

Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association Resolution on Use of High-Stakes State Assessments

WHEREAS: The RI School Superintendents' Association (RISSA) is committed to ensuring all students demonstrate proficiency with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in post-secondary education, careers, and citizenship within a global society;

WHEREAS: It is important to the economic well-being of our local businesses, local communities, Rhode Island, and the United States of America that our students have the knowledge and skills to compete regionally, nationally, and internationally;

WHEREAS: The RI Diploma System requires districts to use multiple measures aligned to standards – Course Credits, Portfolios, Exhibitions, Course Assessments, and State Assessment – to determine student proficiency, including applications of knowledge, in six core academic areas;

WHEREAS: RISSA supports ensuring that students demonstrate proficiency, using multiple measures, with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college and careers;

WHEREAS: For school accountability purposes, the federal government requires the use of a State Assessment in reading and mathematics in each school each year, a state may seek approval to include multiple grades or other areas for school accountability decisions;

WHEREAS: The use of the State Assessment as a high-stakes graduation requirement and for educator evaluation is a decision made by the State of RI;

WHEREAS: The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment that was selected by RI for use as a State Assessment is still being developed and desired levels of student performance are not yet fully established;

WHEREAS: Other states that initially elected to be part of the PARCC Consortium have decided to withdraw from the Consortium or postpone its use for high-stakes decisions;

WHEREAS: The time and resources allocated at the state and local level to curriculum development, purchasing instructional materials and technology, professional development and instructional changes aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are insufficient to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all students, teachers, and schools prior to the implementation of a high-stakes State Assessment;

WHEREAS: Whereas students have not had the benefit of multiple years of preparation with the CCSS prior to taking the PARCC assessment, which is intended to assess proficiency with these standards;

WHEREAS: Student performance can be measured by high-quality assessments directly related to the curriculum, but high-quality curriculum and instruction are essential to improve student performance; and

WHEREAS: As per information provided by the RI Department of Education, the graduating class of 2019 is the first graduating class that has the opportunity to take all PARCC Assessments currently being considered for graduation – Algebra 1, Geometry, English I, and English II – while they are enrolled in the particular content area courses as is the intended design of PARCC;

WHEREAS: RI General Law § 16-2-9 (a) states: “The entire care, control, and management of all public school interests of the several cities and towns shall be vested in the school committees of the several cities and towns” and “School committees shall have, in addition to those enumerated in this title, the following powers and duties: (a)(4) to provide for the evaluation of the performance of the school system”; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED: The RI School Superintendents' Association supports using multiple measures, with an emphasis on local data and local decisions, to determine students' readiness for graduation and for educator and school accountability;

RESOLVED: RISSA supports piloting and refining any State Assessment for validity and reliability before it is used for high-stakes decisions about student proficiency or educator effectiveness;

RESOLVED: RISSA supports the allocation of adequate time and resources to systematically implement rigorous curriculum, instruction, and local assessments aligned to Common Core State Standards prior to the implementation of a high-stakes State Assessment;

RESOLVED: RISSA supports a substantial investment in ongoing professional development that is essential for teachers and administrators to fully understand and integrate CCSS into curriculum, instruction, and assessments at the local level prior to the implementation of a high-stakes State Assessment;

RESOLVED: RISSA supports a substantial investment of resources to replace existing textbooks, instructional materials and technologies designed for older standards with new textbooks, instructional materials and technologies explicitly aligned to CCSS and student performance expectations prior to the implementation of a high-stakes State Assessment;

RESOLVED: RISSA calls for a moratorium on the use of any new State Assessment including the PARCC, as a graduation requirement and for educator evaluation until specific criteria approved by RISSA and other stakeholders are developed and met including, but not limited to, validity, reliability, standard setting, and the opportunity to learn the Common Core State Standards assessed by the PARCC;

RESOLVED: RISSA supports eliminating the use of the NECAP State Assessment as a graduation requirement starting with the class of 2015 as it is a diversion of time and resources needed to prepare students for proficiency with the Common Core State Standards;

RESOLVED: RISSA strongly believes that due to the comprehensive and technical nature of a multiple measure graduation system any changes to the requirements, including the use of a State Assessment, should be carefully vetted through a stakeholder group that includes RISSA. The RI Board of Education should take appropriate action to enact the moratorium called for in this resolution;

RESOLVED: RISSA supports the analysis, use, and retention of personally identifiable student and adult data at the local level and the creation of local data systems; and

RESOLVED: A copy of this Resolution will be forwarded to the RI Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, every Rhode Island School Committee, State Senator and State Representative, and the Governor.

Adopted: June 23, 2014 by the General Membership of the RI School Superintendents' Association