

# New Bedford Education Coalition to hold MCAS “Opt-Out” rally

The New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools is urging families and students in public schools to opt out of the spring MCAS exams and is promoting that message with a rally and car caravan on Sunday, May 2.

“High-stakes standardized testing in general does a lot of damage to our public schools and to our students. This year in particular, administering MCAS exams is shameful, taking away precious time from educators and students to rebuild relationships as more and more schools reopen to in-person learning,” said New Bedford resident Cynthia Roy, an educator at Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical School and co-chair of NBCSOS.

The rally will begin at 10 a.m. at New Bedford High School. In addition to having information available about opting out of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams, there will be family entertainment activities and refreshments. At 11:30, a car caravan will travel to Fall River to further spread the opt-out message.

Emily DeSousa, a student at Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, said that she does not consider herself a conventional learner and that the MCAS is too narrow in its focus.

“It’s not motivating to remind students every year that the educational system views them as though they’re nothing more than a test score,” DeSousa said. “These tests can even damage students’ self-esteem.”

The state is required to administer the MCAS, but students in

grades three to eight are not required to take the exam. High-school students do need to pass the MCAS as a graduation requirement, however that is waived until 2022.

NBCSOS points out that there are no consequences for students, schools or districts if students opt out of the exam.

NBCSOS is a coalition of students, parents, educators and community activists dedicated to fully funded, equitable and socially just public schools. The coalition opposes the use of high-stakes standardized tests, as they are an instrument of structural racism. Standardized tests are used to perpetuate a false narrative about failing schools, and the coalition supports progressive action to meet the diverse needs of students who deserve to be treated as individuals.

Those interested in joining the rally and caravan can visit the event page on Facebook or the NBCSOS website.