

Sample opt-out/refusal letter

In February 2014, MecklenburgACTS.org co-chair Pamela Grundy and her husband sent the following letter to the principal at their seventh-grade son's school.

They met with their son's principal to discuss their concerns about the testing and their decision to refuse the test. They followed up with the letter a week later.

Dear Principal —,

We write to let you know that as the parents of —, we have decided that he will not participate in end-of-the-year state testing for the 2013-14 school year. This includes both End of Grade Tests and North Carolina Final Exams.

As parents, we have both the right and the responsibility to protect our child from harm. After nearly eight years in a public school system that has been increasingly consumed with high-stakes testing, we have concluded that the damage this testing is doing to our son and to the schools in which he has been educated has become so great that it compels us to take this action.

To name just a few of these problems: over the past eight years we have seen the pressures of high-stakes testing narrow school curricula; foster teaching to the test; create damaging stress in school communities; divert money, time and energy that could be far better spent on classroom work; and significantly reduce our son's interest in school and learning.

We request that in order to maximize our son's opportunity for learning, and to minimize disruptions for classmates who will be taking the tests, an alternate activity in a separate space be provided for our son and any other students whose families choose not to participate in the testing. We would be happy to assist in making and carrying out such arrangements.

Please know that this decision does not stem from dissatisfaction with you, your teachers, your school or the school district as a whole. We understand that you are carrying out mandates handed down by state and federal policy-makers, and appreciate the efforts you have made to carry out those mandates as humanely as possible. We realize that this is an extremely serious decision, and we make it only because we see these tests doing such great harm to our son and his fellow students. If you wish more details, we would be happy to provide them.

We thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,