

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact for National Press:

Josh Baran
(917) 797-2666

Contact for Regional and Local Press:

Chelsea Doctors
Phone: (925) 310-4242
Chelsea@RacetoNowhere.com

Movement Behind Hard-Hitting Education Documentary “Race to Nowhere” Called “Juggernaut” Centerpiece of a National Movement

Updated: January 29, 2013 - Named one of the top 10 education documentaries you don't want to miss by Take Part.com, “Race to Nowhere,” has been embraced by hundreds of thousands of individuals in more than 30 countries at over 6,000 screenings.

A community discussion follows each screening, so the film is an active centerpiece for a fast-growing movement for breaking out of this “race to nowhere.” Slate.com called the film, “The Battle Hymn of the Anti-Tiger Mother... the stealth juggernaut... a powerful alarming documentary that’s riling up parents across the country.”

The film hit a cultural nerve, inspiring diverse audiences at schools, universities, corporations, medical centers, religious institutions and non-profits to discuss the most pressing issues of our times: education, health, parenting, the 24/7, nonstop culture, the global economy, working parents, wellness, technology, innovation, and childhood.

Vicki Abeles, the co-director of “Race to Nowhere” launched a social action campaign in 2012 to provide advocacy and community building resources to individuals and communities to help address the issues the film raises. Tool kits have been developed to support education and action in schools, corporations, colleges and homes.

UNIQUE DISTRIBUTION AND OUTREACH An independently produced and distributed film—boasting no studio backing or commercial distribution and untethered to third-party corporate interests—“Race to Nowhere” has been distributed solely through unique grassroots, and community-based platforms. Director, Vicki Abeles, notes that this distinctive distribution approach reflects her priority to link the film to action and on-the-ground social impact. “When you step outside the conventional distribution approach and encourage audiences to engage with film, not as consumers, but as activists and stakeholders, you begin to see the incredible power of documentary to effect change in our communities,” Abeles says.

The team behind “Race to Nowhere” has launched several initiatives and together with the film has ignited change in hundreds of schools and districts.

RACE TO NOWHERE ACROSS AMERICA 2013

With the release of the Home DVD, students, parents, teachers, and community members are encouraged to gather in intimate home settings to watch the film, discuss their own experiences, and take action in their communities. The purchase of the DVD will give buyers online access to discussion materials that will help facilitate local organizing.

In an effort to capture the dynamic and particular stories of people across the country, the film team is also encouraging house party organizers and participants to record personal stories from the frontlines of American education—and to share such stories with the broader “Race to Nowhere” community—now more than one million strong in the wake of the film’s successful community screening campaign.

Schools and communities are also being encouraged to join **Race to Nowhere Across America**. Participating communities will receive our brand-new **Break Out Action Guide** to coordinate and chart real change.

"Fathers, everywhere - please see this film. There are so many parenting issues where the torch is being carried by the moms alone, and the dads are merely roped in. The issues raised in *Race to Nowhere* are too important; we need to see it, talk about it, and deal with it. It'll take a collective effort to create communities around our children where they are not so destroyed by a single failure, where they don't feel every single act is being judged by admissions officers, and where they are free to still be kids." - Po Bronson, co-author of *NurtureShock: New Thinking About Children*

"The "Race to Nowhere" is another inconvenient truth. It's a wake-up call to all of us who care about children, the purpose of schools, and how we define success in American education. And, importantly, it provides viewers with excellent, actionable suggestions of how to begin to address change locally in our schools." George Lucas Education Foundation

"Race to Nowhere' is a must-see documentary for parents, teachers and the young people we care for and work with, so that a new national dialogue can emerge around re-engineering school to meet its real purpose: to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for students to discover their passions and future without sacrificing their health, well-being, and youthfulness itself in the process." Patrick Bassett, President of NAIS

HEALTHY HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

In June 2012, "Race to Nowhere" director Vicki Abeles joined with education and homework experts Alfie Kohn (author, *The Homework Myth*), Dr. Etta Kralovec (Associate Professor, Univ. of Arizona and co-author, *The End of Homework*) and Sara Bennett (co-author, *The Case Against Homework*) to launch a national online petition on Change.org, urging the National PTA to adopt a set of homework guidelines that schools across the country can implement locally in an effort to realign homework policy and practice with the best research on student learning, health and engagement.

More than 18,000 individuals signed the petition and The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Resolutions Committee is formally review a groundbreaking set of "[Healthy Homework Guidelines](#)" as its first-ever position on homework.

In November 2012, the local PTA at Cornell Elementary School in Albany, CA submitted the guidelines to the National PTA for formal consideration as a resolution.

Even in advance of formal action by the National PTA, schools are using the Healthy Homework Guidelines to create local change. Inspired by "Race to Nowhere" and Alfie Kohn's research, Cardiff Elementary School in San Diego, California created a homework task force and adopted a new policy that mirrors much of the healthy homework guidelines. After hearing about Cardiff's new policy, other schools are following suit and using the Healthy Homework Guidelines to inform their homework policies.

SLEEP AWARENESS CAMPAIGN "Race to Nowhere" streamed the film to more than 1,000 medical professionals and dozens of schools have added later start times allowing students to get the sleep their bodies and minds need and providing more time for collaboration among teachers.

COLLEGE SCREENING CAMPAIGN "Race to Nowhere" has been screened at hundreds of colleges and universities reaching students, professors, admissions officers and health and wellness centers and professionals. There's a brand new College Tool Kit to support conversation and action on college campuses.

TESTING The team behind "Race to Nowhere" is a sponsor of the [National Resolution on High-Stakes Testing](#) calling on federal and state policymakers to reduce standardized test mandates and base school accountability on multiple forms of measurement.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SCHOOLS

The film has ignited change in hundreds of schools and districts where *Race to Nowhere* has been screened, including:

- **Ridgewood High School** in New Jersey, which has addressed homework, healthy balance and later start times. The school has also created a student advisory to the principal. Other schools in the district have followed Ridgewood's lead and have created homework free holiday breaks.
- **Great Neck High School** on Long Island—site of the SAT cheating scandals in 2012—which eliminated all homework over Thanksgiving break.
- **Walter Payton High School** in Chicago IL which eliminated homework over holiday breaks and is working to implement many additional changes.
- **Wellesley Middle School** in Wellesley, Mass., which has committed to a no-homework policy on religious holidays or school vacations.
- **Galloway School District** in Galloway, New Jersey, whose superintendent has proposed a ban on assignments on weekends, holidays and school vacations.
- **Ridgefield High School** in Ridgefield, NJ, which shifted to block scheduling.
- **Potomac School** in Montana which created a new schedule and eliminated homework.

Press Attention for “Race to Nowhere”

The Washington Post: “Riveted to this disturbing tableau were more than 300 parents and educators, including Elise Browne Hughes, 46, who wiped away tears one recent evening in Bethesda while watching the documentary “Race to Nowhere,” which is becoming a growing grassroots phenomenon in the achievement-minded Washington area and beyond. “It’s in the culture, and it kind of feeds on itself,” said Hughes, a mother of two sons who paid \$10 for a ticket and braved the heavy rain to watch the film at Walt Whitman High School. For her and thousands of others nationwide, the film has raised difficult questions about how to raise well-adjusted children at a time when schools seem test-obsessed, advanced classes are the norm and parents worry that their children will not go as far in life as they have.” (10/7/2010)

Katie Couric, former CBS News Anchor: “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. One study found that 15% of U.S. high school students had seriously considered suicide. 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.” (3/1/2011)

The Washington Post: “If Obama really wants to help promote education films, he could take a look at “Race to Nowhere,” a documentary that isn’t backed by a Gates grant but explores the strains of competing in a pressure-packed academic culture that is highly test-driven and pushes some students to the edge. His time would better be spent by talking to education experts who aren’t enamored with his policies and using his extraordinary intellect to come to understand how he is getting education so wrong.” (10/11/2010)

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)

###