

Letter in support of Chicago teachers boycotting the Illinois standardized test

March 1, 2014

The following letter, to which I have added my name, is being circulated by education faculty. Dozens of education faculty have already signed and teachers at another Chicago school, with support of parents, have now decided to boycott the test. School administrators have threatened retaliation against the teachers, and support from outside the city is essential. The Chicago Teachers Union is supporting this teacher-led boycott.

TO SIGN, PLEASE SEND YOUR NAME, TITLE, AND UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION TO:
gutstein@uic.edu

February 28, 2014

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR CHICAGO TEACHERS REFUSING TO ADMINISTER THE ILLINOIS STANDARD ACHIEVEMENT TEST

As university faculty whose responsibilities include preparing future educators, we support the action of teachers at the Saucedo Elementary School in Chicago who are refusing to administer the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT). Over a decade of research shows that an over emphasis on high-stakes standardized tests narrows curriculum, creates social and emotional stress for students and families, drives committed teachers out of the profession, and turns schools into test-prep factories with principals forced to comply as overseers—especially in low-scoring schools. We understand assessment as the process of gathering evidence about learning, from multiple sources, so that teachers can better support student learning. The ISAT, in contrast, contributes virtually nothing. CPS no longer uses the ISAT for promotion, graduation, or eligibility for selective-enrollment schools and is phasing it out after this year. It is not aligned with Common Core State Standards—which, regardless of how one sees them, Illinois has already adopted—and does not help teachers improve student learning. The pre-service teachers with whom we work are demoralized about a future of teaching in such a test-driven atmosphere. We teach our students—future educators—to stand up for their students, families and communities, and to take principled stands for social justice. That's what the Saucedo teachers are doing. We applaud them and stand with them.