

STUDENT ASSESSMENT, ACHIEVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

(Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2000)

Reviewed by Board of Managers April 2010

- WHEREAS, The state of California has adopted a new Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) that is designed to evaluate the quality and improvement of public schools as they relate to student achievement; and
- WHEREAS, Assessment is an integral part of the instructional program and is essential to all aspects of teaching and learning; and
- WHEREAS, Testing and student assessment are necessary to diagnose students' strengths and needs, to plan and adjust curriculum and instruction, and to provide feedback to students and parents regarding student progress and achievement; and
- WHEREAS, The California State PTA believes that assessment of student performance must be linked to curricular goals that are compatible with the challenges and the changes in education; and
- WHEREAS, The California State PTA further believes tests should not be limited to multiple choice or true/false questions, but must provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned; and
- WHEREAS, Parental involvement plays a vital role in determining a student's success in meeting academic and performance standards; and
- WHEREAS, A student's academic success is a shared responsibility between parents, teachers and the students themselves, and parents expect test scores to reflect student achievement as accurately as possible; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts advocate for the continued development of a comprehensive California State Student Assessment System that equitably measures individual student achievement and the breadth and depth of the instructional program; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts advocate at the state and local levels for a commitment of the resources (including funds, teachers, support staff and facilities) needed to provide all students with equal opportunity to learn and, when necessary, to provide access to the appropriate early intervention strategies and remediation programs required for academic success; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts partner with schools to educate parents and community members about the purpose of student assessment and testing and to help them understand everyone's role and responsibility for the academic success of all students.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

In April 1999, Governor Davis signed into law California's new Public School Accountability Act (PSAA), a collection of related programs designed to evaluate the quality and improvement of public schools. Upon its implementation, only one test was available and all students' test scores, regardless of English fluency and other factors, were included in the reported results. Currently, only this high-stakes test is being used to measure educational quality and to create test scores for individual students. Other planned tests, such as the High School Exit Exam, will do the same.

Testing experts agree that the purpose of standardized tests is to provide better information for students, parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers, and the general public. Student assessment should validate what students know as a result of classroom instruction, as well as measure a student's proficiency in relation to state standards. Tests should provide feedback to students and their parents regarding progress and achievement.

Researchers have concluded that sound educational assessment programs include multiple performance-based measures. The most beneficial assess the many different kinds of knowledge and skills that a student is expected to acquire. Additionally, they support the concept that parents play a vital role in helping their children to succeed in school. Parents should be involved at all levels, including the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of a viable student assessment program. Parental involvement plays a vital role in determining a student's success in meeting academic standards. Parents need to help their children attain test readiness by being aware of their school's assessment methods and testing dates, by striving to ease their child's anxiety, by encouraging healthy sleeping habits, and by promoting good test-taking practices. Afterwards, parents should examine test results and meet with their child's teacher to discuss the results.

It is imperative that California create an educational assessment system that aligns content standards, performance standards, curriculum and instruction materials, classroom instruction, teacher preparation, testing, reporting and accountability so that California's children and youth are not negatively impacted by any assessment or accountability system. State funding also needs to be available to support new approaches to improve student learning and achievement, as well as to support mandated remediation programs at the school site.

Finally, it is essential that California look not to one single test, but instead build a testing system that is comprehensive and coherent. A one-size-fits-all approach to student assessment and school accountability does not provide an accurate measurement of student achievement and education quality.