

Resolution Concerning High Stakes, Standardized Testing of Virginia Public School Students



WHEREAS, the over reliance on standardized, high stakes testing as the only assessment of learning that really matters in the state and federal accountability systems is negatively impacting our public schools and undermining any chance that educators have to transform a traditional system of schooling into a broad range of learning experiences that better prepares our students to live successfully and be competitive on a global stage; and

WHEREAS, there is little research upon which to base the state's assumption that by taking and passing thirty-four criterion-referenced tests between grades three and eleven, Virginia's students will be better prepared to succeed in their careers and college; and

WHEREAS, we believe our state's future prosperity relies on a high-quality education system that prepares students for college and careers, and without such a system Virginia's economic competitiveness and ability to attract new business will falter; and

WHEREAS, there is little research verifying Virginia's method of applying criterion-referenced test results as valid and reliable measurements of authentic growth in student achievement; and

WHEREAS, there is little research verifying Virginia's method of measuring student growth as a valid and reliable indicator of teacher, principal and superintendent performance; and

WHEREAS, the system that Virginia employs for high-stakes education accountability at both the state and federal level is based on the state's method of configuring criterion-referenced standardized tests, growth measures, and performance indicators, all of which lack any solid research foundation; and

WHEREAS, the real work of designing more engaging student learning experiences requires changes in the culture and structure of the systems in which teachers and students work; and

WHEREAS, what occurs in our classrooms every day should be student-centered and result in students learning at a deep and meaningful level, as opposed to the superficial level of learning that results from the current over-emphasis on that which can be easily tested by standardized tests; and

WHEREAS, we believe that a balanced system of assessments that provide a more comprehensive analysis of student learning and growth is far better in defining achievement than using snapshots of student performance on criterion-referenced tests (see VASS Blueprint, October 2011); and

WHEREAS, our vision is for all students to be engaged in more meaningful learning activities that cultivate their unique individual talents, to provide options for students that are designed to respect how they learn best, and to embrace the concept that students can be both consumers and creators of knowledge; and

WHEREAS, only by developing new capacities and conditions in divisions and schools, and the communities in which they are embedded, will we ensure that all learning spaces foster and celebrate innovation, creativity, problem solving, collaboration, communication and critical thinking; and

WHEREAS, these are the very skills that business leaders desire in a rising workforce and the very attitudes that are essential to the survival of our democracy; and

WHEREAS, imposing relentless test preparation and mere memorization of facts to enhance test performance is doing little more than stealing the love of learning from our students and assuring that we fall short of our goals; and

WHEREAS, we do not oppose accountability in public schools and point with pride to the stellar performance of our students, but believe that the system of the past will not prepare our students to lead in the future and neither will the standardized tests that so dominate their instructional time and block our ability to make progress toward a world-class education system of student-centered schools and future-ready students.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE Albemarle County School Board calls on the Virginia General Assembly to reexamine Virginia public school assessments and the system of accountability for which they form the basis and to improve the current accountability system so that it encompasses balanced assessments, reflects greater validity, uses more cost efficient sampling techniques and other external evaluation arrangements, allows for expedited test retakes, and more accurately reflects what students know, appreciate and can do in terms of the rigorous standards essential to their success, enhances the role of teachers as designers, guides to instruction and leaders, and nurtures the sense of inquiry and love of learning in all students.

Signed this 10th day of October, 2013.

By: 
Stephen H. Koleszar, Chairman