

# **FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION**

## ***RESOLUTION ON ASSESSMENTS & ACCOUNTABILITY***

WHEREAS, Florida school districts strongly support accountability on the school, district, and state level for the delivery of the uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools guaranteed by the Constitution of Florida; and

WHEREAS, testing is one of many tools that can play a role in measuring student achievement and learning gains, in identifying areas of weakness, and in informing students and their parents of a student's overall educational progress; and

WHEREAS, Florida's accountability system has developed into a system of high stakes testing that uses student performance on standardized tests to make major decisions affecting individual students, educators, schools, and school districts; and

WHEREAS, since 1998, the number of assessments required, directly or indirectly, by the state to be administered each year has substantially increased, thus reducing instructional time; and

WHEREAS, the over-emphasis on standardized testing has resulted in a variety of unintended consequences that diminish the quality of the educational program, including stifling student engagement, narrowing the curriculum, reducing student access to elective and other desired courses, and impeding the recruitment and retention of excellent teachers and administrators; and

WHEREAS, under Florida's assessment and accountability structure, a student who scores poorly on a statewide assessment may be – among other things – retained in grade, required to take extensive remediation courses, denied access to upper level courses, denied any credit for a course, and/or have a standard high school diploma withheld, regardless of the student's performance on other course tests, reports, course work, projects, and other indicators of the student's abilities, and

WHEREAS, under Florida's assessment and accountability structure, an educator whose work or instruction is not assessed by a statewide assessment, can be evaluated based, in part, on the performance of students that the teacher may have never met or taught; and

WHEREAS, under Florida's assessment and accountability structure, a school's grade may be based, in part, on the performance of students who do not attend the school and who have not been taught by teachers in the school; and

WHEREAS, Florida's high stakes testing instruments are not correlated to any national or international assessment instruments to allow for a comparison of both student achievement and progress in Florida with student achievement and progress with other states and countries; and

WHEREAS, Florida's previous assessment system was plagued by constant revisions to standards, cut scores, testing time frames, scoring criteria, and other elements of the testing structure, making it impossible to track student learning gains or identify areas of weaknesses from one year to the next, or provide timely results for diagnostic purposes, thus defeating the original purpose of such testing; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida intends to administer new statewide assessments to measure mastery of the newly adopted Florida State Standards in the same year that the Standards are first being introduced and implemented across all grades and subjects; and

WHEREAS, one of Florida's new assessment instruments, the Florida Standards Assessment, has not been field-tested in Florida and the Florida Department of Education, instead, has relied upon field testing in a state that does not resemble the demographics of Florida and may result in a test that is culturally biased and inappropriate for use in Florida; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida has failed to demonstrate that its previous and current assessment programs are able to provide the reliable and consistent data necessary to support the accountability measures for which the assessments are used; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida has required each school district to develop and/or purchase hundreds of local assessments for every grade and subject not covered by a state assessment, yet has provided no funding to districts for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, the over-reliance on Florida's high-stakes standardized testing is undermining Article IX, Section 1 of the Constitution of Florida which declares that it is "a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision . . . for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education" particularly with regard to adequate provision, uniformity, efficiency, and high quality;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Florida School Boards Association calls on the Governor, Florida Legislature, and State Board of Education to:

- Extend, until fiscal year 2016-2017, the transition period for the implementation of accountability measures relating to student progression, teacher evaluation, school grades, and district ranking and allow districts to identify their own means for determining student promotion, graduation, and educator evaluations during the transition period;
- Halt the practice of using test results for any purpose other than diagnostic purposes;
- Provide paper based option, at the expense of the state, for all state required state and local assessments;
- Enhance state funding for educator professional development and training on Florida State Standards, the related assessments, and required use of technology;
- Assemble an independent representative panel that includes, but is not limited to, representatives appointed by state education related associations, legislative leaders and the Governor, to oversee the implementation of the revised accountability system.
- Ensure that Florida's accountability system is fully funded by the state and that school districts are held harmless from incurring any expenses related to the development of assessment instruments and the administration of assessment tests, including the expenses related to training, test security, and the hardware, software, and infrastructure necessary to administer assessment tests.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Florida School Boards Association calls on the U.S. Congress and Administration to overhaul the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently known as the "No Child Left Behind Act," to reduce the testing mandates, to promote multiple forms of evidence of student learning and school quality, and to remove any fixed mandate for the use of student test scores in evaluating educators.