>  
Western New Yorkers for Public Education Discussion Group  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/480871575265847/>  
[elm.email@verizon.net](mailto:elm.email@verizon.net)
- Lisa Rudley, Parent, NYSAPE
- Janine Sopp, Change the Stakes, New York City  
<http://changethestakes.wordpress.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/changethestakes>
- Bianca Tanis, Parent and Teacher, Re-thinking Testing Mid-Hudson Region, NYSAPE
- **NYSAPE**: New York State Allies for Public Education  
<http://www.nysape.org/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/New-York-State-Allies-for-Public-Education/1408400549375189>

## ***North Carolina***

- Pamela Grundy, mother of 8<sup>th</sup> grader; co-chair, Mecklenburg ACTS (Mecklenburg Area Coming Together for Schools), Parents Across America board member  
<http://www.mecklenburgacts.org/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/MecklenburgACTS;>  
[info@mecklenburgacts.org;](mailto:info@mecklenburgacts.org)

## **Rhode Island**

- Zack Mezera, Executive Director, Providence Student Union  
[www.providencestudentunion.org](http://www.providencestudentunion.org)  
[contact@providencestudentunion.org](mailto:contact@providencestudentunion.org)  
@pvdstudentunion  
(2013 interviewee, Aaron Regunberg)

## **Tennessee**

- Jennifer Smith, Stop TN Testing Madness <http://stoptntesting.com/>

## **Texas**

- Dineen Majcher and Laura Yeager, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA)  
[www.TAMSATX.org](http://www.TAMSATX.org)  
<https://www.facebook.com/tamsatx>
- Edy Chamness, Texas Parents Opt Out of State Tests  
<http://optoutofstandardizedtests.wikispaces.com/Texas+TX>  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Texas-Parents-Opt-Out-of-State-Tests/121316371311714>

## **Washington**

- Jesse Hagopian, Teacher and Parent; Social Equality Educators

## **National Organizations**

- Bad Ass Teachers Association (BATS): Marla Kilfoyle (also in NYSAPE)  
<http://www.badassteacher.org/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/BadassTeachersAssociation>  
@BadassTeachersA  
<http://badassteachers.blogspot.com/>  
[contact.batmanager@gmail.com](mailto:contact.batmanager@gmail.com) (also goes to Melissa Tomlinson)
- Network for Public Education: Anthony Cody <http://www.networkforpubliceducation.org/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/networkforpubliceducation>  
Anthony Cody, Living in Dialogue: <http://www.livingindialogue.com/>
- Parents Across America: Pamela Grundy and Julie Woestehoff  
<http://parentsacrossamerica.org/>  
[PamelaG@parentsacrossamerica.org](mailto:PamelaG@parentsacrossamerica.org)
- United Opt Out: Peggy Robertson  
<http://unitedoptout.com>  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/United-Opt-Out-National/265810576790447>  
<http://unitedoptout.com/2014/07/01/an-activist-handbook-for-the-education-revolution-united-opt-outs-test-of-courage/>

## V. RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

### *FairTest Resources*

- A Better Way to Evaluate Schools <http://fairtest.org/fact-sheet-better-way-evaluate-schools-pdf>
- Actions to take for testing reform: <http://fairtest.org/eight-steps>
- Community Meetings and Forums: <http://www.fairtest.org/howto-guide-community-forums-testing>
- *Testing Resistance and Reform Guide*: [http://fairtest.org/get\\_involved/tools](http://fairtest.org/get_involved/tools)
- *Multiple Measures: A Definition and Examples from the U.S. and Other Nations*:  
<http://fairtest.org/fact-sheet-multiple-measures-definition-and-exampl>
- *NCLB's Lost Decade for Educational Progress: What Can We Learn from this Policy Failure?*  
<http://fairtest.org/NCLB-lost-decade-report-home>
- News clips weekly posting: <http://www.fairtest.org/news/other>
- Opting Out: <http://fairtest.org/get-involved/opting-out> (see also <http://www.unitedoptout.com>).
- *Testing Reform Victories: The First Wave*  
<http://www.fairtest.org/new-fairtest-report-testing-reform-victories-first>
- The Spring 2013 Testing Uprising: <http://www.fairtest.org/spring-2013-testing-reform-uprising>
- *Time for a Real Testing Moratorium*: <http://fairtest.org/time-real-testing-moratorium>
- “Why You Can Boycott Standardized Tests Without Fear of Federal Penalties to Your School.”  
<http://www.fairtest.org/why-you-can-boycott-testing-without-fear>

### *Other resources (includes those cited in the report)*

- Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools: <http://www.reclaimourschools.org>
- Answer Sheet, Valerie Strauss, Washington Post: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/>
- Bad Ass Teachers blogs on racial issues:  
<http://badassteachers.blogspot.com/2014/08/bats-statement-on-racial-ethnic-and.html> and  
<http://badassteachers.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-growth-of-movement-lessons-learned.html>.
- California's “Community Based Accountability” law:  
<http://www.lao.ca.gov/Publications/Detail/2797>
- Chicago boycott – Michelle Gunderson blog: “Chicago Test Boycott - Second School Joins In.”  
[http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/living-in-dialogue/2014/02/chicago\\_test\\_boycott\\_second\\_sc.html?qs=Saucedo](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/living-in-dialogue/2014/02/chicago_test_boycott_second_sc.html?qs=Saucedo)
- Colorado Coalition for Better Education – billboards: <http://www.thebbe.org/support.html>
- Diane Ravitch's Blog: <http://dianeravitch.net/>
- Forum on Educational Accountability: <http://www.edaccountability.org>
- Gibson and Sinema HR 4172, to reduce federally mandated testing:  
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr4172ih/pdf/BILLS-113hr4172ih.pdf>
- NEA toxic testing campaign: <http://www.nea.org/home/59453.htm>

- New York Performance Standards Consortium:  
<http://performanceassessment.org/> See esp. [http://performanceassessment.org/articles/DataReport\\_NY\\_PSC.pdf](http://performanceassessment.org/articles/DataReport_NY_PSC.pdf) and FairTest article: <http://www.fairtest.org/performance-assessments-succeed-new-york>
- Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Survey: <http://pdkintl.org/programs-resources/poll/>
- United Opt Out guide: <http://unitedoptout.com/2014/07/01/an-activist-handbook-for-the-education-revolution-united-opt-outs-test-of-courage/>