

THE DOCUMENTARY
RACE TO NOWHERE
THE DARK SIDE OF AMERICA'S ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE

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**Education Doc "Race to Nowhere" Ignites Movement
For Homework-Free Holidays and Weekends**

600 teachers and principals in 40 states take Homework Pledge

December 2011—A growing news story this holiday season is about what some kids are *not* doing. Homework. Inspired by a call-to-action from the makers behind the education documentary film "**Race to Nowhere**", schools across the country are now committing to homework-free weekends and holiday breaks.

The team behind "**Race to Nowhere**" calls on principals, superintendents and classroom teachers to eliminate homework on weekends and holidays by signing the **Homework Pledge**, launched on the film's online action platform **End the Race.org**. More than **600 teachers and principals in 40 states** have already taken the Homework Pledge, along with more than 6,500 parents and students.

Advocating for a "cultural shift", the **Homework Pledge** points to research revealing that most homework doesn't demonstrably increase learning, raise test scores or reflect students' academic success. Already, the pledge platform has ignited practical and policy changes in schools across the country, including:

- **Ridgewood High School** (Ridgewood, NJ), which has banned homework during its winter and February breaks.
- **Walter Payton College Prep** (Chicago, IL), which has eliminated homework for all school breaks this year, with no tests or projects due upon return to school.
- **Wellesley Middle School** (Wellesley, MA), which has implemented a no-homework policy on religious holidays and school vacations.
- **Burlington High School** (Burlington, MA), whose principal has instituted a no-homework policy for the upcoming holiday break.
- **St. Mary's School** and **Bishop O'Dowd High School** (both in Oakland, CA), which have eliminated homework for the upcoming holiday break.

These schools reflect a growing movement that supports the rigorous reevaluation of homework policies. The **New York Times** recently showcased this trend in New York City: "Armed with neuroscience, self-analysis and common sense, some of New York City's most competitive high schools, famed for their Marine-like mentality when it comes to homework, have begun to lighten the load for fear of crushing their teenage charges. Teachers, parents and administrators are also beginning to look beyond the academic questions, studying research about the health effects of overscheduling and stress."

Filmmaker Vicki Abeles says that the broad base of support for who have signed the **Homework Pledge** reveals that "A consensus is building that we need to give our children opportunities for true learning and growth outside of structured schoolwork—and that means committing to homework-free weekends and holiday breaks."

Abeles is available for interviews during December, as are some of the principals and teachers who have pledged to revolutionize local homework policies.

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Film Website: www.racetonowhere.com

Action Website: www.endtherace.org

Film Trailer: <http://youtu.be/Uem73imvn9Y>

Press Response to "Race to Nowhere":

Katie Couric: "I interviewed Vicki Abeles on my web show today and was struck by her message: 'Schools are not factories', she argues, 'and children aren't products to be fixed and tested.' Over-scheduled, stressed-out kids aren't just less competitive, they are miserable...This film is a poignant reminder that straight A's and high SAT scores are not the Holy Grail. We all want our kids to excel, but I'd take a happy child over a 'depressed success' any day of the week." (CBS News: 3/1/2011)

The New York Times: "Spurred by the medical and emotional problems of her own three children, Ms. Abeles embarked on a deeply personal inquiry into the insanely hectic lives of too many of our offspring. Rushing from class to sports practice, from community work to homework, and relying increasingly on stimulants and sleep deprivation, these kids seem more pressured than the average C.E.O. Documenting consequences that range from depression to eating disorders to suicide, the film's medical professionals share Ms. Abeles' alarm and her awareness that blame, if it exists, is systemic and with little current incentive to change." (9/9/2010)