

More national standardized testing is planned - but resistance is growing too

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The Obama administration is surreptitiously moving forward with its program to increase, vastly, resources devoted to standardized testing. Stephen Krashen and Susan Ohanian explain the blueprint in their excellent post in Education Week. A counter-movement, SOS, (Save our Schools), has emerged among teachers, who are planning a march on and in Washington to save public education, on July 30. It's truly astounding how little news about the growing opposition among teachers in the country, or the extraordinary resistance in the rest of the world, reaches us in the U.S. through our popular media.

Another heartening development is that teachers who have not before thought of unions as vehicles for organizing about social justice - or defense of public education for that matter - are realizing they have to "own" the unions, democratize them and make them use their (still) considerable resources to mobilize against these destructive policies being in put in place by President Obama.

SOS has called on teachers to recruit their union locals to join the march. The AFT national executive board has given the march its official approval. Put one point in the common sense column. Whether the AFT national apparatus will actually do anything to build the march is quite another question. Its usual idea of "support" is to send staffers to appear at the rally in AFT T-shirts, have its PR people take lots of photos, especially if the union president is a speaker, then publicize its support in the union newspaper and website, and refer to this "support" when questioned about its lack of involvement in progressive causes.

Last I heard, the NEA national office had endorsement of the march on its agenda. If the NEA can be pressured to endorse and actually build the mobilization, the AFT will feel pressure to do likewise. This would be an important reversal of the "race-to-the-right" to gain political brownie points from the Democrats — and Republicans — that characterizes AFT and NEA politics.

The July 30 march is an action that deserves support from anyone who cares about having a system of public education that does more than prepare kids to work as wage slaves, which is the real purpose of all this standardized testing. Can't attend on July 30? Me neither so I've made a donation. I encourage you to do the same.