

Sarasota County School Board

RESOLUTION

THE 2014-2015 STATE ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

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 focusing instruction in areas of identified student strengths and weaknesses, 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 inappropriately uses student performance on state standardized assessments to make major decisions affecting individual students, educators, schools, and school districts without due regard to other evidence of student, educator, school and school district performance and achievement; and

WHEREAS, Florida's previous assessment system was subject to constant revisions to state standards, cut scores, testing time frames, scoring criteria, and other elements of the testing structure which has led to confusion and distrust by parents, educators, taxpayers, and other stakeholders who are calling for a complete overhaul of the state assessment and accountability system; and

WHEREAS, Florida adopted, and began a phased implementation of, new standards – the Florida State Standards – and began the development of new statewide assessments – the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) – to measure student mastery of the new standards; and

WHEREAS, the FSA was not field-tested in Florida and the Florida Department of Education, instead, relied upon field testing in another state that does not use the Florida State Standards and that does not resemble the demographics of Florida, thus raising concerns about the validity and reliability of the assessment as well as the potential for racial and cultural bias in the field test results; and

WHEREAS, the first administration in Florida of the new assessments during the 2014-2015 school year was conducted in the same year in which the Florida State Standards were first implemented across all grades and subjects, raising additional questions about the validity and reliability of the assessments; and

WHEREAS, the first administration in Florida of the new assessments during the 2014-2015 school year was plagued by widespread technical problems and related disruptions and confusion; and

WHEREAS, an independent study of the validity of the FSA found, among other things, that only about two-thirds of test questions were truly aligned with the Florida State Standards; and
WHEREAS, an independent study of the validity of the FSA found, among other things, that the FSA did not meet the normal rigor and standardization expected with a high-stakes assessment program; and

WHEREAS, the majority of the components traditionally used to calculate school grades is not available to appropriately conduct this calculation yet the Department of Education intends to release school grades based on incomplete data; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida has failed to demonstrate that its new assessment program is able to provide the valid and reliable data necessary to support the accountability measures for which the assessments are used; and

WHEREAS, FSBA has adopted its 2016 Legislative Platform which includes a statement of support for the recommendations issued by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents as reflected in their press releases dated September 25, 2015 and September 30, 2015; and

WHEREAS, Florida's high-stakes standardized assessment system is inconsistent with the provisions of Article IX, Section 1 of the Constitution of Florida which declare 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 School Board of Sarasota County calls on the Governor of Florida to direct the Florida Department of Education to waive the use of the 2015 FSA assessment results for accountability purposes with regard to student progression and graduation, personnel evaluations, school grades, and district ranking; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the School Board of Sarasota County calls on the Governor of Florida to establish a diverse committee, to include Florida teachers and district personnel, charged with conducting a comprehensive review of Florida's assessment and accountability system and with providing a report and recommendations, including but not limited to recommendations on the appropriate components of the system, the appropriate use of data derived from assessments; an assessment of the capacity of districts and schools to administer the required assessments without interruption in the ongoing delivery of instruction to students who are not being assessed; a feasible timeline for the transition and full implementation of the system; and the appropriate role of the system with regard to personnel evaluations.