

RESOLUTION TO REDESIGN COLORADO'S EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
2020-21

- 1) WHEREAS – Public education is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society, the essence of which requires an informed citizenry in which the needs, talents, and aspirations of our children are addressed.
- 2) WHEREAS – In January 2002 “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) with bipartisan support, was signed into law, mandating to the states a public education accountability system based entirely on standardized tests, “with the intent and promise of improving student learning.”
- 3) WHEREAS – NCLB was intended to close the achievement gap between poor and minority students and their more advantaged peers by requiring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for each school based on test scores in Math and Language Arts in grades 3-8 and once in high school, with the additional requirement that 100% of students reach proficiency by 2013-2014, or face sanctions.
- 4) WHEREAS – Schools and districts which failed to meet achievement targets were subject to federally prescribed sanctions such as school closure, conversion to a charter school, or management by a private external management organization (EMO). Such measures have disproportionately affected those schools and districts serving low socio-economic communities.
- 5) WHEREAS – In 2010, Colorado received \$17.9 million of a national competitive grant known as “Race to the Top,” the funds from which were earmarked for those states which adopted Common Core Standards and established assessments aligned to those standards, including an educator evaluation system measured by standardized test results.
- 6) WHEREAS – In 2010, the Colorado legislature passed SB10-191, *Concerning Ensuring Quality Instruction Through Educator Effectiveness*, a bill which tied 50% of teacher and principal evaluations to the academic growth of their students based on standardized test scores.
- 7) WHEREAS – The State Board of Education has the authority to determine cutoff scores on standardized tests, which are used to identify performance levels of schools and districts.
- 8) WHEREAS –The state accreditation system uses performance levels based on test scores to determine school and district ratings, which are Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, or Turnaround.
- 9) WHEREAS – An accountability system based on test scores in only Math and Language Arts results in a narrowing of the curriculum with fewer resources and less time available for science, social studies, physical education, the arts, music, drama, and career and technical education. This has disproportionately affected schools with high numbers of students who qualify for free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs.
- 10) WHEREAS – An accountability system based on test scores results in a focus on test preparation, encouraging fraud, scandals, and an anti-testing opt-out movement.
- 11) WHEREAS – With bipartisan support, the 2015 reauthorization of NCLB occurred, resulting in the federal enactment of ESSA (*Every Student Succeeds Act*). ESSA reduced federal authority and allowed each state the flexibility to redesign its own accountability system, yet retained the requirement

of standardized testing. Furthermore, ESSA gave states the authority to eliminate many of the “high stakes” policies, such as:

- a) Educator evaluations linked to standardized test scores
- b) Ratings of schools based on test scores
- c) Federally prescribed sanctions for low-performing schools

12) WHEREAS - Due to the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, the Colorado Department of Education suspended all spring testing of Colorado Measurement of Academic Success (CMAS). This decision consequently interrupted the school and district accountability systems which measure yearly academic growth based on test scores.

13) WHEREAS – Because of the disruption of educational instruction and the negative economic impact of the current pandemic, a mindful review of related educational policies along with an in-depth analysis of their true educational value is of critical importance.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s General Assembly and Department of Education utilize the state authority and flexibility prescribed under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* to conduct an audit of the efficacy of the state’s accreditation and accountability system regarding student learning and success.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s General Assembly and Department of Education utilize the state authority and flexibility prescribed under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* to redesign a state education accountability system that meets federal guidelines which *allow for the elimination of high-stakes policies tied solely to standardized testing*, specifically accountability and accreditation ratings of schools and districts, federally prescribed sanctions for targeted schools and districts, and educator evaluations linked to standardized test scores.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s General Assembly and Department of Education utilize the state authority and flexibility prescribed under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* to redesign a state education accountability system which is meaningful, relevant, and equitable for all students and which supports local, community-based solutions, services, and resources to address the health and well-being of each student and the unique community in which they live.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s General Assembly and Department of Education utilize the state authority and flexibility prescribed under *ESSA* to redesign a state education accountability system which includes the implementation of multiple assessment tools such as portfolios, projects, and performance tasks to measure student growth and which acknowledges the many learning styles of human beings.

Be It Resolved that Colorado’s General Assembly and Department of Education commit to closing achievement and opportunity gaps by conducting needs assessments for targeted, high-needs schools and districts and providing community-based support and interventions which are proven to increase student learning.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s General Assembly and Department of Education commit to working with the Colorado Department of Education to resubmit a state plan to the U.S Department of Education which reflects the elements aforementioned.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s General Assembly and Department of Education commit to the suspension of the CMAS testing for the 2020-21 school year and in subsequent years until the efficacy of the current state accountability system is proven through research-based measures or audit to have “improved student learning and closed the achievement gap,” as promised under NCLB and ESSA.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s Congressional delegation commits to promoting federal legislation which eliminates standardized testing as the primary measurement of student growth and supports state implementation of more accurate and meaningful forms of assessments and accountability systems.

Be It Resolved, that Colorado’s Congressional delegation demands that current and/or future federal education mandates be appropriately funded, including IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and Title I.