

FEA Resolution on Accountability and Testing Opt-Out

Resolution

The recent calls for Florida school districts to withdraw or opt-out of all state testing mandates is yet another serious symptom of our profoundly troubled education system and the state's incoherent and unsound school reform and accountability policies. Until autonomy is returned to local school districts to decide what is best for their student population and can develop a fair and accurate system of assessing student performance, the State of Florida must provide a legitimate process for parents and students to decline participation in these educationally unsound tests.

Resolution on a Rational Transition to a New Education Accountability System and Call for Legitimate Policy Providing for a Testing Opt-Out

WHEREAS test results have been twisted and contorted into a time consuming, all-encompassing arbiter of total student performance, teacher evaluation and pay, as well as school quality;

WHEREAS the formula to calculate school grades and the variables used have been manipulated continuously making comparisons and value judgments about the quality of public schools and teaching and learning meaningless;

WHEREAS the inaccurate data has been misused for shame and blame and not as an effective diagnostic tool to help measure and identify student learning gains, academic proficiency, areas of student weakness, and ways to improve teaching;

WHEREAS teachers and administrators are frustrated and do not trust an evaluation system that is based on standards that are in a state of flux and aligned with an assessment that has yet to be developed or validated;

WHEREAS the stakes have never been higher: high stakes test results impact retention and graduation rates for students; influence teacher and principal evaluations and pay; and can yield disappointing or failing school grades that negatively affect students, teachers, parents and the business community;

WHEREAS it is unrealistic to expect a full and quality implementation across all grades, K-12, and all courses by the 2014-2015 school year;

WHEREAS school districts have struggled to develop and pay for local assessments, including End-of-Course Exams (EOCs), to satisfy the statutory deadline of 2014-2015;

WHEREAS the infrastructure, connectivity and bandwidth of most districts and schools is woefully inadequate to meet the instructional and assessment needs of students;

WHEREAS our students, schools and communities have suffered from state leadership turmoil and from ever-changing and ineffective policies such that parents, teachers, educational staff professionals and Florida's citizens no longer trust the Florida education system or its leaders, managers and policy-makers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Florida Education Association:

1. Supports student assessment, aligned to grade and content-specific standards, administered with minimal disruption of the instructional process and designed to provide prompt and worthwhile data to assist teachers in addressing individual student learning needs;
2. Supports provisions which will give school districts the flexibility to develop appropriate measures of student success for grades and subjects not assessed by statewide tests;
3. Urges all new assessments be field tested **in the State of Florida** by representative demographic

populations and validated;

4. Urges rejection of any untested assessments for any high stakes purpose including criteria for student promotion or retention, teacher evaluation, or school and district grades and other high stakes decisions until their usefulness and validity is determined;
5. Supports a moratorium on using the incoherent, volatile school grading formula which ill-serves students, parents, teachers, educational staff professionals and Florida school communities until such time as a broadly understood and supported system is tested, measured and in position to replace the current system;
6. Supports a less intrusive system of student assessment that provides helpful, timely feedback and does not reduce valuable classroom instructional time;
7. Urges a longer transition time period beginning with kindergarten to realign and revamp the accountability system and regain the trust of students, teachers, parents and Floridians;
8. Urges adequate state funding for technology infrastructure to ensure that load testing and rectification will precede the implementation of any new assessments with sufficient lead time and resources to correct any deficiencies, and;
9. Urges the Governor of the State of Florida to exercise his executive authority and protect the wellbeing of Florida's students and the legitimacy of Florida's education system by immediately providing a process for public school parents and students to be excused without penalty from participation in the statewide required assessments.