

FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

RESOLUTION ON HIGH STAKES TESTING

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, it is widely recognized that standardized testing, when used alone, is an inadequate and often unreliable measure of both student learning and educator effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, since 1998, the number of state required high stakes tests administered each year has soared from two to more than twelve; 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, it has been demonstrated that high stakes standardized testing fails to measure accurately student progress from the beginning to the end of the same school year; and

WHEREAS, under Florida's high stakes testing structure, a student who scores poorly on a statewide assessment may – among other things – be retained in grade, be required to take extensive remediation courses, be denied access to upper level courses, be 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 high stakes testing structure, an educator whose work or instruction is not assessed by a statewide assessment, can be evaluated based, in majority measure, on the performance of students that the teacher may have never met or taught; and

WHEREAS, under Florida's high stakes testing structure, a school's grade can 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, periodic revisions approved by Florida's State Board of Education to curriculum standards, cut scores, testing time frames, scoring criteria, and other elements of the high stakes testing structure have made it impossible to track student learning gains or learning weaknesses from one year to the next, or provide timely results for diagnostic purposes, thus defeating the original purpose of such testing; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of state funding, Florida's school districts have been forced to take growing amounts of fiscal and human resources away from student instruction and support services and redirect those resources to the development, the purchase of hardware and infrastructure, the administration, and the related support of high stakes testing; and

WHEREAS, Florida's high stakes testing structure hampers efforts to promote innovation, creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking that allow students to thrive in a democracy and in a global society and economy; and

WHEREAS, Florida's high stakes testing structure has been shown to have a negative impact on economic development; 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:

- Contract with a qualified, independent entity to conduct a thorough and fully transparent independent review and evaluation of Florida's accountability system, including the assessment instruments, contracts with service providers, state and local costs, the return on investment, and the overall quality, reliability, and validity of the system;
- Revise the accountability system to include data from multiple forms of assessment and limited standardized testing to more accurately reflect student learning gains and identify learning weaknesses;
- Eliminate the practice of using student performance on standardized tests as the primary basis for evaluating teacher, administrator, school, and district performance;
- Phase in any revisions to the accountability system in order to ensure adequate time for students, teachers, parents, and administrators to fully understand and adapt to the revisions, and ensure that students, teachers, schools, and districts are held harmless during the phase-in period; and
- 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," reduce the testing mandates, promote multiple forms of evidence of student learning and school quality in accountability, and not mandate any fixed role for the use of student test scores in evaluating educators.