



STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Directors

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To: Board of Directors

From: Amber Concepcion, David Hutchinson, Jim Leous

Re: Board Resolution on Revising the State Assessment System

Date: May 8, 2017

At our Monday, April 24, 2017 Regular Board meeting, the Resolution on Revising the State Assessment System was discussed as an Information item.

Our goal is to share what we believe to be the most concerning aspects of the state's current assessment system, as well as recommendations to improve this system for both students and teachers moving forward.

A few revisions have been made since our discussion and attached is the revised resolution that will be on the May 8, 2017 Regular Board meeting agenda for action.

State College Area School District Board Resolution
on Revising the State Assessment System

May 8, 2017

Whereas, the current Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) requires students to sit for exams for more than nine hours each spring in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7, and 11.5 hours in grades 4 and 8. The fact that this time is concentrated during the month of April causes a significant disruption to learning during this time period. For many students and teachers throughout the Commonwealth, the PSSAs cause significant stress, and are disruptive to the teaching and learning environment.

Whereas, the PSSA requires that each student, regardless of her/his development, completes a set of fixed, standardized tasks. This format results in many students being presented tasks that they are either not prepared to complete or that they have already mastered (i.e. - disrespectful tasks) In addition, this format cannot be used to assess annual growth for above grade level students. This format cannot provide nuanced information regarding the student's instructional needs or development.

Whereas, the timing of the PSSAs, approximately six weeks before the end of the school year, means that a significant amount of that year's curriculum may not yet have been covered.

Whereas, with results arriving after the end of the school year, the PSSA does not provide timely information to teachers and principals that could be used to improve learning experiences in ways that are responsive to students.

Whereas, a community's economic status is an excellent predictor of standardized test scores, and

Whereas, the current teacher evaluation system is constrained by the weight it gives to standardized testing. For schools with high School Performance Profile scores (typically schools with higher SES), the required evaluation calculation is a constraint when working with an individual teacher who is struggling within the four domains of effective teaching practice, because the overall school score unnaturally raises the teacher's evaluation score. The inverse is also true. The current system discourages quality teachers from working at schools with low SPP scores, typically located in communities of relatively high poverty, because the overall school score unnaturally lowers the teacher's evaluation.

Whereas, currently, all high school students must demonstrate mastery of PA Core and Academic Standards in all content areas for which such standards are defined. Students in the Class of 2019 must pass the Keystone Exams in Algebra I, Literature, and Biology in order to graduate. Placing this much weight on three relatively narrow curricular areas: 1) is a limited indication of how well a student is prepared for life beyond high school; 2) does not reflect achievements of students whose strengths are in other areas, and 3) does not begin to address the higher level critical-thinking and communication skills that are essential for success after high school.

Whereas, the Commonwealth spends nearly \$80 million a year in the implementation of an assessment model that produces little useful and timely information to parents or teachers and doesn't provide reliable summative information about student mastery of standards.

Therefore, be it resolved: The SCASD Board of School Directors proposes that for the purpose of state accountability, schools be allowed to use a computer adaptive, formative assessment system that provides student performance information in regard to current grade placement academic standards, and:

1. significantly reduces the amount of time that students sit for exams, by replacing the current PSSA with shorter and more frequent assessments, occurring several times throughout the school year.
2. adjusts the complexity of tasks during the testing experience for each student, thereby providing timely and specific information to teachers regarding student achievement, thereby improving teachers' ability to adjust instruction to meet an individual student's learning needs.
3. is implemented online, reducing the logistics of test security that is imposed by the current system
4. removes the standardized testing calculation from the teacher supervision and evaluation process, so that the evaluation process is based on the four Danielson domains, to more accurately reflect the each teacher's performance.

Be it further resolved that students be permitted to use as evidence of having met high school graduation requirements, any of the following:

- an Industry-based Competency Certificate (e.g., NOCTI/NIMS) in a student's program of study.
- a student Career Portfolio that reflects a student's readiness for meaningful postsecondary engagement consistent with their career plans.
- a locally established minimum grade in any Keystone designated course for which proficiency on the Keystone exam has not been determined.
- a score on an approved assessment, such as SAT, PSAT, ACT, AP and/or IB, that meets or exceeds the state defined cut score.

Board Approved Resolution at its May 8, 2017 Regular Board Meeting.

Amber Concepcion, Board President

Mary Jenn Dorman, Board Secretary