

RESOLUTION REGARDING MANDATED STUDENT ASSESSMENTS

WHEREAS, the Colorado Legislature, the State Board of Education, and the Colorado Department of Education have enacted a variety of laws, regulations, and rules in recent years which have required school districts to redesign their curricula, purchase new instructional materials, engage in extensive training of staff members, and invest in extensive technology improvements so that those districts can administer student learning assessments to measure mastery of the Colorado Academic Standards; and

WHEREAS, the State Legislature, at the same time that it has imposed these mandates upon school districts, has not allocated funding to school districts to cover the implementation costs for compliance with these mandates, and has instead reduced funding to school districts, for the 2014-15 school year alone, to a level approximately \$900 million less than required by Amendment 23 to the Colorado Constitution; and

WHEREAS, these unfunded mandates have posed a significant financial burden upon the Adams 12 Five Star Schools, including a \$12.5 million investment in technology resources for the 2014-15 school year that was larger in scope and cost than would otherwise been made without the online assessment mandate for the 2014-15 school year; and

WHEREAS, the accumulated testing burden established by these state mandates now outweighs the value provided by these assessments to students, parents, schools and our Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, state mandated assessments are scheduled to begin in the Adams 12 schools in less than 30 days, and the Board finds that changes to the planned Spring 2015 assessment schedule at this juncture would cause unnecessary confusion and disruption to the hard work of staff and students in preparing for these assessments; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Legislature and the United States Congress are now engaged in debate regarding amendments to state and federal laws mandating student assessments, and the Board of Education desires to share its perspective on these issues with these decision makers with the objective of reaching a more appropriate balance in the amount of student assessments to be administered in the 2015-16 and subsequent school years.

NOW THEREFORE, the Adams 12 Board of Education hereby resolves as follows:

1. We commend Adams 12 students and staff for their hard work in preparing for administration of the Spring 2015 online assessments and are hopeful that this hard work will be rewarded with successful online administration of these assessments and with continued growth in student achievement.

2. In the event that the Colorado Legislature, State Board of Education, or Colorado Department of Education amend state law, regulations, or rules to permit student assessments to be conducted in paper and pencil formats rather than the online format heretofore mandated for the 2014-15 school year and beyond, the Legislature should allocate funding to Adams 12 and other districts adequate to reimburse them for technology investments incurred because of the heretofore unfunded mandate to conduct assessments online.
3. Given the many high-stakes tests already completed by high school juniors and seniors, including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and ACT/SAT exams, we find that the value of administering state assessments in language arts, mathematics, social studies and science in those grades is outweighed by the burden of those assessments. We urge state and federal lawmakers to remove testing requirements in these grades and content areas, except for an assessment such as the ACT which allows efficient measurement of student content mastery across multiple disciplines.
4. Given the disruption that state and federally-mandated testing causes throughout a school's learning environment, we urge state policymakers to demand that PARCC, or such other assessment-creator engaged by the state in future years, develop a single end-of-year assessment that measures student learning rather than the separate performance-based and summative assessments mandated in the current system. The revised assessment system should emphasize, to the extent possible given the other parameters set forth in this resolution, measurement of critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application of knowledge in each content area.
5. We urge policymakers to demand that the future state assessment system reduce the total testing time completed by students in language arts, mathematics and science from the current level, which ranges from approximately 10-15 hours per year depending upon a student's grade level, to one in which the end-of-year assessments in these disciplines combined totals no more than 4-5 hours.
6. The current assessment system for science and social studies provides data of limited usefulness given that these assessments are only given once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school. The current assessments in these disciplines cover a wide range of material and often assess student mastery of content taught several years before the assessment.

We urge policymakers to adopt a state assessment system which includes an annual assessment of student achievement progress in social studies and science so that we can more accurately gauge annual student growth in these disciplines. We recommend that participation in such assessments be optional as determined by each local board of education.

7. We support reductions in state-mandated assessments for students in grades kindergarten through three as recommended in the Report of Findings and Recommendations of the Colorado Standards and Assessments Task Force (HB14-1202) issued January 28, 2015.
8. We direct the Superintendent to advocate for changes to the mandated state and federal assessments consistent with this Resolution.

Adopted by the Board of Education at its regular meeting of February 18, 2015.