

## Divesting Our Youth from the War Machine: A Guide to Countering and Resisting the Militarization of Youth.

2017-2018.

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### Divest from the War Machine

This Campaign Guide was compiled by CODEPINK in support of the Divest from the War Machine Campaign.

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Civilian Education. We are extremely grateful to them for contributing their insight and experience to this movement. To learn more about NNOMY's work, visit <http://nnomy.org/index.php/en/>. To learn more about the Coalition to

Protect Student Privacy's work, visit <http://www.studentprivacy.org/>. To learn more about Stop Recruiting Kids, visit: <http://srkcampaign.org/>. To learn more about Save Civilian Education's work, visit <http://savecivilianeducation.org/>.



### More information

For more information about this youth divestment guide, to add your story and suggestions, or to share insights from your national and local efforts, please email [divest@codepink.org](mailto:divest@codepink.org). For more information, latest updates and more on global efforts for peace

and disarmament, visit [divestfromwarmachine.org](http://divestfromwarmachine.org).

**Please keep us informed about your actions and activities, so that we can share with other campaigners on the [divestfromwarmachine.org](http://divestfromwarmachine.org) website.**

### Glossary

- ASVAB- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
- NCLB- No Child Left Behind
- JROTC- Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps
- JAMRS- Joint Advertising Marketing Research & Studies

# The Problem

The United States has the largest, most efficiently organized, and most effective system in the world for recruiting children and youth as prospective soldiers. This guide will outline a variety of avenues through which military recruitment takes place in schools. Divesting youth from the war machine means opposing and preventing the use of youth as cannon fodder for an unrestrained military apparatus engaged in endless wars. The military should not be allowed to intrude upon school grounds in search of impressionable youth to refill its ranks through means of sensational advertising, promotion and deception.

Over the last several decades, the Pentagon, conservative forces, and corporations have been systematically working to expand their presence in the K-12 learning environment and in public and private universities. The combined impact of the military, conservative think tanks and foundations, and of corporatization of our public educational systems has eroded the basic democratic concept of civilian public education. It is a trend that, if allowed to continue, will weaken the primacy of civilian rule and, ultimately, our country's commitment to democratic ideals. (See: <http://savecivilianeducation.org/>)

Military recruiting intentionally targets the rural and urban poor, especially young people of color. These are groups that have fewer opportunities for economic advancement outside the military. We must oppose the varying methods of military recruitment which reiterate the core tenets of U.S. militarism--unquestioned obedience to authority, the notion we must fear "enemies," and the primacy of military might in American foreign policy. We must divest our youth from the war machine, and ensure our most vulnerable youth populations have access to jobs and fields outside the military after school.

As there is a need to divest youth from the war machine, there is also a need to divest public funds from the war machine in order to reinvest in life-affirming sectors like education, healthcare, clean energy, and more to ensure that those same youth have access to non-military jobs, quality education, life-sustaining health services, and to safeguard a liveable planet for them.

As outlined by Colonel Larry Wilkerson at the Divest from the War Machine Summit in October 2017, the military is now restricted when they go to recruit because many youth in high recruitment states today lack the intellectual capacity to pass the Armed Forces Aptitude Battery and because of health issues, most commonly obesity. It is morbidly ironic that the military apparatus that diverts so much funding away from life-affirming sectors such as education and healthcare is suffering from the impacts of its own excesses. (See: [http://www.divestfromwarmachine.org/our\\_reason\\_for\\_existing\\_is](http://www.divestfromwarmachine.org/our_reason_for_existing_is))

## A Threat to Public Health

In 2012 the American Public Health Association (APHA) released a policy statement calling for the "Cessation of Military Recruiting in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools," identifying youth military recruitment as a public health problem affecting young people in America. APHA is the oldest, largest, and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the

world. In the statement, the APHA stated:

Recruiters for the various US armed forces have free access to our nation's public high schools, as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Military recruiting behavior in the nation's high schools has become increasingly

aggressive and predatory. Although adults in the active military service are reported to experience increased mental health risks, including stress, substance abuse, and suicide, there is evidence that military service for the youngest soldiers is consistently associated with health effects far worse than for those who are older. This suggests that military service is associated with disproportionately poor health for those in late adolescence.

These negative outcomes for teen soldiers, coupled with significant evidence that the adolescent brain is not equipped to make accurate risk calculations, leads APHA to conclude entry into the military should be delayed until full adulthood. For these reasons, the American Public Health Association opposes military recruiting in public elementary and secondary schools. (See: Cessation of Military Recruiting in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, October 2012. Retrieved from: <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/23/11/19/cessation-of-military-recruiting-in-public-elementary-and-secondary-schools>)

## How Does it Affect You?

The most aggressive outside effort to use the school system to teach an ideology with ominous long-term implications for society comes from the military establishment. Over the last two decades, with relatively little media coverage or public outcry, the Pentagon's involvement in schools and students' lives has grown exponentially. Now, for example:

- Every school day, at least half a million high school students attend Junior ROTC classes to receive instruction from retired officers who are handpicked by the Pentagon to teach its own version of history and civics. These students are assigned “ranks” and conditioned to believe that military and civilian values are similar, with the implication that unquestioning obedience to authority is therefore a feature of good citizenship.
- Armed forces academies are being established in some public schools (Chicago now has eight), where all students are given a heavy dose of military culture and values.
- A network of military-related programs is spreading in hundreds of elementary and middle schools. Examples are the Young Marines and Starbase programs, and military programs that sneak into schools under the cloak of Science / Technology / Engineering / Math (STEM) education.
- Military recruiters are trained to pursue “school ownership” as their goal (see: “[Army School Recruiting Program Handbook](#)”). Their frequent presence in classrooms, lunch areas and at assemblies has the effect of popularizing military values, soldiering and, ultimately, war.
- Since 2001, federal law has overridden civilian school autonomy and family privacy when it comes to releasing student contact information to the military. Additionally, each year thousands of schools allow the military to administer its entrance exam--the ASVAB--to 10th-12th graders, allowing recruiters to bypass laws protecting parental rights and the privacy of minors and gain access to personal information on hundreds of thousands of students.

(See: <http://savecivilianeducation.org>)

## The Threat to Public Education

Efforts by groups outside the school system to inject conservatism and corporate values into the learning process have been going on for a number of years. In a recent example of right-wing educational intervention, *The New York Times* reported that tea party groups, using lesson plans and coloring books, have been pushing schools to “teach a conservative interpretation of the Constitution, where the federal government is a creeping and unwelcome presence in the lives of freedom-loving Americans.” (See: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/17/us/constitution-has-its-day-amid-a-struggle-for-its-spirit.html> )

Corporations have been projecting their influence in schools with devices like Channel One, a closed-circuit TV program that broadcasts commercial content daily to captive student audiences in 8,000 schools. Some companies have succeeded in convincing schools to sign exclusive contracts for pizza, soft drinks and other products, with the goal of teaching early brand loyalty to children. A National Education Policy Center report issued in November 2011 documents the various ways in which business/school partnerships are harming children educationally by channeling student thinking “into a corporate-friendly track” and stunting their ability to think critically. (See: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/schoolhouse-commercialism-2011> )

The development of this corporate-friendly track dovetails with a radical corporate agenda to dismantle America's public education system. States across the country are slashing educational spending, outsourcing public teacher jobs, curbing collective-bargaining rights, and marginalizing teachers' unions. There is a proliferation of charter and "cyber" schools that promote private sector involvement and a push toward for-profit schools where the compensation paid to private management companies is tied directly to student performance on standardized assessments. The cumulative effect is the creation of institutions that cultivate a simplistic ideology that merges consumerism with subservience. (See: <http://www.wright.edu/administration/aaup/OP/OP-2011-11/020.pdf> )

The corporatization of education via charter schools and the administration sector growth at universities is another troubling trend for public education. Diane Ravitch's book *Reign of Error* and Henry A. Giroux's newest book, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* give pointers to the doubtful role of corporate values in public education. (See: <http://www.npr.org/2013/09/27/225748846/diane-ravitch-rebukes-education-activists-reign-of-error> and <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/22548-henry-giroux-beyond-neoliberal-miseducation> )

Why is this happening? Giroux notes that “Chris Hedges, the former *New York Times* correspondent, [appeared on Democracy Now! in 2012](#) and told host Amy Goodman the federal government spends some \$600 billion a year on education—“and the corporations want it.”

(See: <http://savecivilianeducation.org> )



## Stopping These Threats

There is reason to be hopeful about reversing this trend if we look, for example, at some of the successes in grassroots efforts to curb militarism in schools. In 2009, a coalition of high school students, parents and teachers in the very conservative, military-dominated city of San Diego succeeded in getting their elected school board to shut down JROTC firing ranges at eleven high schools. Two years later, the same coalition got the school board to pass a policy significantly limiting military recruiting in all of its schools. Though such initiatives are relatively few in number, similar victories have been won in other school districts and on the state level in Hawaii and Maryland.

There are also some organizations supporting efforts to introduce history and civics lessons from a progressive perspective, such as the Zinn Education Project and Rethinking Schools (See: <http://www.zinnedproject.org> and <http://www.rethinkingschools.org>). And a small movement is working against Channel One and the commercialization of the school environment (e.g., <http://www.commercialalert.org/issues/education/> and <http://www.obligation.org/> ).

As promising and effective as these efforts are, they pale in comparison to the massive scale of what groups on the other side of the political spectrum are proactively doing in the educational environment to preserve the influence of conservatism, militarism and corporate power.

**It is time for progressive organizations, foundations and media to confront this and become equally involved in the educational system.** It is especially important that more organizations unite to oppose the growing intrusion of the Pentagon in K-12 schools and universities. Restoring the primacy of critical thinking and

democratic values in our culture cannot be done without stopping the militarization and corporate takeover of public education.

## What we can do

Progressive **individuals, organizations, foundations** and **media** all have important roles to play in confronting the conservative, corporate and military influences in our educa-

tional system. Below are lists of ideas for action and groups that offer useful resources and background information to help you get to work

to divest our youth from the war machine. (See: <http://savecivilianeducation.org/>)

## Six Avenues of Resistance: Counter-recruitment, Opt-out, ASVAB, JROTC, Marksmanship, and Recruiter Access

### Counter Recruiters' Narrative Before Students Enlist

- Share the video “**Before You Enlist**” with youth in your community. This video provides a rational voice to counter the seductive and often deceptive recruiting practices of the U.S. military. The message is not “don’t enlist” but rather to provide young people and their families a more complete picture of the life-altering consequences of joining the military. The video is 14 minutes long. Find it here: <https://goo.gl/fUfnmL>
- Host watch parties. Share flyers for the event throughout your community, and invite as many families from your area as possible. Play the video and hold space for discussion afterward.
- Federal courts have ruled you have the right to counter the message of recruiters in the schools. (Source: [http://www.comdsd.org/article\\_archive/9thcirintro.htm](http://www.comdsd.org/article_archive/9thcirintro.htm))
- **Form a group of “counter-recruiters.”** Follow the example of the North West Suburban Peace and Education Project active in Chicago. They table at 8 high schools in their district to achieve the following goals:
- To talk to students in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago about the realities of military life and war so young people will better understand what they're getting into [when talking with recruiters](#).
- Encourage youth to think critically, search for more information and then make up their own minds.
- Present students with [career alternatives](#) that show young people a way to learn valuable skills, find adventure, pay for higher education and serve others.
- Provide resources for young people to reinforce values of critical thinking, youth leadership, dialogue and non-violence.
- Inform and educate the public on issues of student privacy and militarism in the schools.
- Find more information in the **Back-To-School kit for Counter-recruitment and School Demilitarization**

**Organizing** from the National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth. This is a catalog of basic material useful to educating young people and school personnel about the realities of military enlistment and war. The catalog also includes some information on alternatives to enlistment, as well as items written for organizers seeking to reach out to local schools. Find the kit here: <https://goo.gl/pC4Ha9>

## Promote “Opt-Out” Procedures to Prevent Children’s Information from Being Sent to Military Recruiters

- Federal law requires schools to release the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all high school students to military recruiters.
- Many state/public school systems also provides recruiters a child’s: date and place of birth, education, degree received, and the most recent previous school attended.
- Parents have the right to “opt-out” in writing from having their child’s information sent to military recruiters.
- Schools must notify parents they have the right to opt out.
- Most do a lousy job informing parents of the right to opt out. Some
- school systems, however, have made the opt-out notification prominent and provide an easy way to submit an “opt-out” request. For more on this, see <http://www.studentprivacy.org/>.
- Host a meeting for parents at a local school in your community!
- Make flyers with this information and post them around your city!
- Pass around Opt-Out forms to parents at schools in your city!
- Research your school district’s opt-out procedures. If needed, petition for local school policy changes to make opting out easier.

## Campaign for Laws Mandating ASVAB Test Results May Not be Used for Military Recruitment

- The ASVAB is the military’s 3-hour enlistment exam.
- About 700,000 students in 12,000 high schools now take the ASVAB across the country every year.
- Military regulations say the primary purpose of the ASVAB “Career Exploration Program” is to find leads for recruiters.
- The ASVAB also collects social security numbers, a practice prohibited by many state laws.
- The military proctors the test with the assistance of school staff. If the schools gave the ASVAB, the results would be deemed to be educational records and thus, subject to the federal law that calls for parental consent before such information on children is released to third parties.
- ASVAB results are the only student information of this type leaving our nation’s classrooms without parental consent.
- To prevent testing information from reaching recruiters, schools must tell the military before the test that “ASVAB Release Option 8” must be used for ALL the students who are tested. Option 8 means the military can’t use the results to recruit kids.
- Schools select release options, not parents or students.
- Just 20% of the high schools across the country select Option 8 for their students who take the ASVAB.
- Maryland, Hawaii, and New Hampshire have laws mandating Option 8 while 2,000 additional high schools

have selected Release Option 8.

- Some states allows high school students who fail mandated exit exams to take the ASVAB as an alternative assessment.
- **Petition your school district or state to mandate Option 8 to protect the privacy of the children in your community!**
- Sample policies mandating Option 8 can be found online thanks to the National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy. You can find them here: <http://www.studentprivacy.org/school-policies-calling-for-option-8.html>.

## Monitor and Oppose JROTC in your Community

The Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) is the Pentagon's high school military training and indoctrination program. What makes this child-soldier themed program so striking is that the Pentagon carries it out in plain sight in hundreds and hundreds of private, military, and public high schools across the U.S. The JROTC program, still spreading in high schools across the country, costs U.S. taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars annually. (Source: [http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175784/tomgram%3A ann jones, suffer the children](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175784/tomgram%3A_ann_jones_suffer_the_children))

Since its early days of existence JROTC programs have been pushed and expanded into “educationally and economically deprived areas” where they enroll “at risk” youth. JROTC is a propagandic indoctrination program that often preys on youth from poor and marginalized communities activists who may lack other economic and career opportunities. In some communities have been successful in limiting JROTC programs . Now is the time for more of such efforts across the country.

- JROTC programs exist in 3,402 high schools nationwide--65% of them in the South-- with a total enrollment of 557,129 students.
- JROTC textbooks teach a reactionary brand of U.S. history and civics classes are sometimes taught by military retirees with no college education. Meanwhile, every other classroom teacher in the nation typically must hold a Masters after a few years.
- The unit on citizenship is entitled, “You the People.”
- Many states allow students who take JROTC to also satisfy Physical Education credits.
- Students should never be placed in JROTC classes without parental consent. Check with schools in your community to see if a JROTC program is in place and whether placement in those programs requires parental consent.
- Request the JROTC enrollment statistics for each school in your community. If any units have fallen below a total of 100 students two years in a row, agitate to remove them as required by federal law.
- Host meetings with other parents or student groups in your community to discuss why you are opposed to JROTC programs in your community.
- Read more about past campaigns that have successfully targeted JROTC programs and develop a plan to urge decision makers in your school district to cancel existing JROTC programs and to adopt a policy to never implement JROTC programs in the future. (See: [http://www.comdsd.org/article\\_archive/SDstudentsGivePinkSlipHSmilitaryProgram.html](http://www.comdsd.org/article_archive/SDstudentsGivePinkSlipHSmilitaryProgram.html) and <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2008/jun/04/city-light-2/>)

## Monitor and Oppose School Marksmanship Programs in Your Community

- The Pentagon embraces the seductive power of the trigger as a recruiting device. Realizing the potential, the

military exploits video games and weaponry to recruit and cultivate adolescent killers.

- 2,400 high schools have marksmanship programs affiliated with JROTC and the congressionally-chartered Civilian Marksmanship Program. The kids regularly attend tournaments hosted by the NRA.
- More than 250,000 youth participate in these programs and every year more than 1,500 junior air rifle competitions are conducted in the USA.
- Schools allow shooting to occur during school hours in classrooms and gyms that are contaminated by .177 cal. lead pellets fired from CO2 air rifles at 600 fps.
- Lead fragments become airborne and are deposited on the floor at the muzzle-end and at the target backstop. Kids track the lead throughout the school. Loose enforcement of regulations creates a health hazard for students and custodial staff.
- Verify which schools currently have firing ranges in your area.
- Demand the closure of marksmanship programs. At least demand they stop using lead projectiles in school buildings.
- If shooting ranges are present, determine if the school is adhering to the “[Guide to Lead Management for Air Gun Shooting](#)” published by the Civilian Marksmanship Program.

## Oppose Disproportionate Access to Students for Military Recruiters

- Federal law says military recruiters are to have the same access to high schools as college and civilian employment representatives --not greater access. Yet military recruiters may eat in the cafeteria while college recruiters must meet with select kids in the guidance office. Military recruiters also perform dozens of volunteer tasks in the schools.
- Activities by military recruiters CAN be limited if a school district adopts a policy that regulates all types of recruiters the same way. For information on how to secure such a policy, visit <http://nnomy.org/index.php/en/resources/downloads/access-to-schools/571-cr-policy-organizing.html>.
- Get counter-recruitment information from [NNOMY \(National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth\)](#) and [Project YANO \(Project on Youth and Non-military Opportunities\)](#) into your schools. Federal courts have ruled you have the right to counter the message of recruiters in the schools.

## Other Strategies for Countering School Militarization

- [Tabling opposite the Marines at McCallum HS](#)
- [Winning The Peace: A National High School Intervention](#)
- [Guide to High School Leafleting](#)
- [A fuller list of ideas that can confront expanding militarism](#)
- [in in your schools and community](#)

**Next:** Contact the Divest from the War Machine team and NNOMY to learn how we can assist your activism. Contact us at [divest@codepink.org](mailto:divest@codepink.org), or contact NNOMY [here](#).

**CODE PINK**  
WOMEN FOR PEACE



**National Coalition to  
PROTECT STUDENT PRIVACY**

**Stop Recruiting Kids**

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SRKcampaign.org

**A National Call: Save Civilian Public Education**

