Practical Strategies to Save Our Schools
Without question, this is a risky undertaking. Theoretically, even an entire school faculty could be fired. But the more powerful a teacher's reason for resistance, the more likely it is that administration will respond with what one former teacher described as "a cycle of neglect and repression." In short, teachers who feel they must challenge the tests will likely find themselves placed on the defensive in ways they may not fully anticipate.

In the United States, resistance to testing has taken many forms. Teachers have written books or articles. They have spoken at conferences, talked with colleagues, and presented workshops. They have called on state and local officials to rescind the tests. They have joined forces with parents and community members to mobilize public opinion in favor of testing reform. They have even met with the U.S. Congress, where their leaders have written newspapers and even given testimony before congressional committees. But how many of these efforts have yielded results? How many teachers have been able to change the policies of their schools or districts? How many have opened the eyes of their state legislators and the governor?

To get an idea of the picture of resistance, consider the story of one teacher named Frank Perl. Beginning in 1987, Perl began to question the validity of the tests given in his school district. And so when he was asked to participate in a district-wide test of the achievement of his students, he agonized about what to do. Finally, he decided that if the test was just as unfair and destructive as it had been in the past, he would refuse to allow his students to participate. "I have no job because they've taken it away from me," he said. "As long as I have to spend my time teaching to the test, I don't want to be doing it."

"My job is to teach, not to get involved in political disputes.""Just teach well and the tests will take care of themselves." "Excellent teachers don't have to worry about test scores..." "A good teacher roots for the tests to do their job."

"A Set-Up to Tell You You're Stupid," titled "The Insanity of Testing Mania.", Priscilla, Nebraska, (a) letter to the editor of the (b) local paper. (c) United States (d) (e) 2001 (f) New York Times (g) 1992 (h) May 7, p. (i) A8...

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Together with other educators and parents, consider taking these actions:

- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper — or, better yet, an op-ed article. Three examples dealing with the MCAS test in Massachusetts are available: "A set-up to tell you you're stupid," "The insanity of testing mania," and "The side of real learning."

- Contact your state legislators about the issue. State resources are available from the [State Name] [test] [system] [Education] [Secretary of State]... [Education] [Secretary of State]... [Education] [Secretary of State]...

- Make a public statement explaining why you oppose the local tests or a state-wide assessment system. "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledged to boycott the next round of testing, would you join them?" (The [Name of School District] site has a bumper sticker that says "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledge to boycott the next round of testing, will you join them?"").

- Write to — or visit — your state legislators about the issue. State resources are available from the [State Name] [test] [system] [Education] [Secretary of State]... [Education] [Secretary of State]... [Education] [Secretary of State]...

- Encourage your local media to investigate the testing issue and make sure your story gets an airing. "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledge to boycott the next round of testing, will you join them?" (The [Name of School District] site has a bumper sticker that says "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledge to boycott the next round of testing, will you join them?"").

- Print up bumper stickers with slogans such as "STANDARDIZED TESTING IS DUMBING DOWN OUR SCHOOLS" or "SUPPORT BETTER EDUCATION: Boycott the [Name of your state's test]."

- Challenge politicians, corporate executives, and others who talk piously about the need to "raise the bar," impose tests, and make excuses. "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledge to boycott the next round of testing, will you join them?" (The [Name of School District] site has a bumper sticker that says "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledge to boycott the next round of testing, will you join them?"").

- Hold a demonstration or march. "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledge to boycott the next round of testing, will you join them?" (The [Name of School District] site has a bumper sticker that says "If ___ percent of the teachers at this school pledge to boycott the next round of testing, will you join them?"").

- Meet with local officials and see if you can persuade them to rescind the tests.

- Participate in a national protest.