



**Race To Nowhere film screening**  
at the historic Port Theater in Corona del Mar  
**Tuesday, October 21, 7pm**  
Hosted by the Waldorf School of O.C.

**Tickets are free, but are limited!**

To reserve a ticket, go to:

<http://www.racetonowhere.com/epostcard/7445>

**RACE TO NOWHERE** is a close-up look at the pressures on today's students, offering an intimate view of lives packed with activities, leaving little room for down-time or family time. Parents today are expected to raise high-achieving children who are good at everything: academics, sports, the arts, community service. The film tackles the tragic side of our often achievement-obsessed culture, with interviews that explore the hidden world of over-burdened schedules, student suicide, academic cheating and young people who have checked out. **RACE TO NOWHERE asks the question: Are the young people of today prepared to step fully and productively into their future?** We hear from students who feel they are being pushed to the brink, educators who worry students aren't learning anything substantive, and college professors and business leaders who are concerned that their incoming employees lack the skills needed to succeed in the business world: passion, creativity, and internal motivation.

The metaphor of a race is so often used in discussing education, we do not even stop to think about the implications. This film gives voice to our students, so seldom heard from in the clamor about their education. One said, "School is just so much pressure. Every day I would wake up dreading it." Another said "I would spend six hours a night on my homework." But they agreed that they were not learning deeply. They are learning to answer questions on tests, learning to cram information into their heads, learning to cheat so they can get the all-important grade that will get them into the best college.

**It is all a race. And races have winners and losers.** The parents, it is clear, are motivated by great fear. They are seeing that the middle class in America is shrinking, and the standard of living is dropping. They believe that if their children are not in the top tenth percentile, that they may not be as successful as they were. Many parents have bought into the American equation of wealth with status - and thus happiness - and see that the next generation is going to have a rougher time achieving this dream. So the pressure is on from an early age, and students are coached to be performers.

**The documentary reveals the tremendous cost of this pressure.** Children are losing their childhoods. They have little time to play, or relax, and research has shown how valuable unstructured play is in building social skills and imagination. They are constantly seeking to please someone else - a parent, a teacher, a coach - and they lose sight of their intrinsic motivation. Why are they doing all of this? What are they passionate about? This is a question that is deferred until after the test, after admittance to college, after graduation, after they have a job. But many children wind up feeling empty, even suicidal, when they contemplate the years of drudgery that awaits them, and cannot even see the point.

**The Port Theater** is located at 2905 East Coast Hwy, Corona del Mar, and offers a full bar and kitchen to emphasize a luxury movie-going experience. Patrons can now enjoy a selection of top-shelf cocktails, fine wines and beer along with hot entrees during the film. The Port's mezzanine-level bar features comfortable leather seats, each with its own private table for convenient placement of food & beverage. Guests are encouraged to arrive a few minutes early to order a delectable beverage and meal to enjoy during the film. <http://portnewport.com/>

# Educating the Whole Child

Vicki Abeles' provocative documentary, **Race To Nowhere**, tells the story of children, parents and teachers who are increasingly frustrated by an educational system pushing their kids to breaking point. As a pediatrician and a parent, I am heartbroken by the growing number of kids I see with anxiety, depression and mind-body ailments like ulcers and migraines associated with the stress of just trying to keep up. Shockingly, some of these children are in elementary school.

**Race to Nowhere** serves not only as a vehicle to tell these children's stories but also as a wake-up call, as Abeles notes, to "mobilize families, educators, and policy makers to challenge current assumptions on how to best prepare the youth of America to become healthy, bright, contributing and leading citizens."

**Questions abound. What is the purpose of school? Are we preparing our children simply to be overworked, stressed-out adults?** Child health experts across the country, myself included, are worried we've gone off track. Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, an adolescent medicine specialist and author of "*Building Resilience in Children and Teens*," in an interview with the *New York Times* wonders, "What are we really trying to do when we think about raising kids? We're trying to put in place the ingredients so the child is going to be a successful 35-year-old. It's not really about getting an A in algebra."

**How do we define success?** In typical American fashion, we've lost sight of the long-term goal. We as a society tend to take the "what-have-you-done-for-me-lately?" approach. It's true in sports, in politics, in economics and alas, now, in childhood. Starting early in preschool puts us ahead for elementary school, where more and more kids are tutored even if they are on grade level. Middle school grades determine high school placements, and college prep begins in 9th grade, not 11th as it used to be. And so on. We are so focused on THIS TEST that we lose sight of the whole child. What about non-academic strengths? Shouldn't we be emphasizing "well-roundedness"?

The parallels with health care are notable. "Why prevent tomorrow what you can fix today?" is our mantra. We should be concentrating on creating wellness through prescribing healthy lifestyles, promoting good nutrition, fitness, rest, and free play in natural settings instead of a pill for each ill. Chronic sleep loss is so significant a concern that the American Academy of Pediatrics recently published a landmark policy urging middle and high schools to push morning start times later. There is mounting evidence that incorporating mind-body skills training -- like yoga or meditation -- in schools reduces stress symptoms and problem behaviors like aggression, while strengthening cognitive functioning and improving focus. Furthermore, coaching kids to develop these self-mastery skills promotes resiliency and confidence.

Here's what I remember. The teachers who had the greatest impact on my life were not the ones who gave me the best grades. They were the ones who connected me with the wider world and challenged me to grow as a person. Our children will not always remember their standardized test scores -- but they will remember those moments when they were challenged, and struggled, and learned, and grew. **Success can be defined not by the grade given but by the lessons learned. We must create a system that values those achievements.**

***It is clear that the ability to solve problems, think critically, and to collaborate with others are the core skills of the 21st century.***