

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 204

BY REPRESENTATIVE JEFFERSON

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the advantages, disadvantages, quality, and effectiveness of assessments administered to public school students as part of the state's testing program and to report its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education at least sixty days prior to the convening of the 2016 Regular Session of the Legislature.

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana provides that it is the goal of the public educational system "to provide learning environments and experiences, at all stages of human development, that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential"; and

WHEREAS, the state constitution requires the legislature to provide for the education of the people of the state and to establish and maintain a public educational system; and

WHEREAS, the legislature is committed to ensuring that all Louisiana public school children receive a quality education; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 17:24.4 states that the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program is "a process of measuring student performance in relation to grade appropriate skills, state content standards, and national educational indices"; and

WHEREAS, assessments are an essential part of the public education system and requiring students to demonstrate what they know and are able to do is crucial to the learning process, as it helps to determine the extent to which the goals and objectives of the public education system are being achieved; and

WHEREAS, the goal of testing students should be to ensure that the state's public schools are providing all students with the education they need to lead meaningful, productive lives; and

WHEREAS, proponents of standardized testing believe that the benefits of such testing include:

- (1) Holding teachers and schools accountable.
- (2) Giving parents a good idea of how their children are performing as compared to students throughout the state and the nation.
- (3) Narrowing achievement gaps among low-income and minority youth and ensuring equity in schools and fair treatment for such students, students with disabilities, and English language learners.
- (4) Providing teachers with a set of established standards and on instructional framework which provide them with guidance for what and when topics need to be taught.
- (5) Removing the potential for bias and subjectivity in scoring by teachers since standardized tests are objective in nature and are scored by computers or by people who do not know the student.
- (6) Providing consistent and objective data about disparities in educational outcomes among students; and

WHEREAS, opponents on the other hand argue that standardized testing has negative effects that include:

- (1) Narrowing the curriculum in schools by eliminating subjects like music, art, foreign languages, and sometimes social studies because these are not included in tests.
- (2) Limiting the type of writing students do with little or no emphasis on the processes of composing and the purposes of writing.
- (3) Giving students negative perceptions about themselves and their abilities.
- (4) Limiting learning among poor and minority students, whose standardized test scores are often lower than those of other students, which can lead to a failure to graduate.
- (5) Loss of instructional time for teachers each year due to mandatory curricula that have been developed to prepare students for standardized tests.
- (6) Reducing learning to the memorization of facts easily recalled for multiple-choice testing at the expense of in-depth learning and critical thinking.
- (7) Placing an increased amount of stress on students and teachers, which can lead to negative health consequences as well as a negative attitude toward school and learning in general; and

WHEREAS, questions and concerns have been raised regarding the length of time students spend taking state and locally administered assessments, the alignment of assessments to state academic content standards, the usefulness of assessment results, and the extent to which parents are informed about tests administered to their children; and

WHEREAS, a poll conducted by the Center for American Progress found that forty-nine percent of parents think there is too much standardized testing in schools; however, another poll conducted by the Associated Press found that three out of four parents think that it is important to regularly assess whether children are on track to meet state academic goals; and

WHEREAS, student assessments should be aligned to the state's expectations for teaching and learning and should thoroughly measure students' academic achievement and progress while maximizing time for instruction throughout the school year; and

WHEREAS, in order to fulfill the constitutional responsibilities and to ensure that Louisiana public school students receive a quality education and are given equal opportunities to develop to their full potential, it is imperative that the state's testing program receive a thorough review including all advantages, disadvantages, and effects of assessments on students and on student learning.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the advantages, disadvantages, quality, and effectiveness of assessments administered to public school students as part of the state's testing program and to report its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education at least sixty days prior to the convening of the 2016 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in conducting such study, the board shall give particular consideration to all of the following:

- (1) The number of assessments administered by grade each year.
- (2) The frequency in which the assessments are administered by grade each year.
- (3) The varying types of assessments administered.
- (4) If and to what extent students are over-tested each year.
- (5) The role of assessments in improving teaching and learning.

(6) The alignment of the state's testing program with expectations for teaching and learning.

(7) The effects of standardized testing on student learning.

(8) The effects of standardized testing on different populations of students, particularly poor and minority students.

(9) How best to eliminate any duplication, maximize instructional time, increase the usefulness of assessment results, and notify parents about required assessments.

(10) All steps taken by the state Department of Education and public school systems to streamline and increase the usefulness of student assessments and the results of such steps.

(11) Any recommendations for statutory revisions that may be necessary to adequately measure student achievement and maximize instructional time.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in conducting such study, the board shall include the participation of public high school students, parents of public school students from the elementary and high school levels, and public school teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state superintendent of education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE