

Resolution on State Assessments in a Pandemic

Introduced by: Lawrence Scott, Member-at-Large

Sponsored by:

Sharon Belton-Cottman, President, Ferry District
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Whereas, the United States Department of Education, in a letter from Acting Assistant Secretary of Education, Ian Rosenblum, denied a requested waiver by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) of state assessments on behalf all Local Education Agencies in New York State for the 2020-21 school year;

Whereas, the NYSED waiver request indicated that the spring 2021 State assessments “cannot be safely, equitably, and fairly administered to all students across the State given how severely the pandemic has impacted the delivery of instruction to students and adversely affected their social and emotional well-being”;

Whereas, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools in New York were directed closed by New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo on Wednesday March 18, 2020 through the remainder of the 2019-20 school year;

Whereas, throughout 2020-21, schools have faced ongoing interruption and change as a result of COVID-19 pandemic with most students having received most of their instruction, remotely;

Whereas, four of the largest urban districts in New York State, including Buffalo Public Schools, began the year in full remote instruction and were least likely to provide in-person learning, as the year progressed, where a higher percentage of students from racial and ethnic subgroups are enrolled;

Whereas, students of color were more likely to choose and remain in full remote instruction when provided the option for in-person learning;

Whereas, the ongoing and changing COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant economic and emotional distress for students and families making it more challenging to safely educate our students;

Whereas, administering State assessments (grades 3-8) for a limited number of students will reduce time for instruction, intervention, and social-emotional support for all students, at a time this is needed most;

Whereas, waiving State assessments (grades 3-8) would redirect funds affiliated with State assessments to providing most needed interventions and supports directly to schools and students;

Whereas, administering State assessments (grades 3-8) in an altered manner with a limited number of students will yield unreliable results and comparisons to previous years of administered State assessments;

Whereas, State assessments (grades 3-8) provide little to no useful information to school staff and parents, and have been mostly used to judge and punish public schools, staff, and students, in attempts to privatize public education, particularly in urban school districts, such as Buffalo Public Schools;

Whereas, Buffalo Public Schools and our staff continue to utilize local, diagnostic, and holistic assessments (i.e. Star Math, DIBELS 8, Independent Reading Level Assessment, New Entrant Screener, iStation, District Benchmark Assessments, Common Formative Assessments, etc.), which provide far more meaningful information on student growth, strengths, and weaknesses, than State assessments (grades 3-8);

Therefore, Be it Resolved, the Buffalo Board of Education respectfully requests that newly appointed United States Secretary of the Department of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona overturn the denial of the NYSED request to waive State assessments for the 2020-21 school year;

Further, Be It Resolved, the Board of Education respectfully requests the assistance of President Joseph Biden, Senator and Majority Leader Charles Schumer, US Senator Kristin Gillibrand, and US Congressman Brian Higgins in overturning the denied NYSED request by USDE to waive State assessments) for the 2020-21 school year;

Further, Be It Resolved, the Board of Education assures Buffalo parents and caregivers the right to choose to have their children opt-out of grades 3-8 State assessments free of any penalty or repercussion, in the event that they are administered.