

Parent Teacher Association Resolution
November 16, 2012
Niagara Region Parent Teacher Association

Background:

There is now more than two decades of scientific research demonstrating that high-stakes testing regimes yield unreliable measures of student learning. Such tests cannot serve as a basis for determining teacher effectiveness. In fact, scientific research shows that high-stakes testing lowers the quality of education. Some of the documented harmful outcomes of high-stakes testing are: “teaching to the test”; narrowed curriculum opportunities; increased emotional distress among children and increased “drop outs”; corruption; the marginalization of both very high performing students and students with special needs; an overall lowering of standards and disregard for individual difference, critical thinking and human creativity. Thus, high-stakes testing has been proven to be an ineffective tool for preparing students for the 21st century.

The intent of this resolution is to ask the State Education Department to suspend its testing program until such time as it can create a new one that reliably measures educational progress without harming children and lowering the quality of education. We need a testing program that helps students and schools, not harms them.

Rationale for Submitting as an Emergency Resolution:

All of the following developments have occurred since April 15, 2012:

- In April, 2012, the New York State Education Department’s testing program’s relationship with Pearson, Inc. produced assessments that were judged by psychometricians, practitioners, parents, and students to be demonstrably flawed instruments, incapable of measuring student learning or teacher effectiveness.
- The New York State Education Department has published numerous memoranda and documents related to assessment and the Common Core Learning Standards, each of which add layers of unprecedented bureaucracy and great uncertainty, proving that there are many aspects of implementation, and the consequences of implementation, that NYSED can’t manage without causing great damage to our schools.
- The research of Walter Troup, of the University of Texas, and others, has demonstrated that the methodology used by Pearson to create the New York State assessments renders them “virtually useless at measuring the effects of classroom instruction” (New York Times, July 28, 2012).
- The United States Department of Education has granted the New York State Education Department a waiver from the requirements of No Child Left Behind (May 29, 2012), which technically lifts the federal testing mandate in grades 3 – 8. Finally, school districts have been informed as recently as September 19, 2012, that more field testing is necessary this October, requiring more testing and less learning.
- As of September, 2012, the curriculum associated with the Common Core Learning Standards still has not yet been fully developed (NYSED continues to ask vendors to write is curriculum modules), nor has it been has not been implemented fully in any part of the United States or New York State so that **it's** effects on students can be measured or researched.
- To date, there has been no trial or testing to verify effectiveness of this student testing and teacher evaluation system, and no research to show that holding students or teachers accountable to the Common Core Learning Standards has been proven to increase the effectiveness of either.
- The Chicago teacher’s strike was a crisis that was primarily focused on the inappropriate role of standardized testing in evaluating students and linking these tests to teacher annual professional performance reviews. We should be aware of the

very real possibility that the numerous controversies, implementation issues, and confusion may well cause considerable disruptions to the important work of educating our children.

- Why would we spend millions of dollars and subject children to another year of emotional distress when it has been determined that these high stakes tests yield no useful information?

Therefore we submit the following resolution:

1. WHEREAS, dating back to 1865, the New York State assessment program was historically a successful collaborative effort involving teachers, administrators and college and university faculty resulting in assessments that measured the efficacy of locally developed curricula in helping students meet state learning standards and yielded data that informed teaching and learning; and, the future well-being of each community in New York State relies on a high-quality public education system that prepares all students for college, careers, citizenship and lifelong learning, and strengthens the nation's social and economic well-being; and

2. WHEREAS, the New York State PTA supports the health and well being of all children, and has voiced its concern regarding government over reliance on testing, stating that it has “tipped the balance of objectives, tasks, and assessments heavily to ward standardized tests” resulting in consequences that can have a “profound impact on students, schools, and the community”, including subjecting students to “drill and kill” test preparation and less focus on curricular areas likely to develop the “whole child”; and

3. WHEREAS, when parents were asked about the high-stakes standardized testing and its negative effects for students from all backgrounds, and especially for low-income students, English language learners, children of color, and those with disabilities in a recent survey of 8,000 parents in New York State, it was found that 75% reported that their child was more anxious in the month before a test, and 80% reported that test preparation prevented their child from engaging in meaningful school activities. Sixty five percent of parents felt that too much time was devoted to test preparation, and 87% of them believed that too much time was being devoted to standardized testing. Ninety five percent of parents were opposed to increasing the number and length of tests causing many informed families to “opt out” of all New York State assessments; and

4. WHEREAS, all schools and school districts in New York State have been spending growing amounts of time, money and energy on high-stakes standardized testing to comply with state and federal accountability systems, in which student performance on standardized tests is inappropriately used to measure individual student progress and teacher effectiveness, which undermines educational quality and equity in U.S. public schools by hampering educators' efforts to focus on the broad range of learning experiences that promote the innovation, creativity, problem solving, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and deep subject-matter knowledge that will allow students to thrive in a democracy and an increasingly global society and economy; and

5. WHEREAS, it is widely recognized that standardized testing, in particular the New York State assessments developed by Pearson, Inc. and administered to children in grades 3 – 8 in April of 2012, provided no data that will help teachers improve their instruction for children, and were judged by assessment experts, school administrators, teachers, and families to be invalid and unreliable instruments to judge student learning or teacher performance, and are damaging the culture and structure of the systems in which students learn, including narrowing the curriculum, teaching to the test, reducing love of learning, pushing students out of school, driving excellent teachers out of the profession, inhibiting the ability of schools to foster engaging school experiences that promote joy in learning, depth of thought and breadth of knowledge for students necessary for student success; and therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the New York State Parent Teacher Association calls on Andrew Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York, the Board of Regents of the State University of New York, and Dr. John B. King, Jr., Commissioner of the State Education Department to enact a moratorium on policies that force New York State public schools to rely on high-stakes testing due to the fact that there is no convincing evidence that the pressure associated with high-stakes testing leads to any important benefits to student achievement, and be it

RESOLVED, that the New York State Parent Teacher Association calls on Andrew Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York, the Board of Regents of the State University of New York, and Dr. John B. King, Jr., Commissioner of the State Education Department to end its agreement with Pearson, Inc. and return to the inclusive practice of assessment design that included teachers and administrators, and engaged the college and university academic community, resulting in the development of tests that effectively measured each district's progress in helping students meet state standards using their own locally developed curricula and will provide practitioners with data that can be used to improve teaching and learning; and be it

RESOLVED, that the New York State Parent Teacher Association calls on Andrew Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York, the New York State Senate and Assembly and Dr. John B. King, Jr., Commissioner of the State Education Department to eliminate the requirement that 40 % of teacher and principal evaluations be based on New York State Assessments and an impractical and unproven Student Learning Objective(SLO) testing model, to develop a system of Annual Professional Performance Review which does not require extensive standardized testing, and requires districts to document that their Annual Professional Performance Review Process assesses the progress of each teacher in meeting the New York State Teaching Standards using multiple measures of teaching performance.

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CONCLUSION : Given the Mission and purpose of the PTA which clearly states that the PTA is: "A powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child." We believe it is our duty and responsibility to be a voice and advocate for our children and our schools.

REFERENCES

For a general overview of standardized testing technology and the issues associated with high-stakes testing, See Daniel Koretz, *Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008; and George Madaus, Michael K. Russell, and Jennifer Higgins, *The Paradoxes of High-stakes Testing: How They Affect Students, Their Parents, Teachers, Principals, Schools, and Society*. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Pub., 2009.

The following studies and research briefs caution against using student test scores to evaluate teachers: Peter Schochet and Hanley S. Chiang, *Error Rates in Measuring Teacher and School Performance Based on Student Test Score Gains*. U.S Department of Education (NCEE 2010-4004), July 2010. Available online: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20104004/pdf/20104004.pdf>; Tim Sass, "The Stability of Value-Added Measures of Teacher Quality and Implications for Teacher Compensation Policy." In *Brief 4*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, November 2008. Available online: <http://www.urban.org/publications/1001266.html>; the following report represents the views of nationally leading education experts: Eva Baker *et al.* "Problems with the Use of Student Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers." Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, August 29, 2010. Available online: <http://www.epi.org/publication/bp278/>. Note as well the letter sent by the National Research Council to the U.S. Department of Education warning it about the limits of so-called "value-added measures" of teacher effectiveness.

See: http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12780#

For a general overview of the relationship between high-stakes testing and corruption, see Sharon Nichols, Sharon Lynn, and David C. Berliner, *Collateral Damage: How High-Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2007.

Research continues to draw a link between dropping out of school and high-stakes testing, see: Elizabeth Glennie, Kara Bonneau, Michelle Vandellen, and Kenneth A. Dodge, "Addition by Subtraction: The Relation Between Dropout Rates and School-Level Academic Achievement." *Teachers College Record* 114, no. 8 (2012): 1-26., and Martin Carnoy, "Have State Accountability and High-Stakes Tests Influenced Student Progression Rates in High School?", *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice* 24, no. 4 (2005): 19-31. That high-stakes testing lowers the quality of instruction and narrows the curriculum to what is tested has long been documented, see, for example, Linda McNeil's, *Contradictions of School Reform: Educational Costs of Standardized Testing*. New York: Routledge, 2000; Recent research on high-stakes testing and gifted students is reviewed here: Tonya Moon, "Myth 16: High-Stakes Tests Are Synonymous With Rigor and Difficulty," *Gifted Child Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2009): 277-279.

Recent work continues to reveal a limited relationship between test scores and economic performance, e.g., Henry Levin, "More Than Just Test Scores," *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 137 August 2012. Available online at <http://roundtheinkwell.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/more-than-just-test-scores-sept2012-2.pdf>

A growing body of research documents the role of high-stakes testing in causing teachers to leave the field. See for example, Daniel Sass, Belinda Flores, Lorena Claeys, and Bertha Pérez, "Identifying Personal and Contextual Factors that Contribute to Attrition Rates for Texas Public School Teachers." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 20, no. 15 (2012): 1-25.

See: Davide Berliner, "Our Impoverished View of Educational Reform," *Teachers College Record* 108, no. 6 (2006): 949-95.

WHEREAS 2

- NYS PTA Where We Stand Position Paper on Standards, Testing and the Whole Child
- Recent work continues to reveal a limited relationship between test scores and economic performance, e.g., Henry Levin, "More Than Just Test Scores," *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 137 August 2012. Available online at <http://roundtheinkwell.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/more-than-just-test-scores-sept2012-2.pdf>
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Damage: How High-Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2007.

WHEREAS 3

- <http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/HowTestsDamageEd.pdf>
- http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/what-parents-say-testing-is-doing-to-their-kids/2012/05/30/gJQABJCz2U_blog.html
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- For a general overview of standardized testing technology and the issues associated with high-stakes testing, See Daniel Koretz, *Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008; and George Madaus, Michael K. Russell, and Jennifer Higgins, *The Paradoxes of High-stakes Testing: How They Affect Students, Their Parents, Teachers, Principals, Schools, and Society*. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Pub., 2009.
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WHEREAS 5

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