

The New York opt-out movement

During the past three years, families in New York State have built one of the strongest opt-out movements in the country, community by community.

The movement started small, with a few families in a few schools. It has now grown to include thousands of families. One of the main New York opt-out Facebook groups, <u>Long Island Opt-Out</u> <u>Info</u>, has nearly 15,000 members. In some schools, as many as 30 percent of families opt their children out of the tests.

Like North Carolina, New York does not give families an explicit right to opt out of state tests. Parents and guardians who have chosen to opt out have invoked their fundamental right to direct their children's education, and to protect them from harm. Some schools and districts have been more open to this argument than others. So far, however, the persistence and courage of families has made it quite successful.

Depending on the district, students who are opting out either engage in alternate activities at the school (the preferred alternative), or remain in the room where other students are taking the test (sometimes allowed to read or draw, sometimes not).

The New York efforts have been chronicled in several recent articles:

Turn On, Tune In, Opt Out, The Nation, November 5, 2013

The Opt-Outers: What happens if enough New York parents say they don't want their kids to take tests?, New York Magazine, November 24, 2013

The Defiant Parents: Testing's Discontents, The New Yorker, January 23, 2014

To access Web links, visit "The New York Opt-out movement" in the "Opting out" section of MecklenburgACTS.org.