

Resolution Regarding a Moratorium on Testing

WHEREAS, our future well-being relies on a high-quality public education system embracing high standards for learning that prepares all students for college, careers, citizenship and lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, it is widely recognized that even well-designed standardized testing can only capture part of the story of student growth and achievement; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts state testing program has been significantly altered and fragmented for the past several years, possibly compromising the tests' reliability and validity; and

WHEREAS, school systems in Massachusetts are nonetheless expending significant classroom time and district resources preparing for high-stakes testing in which student performance on standardized tests is used to make major decisions affecting the accreditation, funding, and governance of educators, schools and districts; and

WHEREAS, the use of high-stakes standardized testing as a primary measure of school and district accountability incentivizes practices that run counter to educational quality and equity such as narrowing the curriculum, teaching to the test, reducing a love of learning, pushing students out of school, driving excellent teachers out of the profession, and undermining school climate; and

WHEREAS, the need to spend scarce resources to avoid consequences and cater to the need for higher test scores makes it impossible to develop the sort of holistic student, school, and district assessments needed to continue to improve Massachusetts' schools; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has an obligation to find better ways to assess students, schools and districts in the 21st century; one that builds on our successes over the last 25 years and uses standardized tests as a data point, without divorcing them from their contexts in the larger world.

THEREFORE, let it be resolved that the Somerville School Committee supports the use of locally developed, qualitative and quantitative measures as part of a comprehensive system of assessments and other indicators of educational quality and **encourages state policymakers to reconsider accountability measures to increase the focus on supporting school improvement over levying consequences;**

THEREFORE, let it be further resolved that the Somerville School Committee calls on state policymakers to adopt a three year moratorium on using standardized tests as grounds to levy consequences; allowing policymakers, parents, education professionals, and other community shareholders to work together to develop equitable assessment systems that support positive teaching practices and more holistic measures of educational quality to better prepare students for lifelong learning.

Approved 4/25/16