

FairTest

The National Center for Fair & Open Testing

Testing Reform Victories: The First Wave

by Lisa Guisbond

Executive Summary

Teachers, parents and students head back to school this year buoyed by the knowledge that the national test resistance movement is growing rapidly and already producing victories against standardized exam misuse and overuse (FairTest, 2013). The past few years have seen [an explosion of resistance](#) to testing overkill in every region of the country. Parents, educators, students, administrators, community activists and taxpayers have found creative and effective ways to say, “Enough is enough!” Like a majority of [Americans](#), they agree that it is long past time to significantly cut the volume of standardized testing, end high-stakes uses, and invest in better ways to assess students, teachers and schools.

The emerging movement’s victories include:

- States ***repealing high school graduation requirements and rolling back other test requirements***. Exit exam repeals or delays have been adopted in Minnesota, South Carolina, Alaska, Nevada, Arizona, Texas and Rhode Island. Virginia reduced the number of state tests, and Oklahoma, North Carolina and New York City reformed their test-based grade promotion policies.
- States ***postponing the consequences of Common Core testing*** include Oregon, Colorado, Nevada, Washington, DC, and New Jersey.
- ***Successful, high-profile protests in the form of opt outs, boycotts and other actions***, from Seattle to Providence and Chicago to Austin and Lee County, FL.

- Opinion polls showing *shifts in public attitudes against high-stakes testing*, with PDK/Gallup (2014) reporting that 68 percent of the public school parents think standardized tests are not helpful.
- *Teachers unions pushing back on test abuse* with campaigns and resolutions. The National Education Association has launched a campaign against “Toxic Testing” and called on Education Secretary Arne Duncan to resign. The American Federation of Teachers voted to put Duncan on an “improvement plan.”
- In Seattle, Denver, Long Island, Los Angeles, Newark, and Michigan, *candidates winning office by speaking out clearly against high-stakes testing*.
- *More colleges joining the test-optional admissions trend*. There are now more than 830 accredited, bachelor-degree granting colleges and universities that do not require all or many applicants to submit SAT or ACT scores.

Even Secretary Duncan echoed the voices of the resistance when he announced “flexibility” for states in using test results for teacher evaluation. Duncan said, “Where tests are redundant, or not sufficiently helpful for instruction, they cost precious time that teachers and kids can’t afford. Too much testing can rob school buildings of joy, and cause unnecessary stress.” Unfortunately, his administration has done nothing to undo the damage of NCLB. Instead, his policies have intensified the law’s widespread destruction. Resisters will, however, use Duncan’s evidence and arguments to fight his destructive test-driven policies. Buoyed by the victories already achieved, they will continue to push until they achieve the ultimate goals of less testing, more learning and assessments that support high-quality schooling for all.