This is to formally notify you that as parents, we are exercising our parental rights - with the full consultation and collaboration of our children Kate, Maya and Isaiah Rayner Fried - by opting to have them not participate in the upcoming TCAP/CSAP testing.

If there is any formal paperwork that we must fill out to satisfy school and/or district requirements, please let us know and we will gladly fill it out.

We have been opting our children out of CSAPs since elementary school. To a greater or lesser degree, school administrators have tried to persuade, cajole, mislead, promise, threaten, beg, plead or intimidate us and them into changing our decision. We are fully aware of state law, as well as the talking points sent out to school districts by the CDE which mischaracterize state law in an attempt to force participation in the TCAPs/CSAPs. Our decision is final and irrevocable, and we expect you to respectfully support our fundamental rights as parents to direct the upbringing and education of our children. We are confident there will be no inappropriate repercussions taken against them.

Why do we oppose high-stakes standardized testing? Because the testing regime is a form of educational malpractice that encourages schools to "teach to the test," overemphasizing scores and undervaluing critical thinking skills and subjects not measured on the test. We have seen its pernicious effect first-hand over many grade levels. As educators, I am sure you are even more aware of the limitations of this top-down federal mandate, but have little choice within the legal mandates but to follow the rules. We as parents have more freedom to proclaim "The emperor has no clothes."

Over-testing our children does not make them learn better, any more than taking your temperature repeatedly will make you healthier or smogging your car weekly will make it run better. There are many other measures of student effectiveness - as well as school quality - already in use, and we feel this one benefits primarily the testing companies and curriculum publishers. The ultimate goal of the CSAP/TCAP/No Child Left Behind regime is to undermine universal public education and turn our children's education into a commodity, a source of economic opportunity for for-profit educational corporations. Many of these special interests in turn spent considerable sums of money lobbying Congress and making campaign contributions to politicians who got this scheme turned into law, thereby earning themselves an excellent return on their investment.

Will my children be allowed to go to the media center during the mornings of March 21-23 when TCAP testing will occur? Should they stay home from school until the tests are over? I will be happy to work with you on any reasonable arrangements you would like to make due to our conscientious non-participation in the tests.

Thank you for your consideration.

Eric Fried

Cheryl Rayner