

Position Statement on Assessments

National PTA believes that high-quality assessments provide valuable information to parents, teachers and school leaders about the growth and achievement of their students. Assessment is a process of gathering information to guide educational decisions. A test is one tool that can be used in a comprehensive assessment system to evaluate and assess student growth and learning. National PTA also believes that neither one test, nor a single data point should ever be the sole determinant of a student's academic or work future, such as graduation, admission, retention or tracking.

National PTA supports annual state assessments for students in math and reading for grades 3-8, once in high school, as well as grade span testing in science. Having annual data on the performance of students helps inform teaching and learning, and identifies achievement gaps among groups of students within a school and school district. National PTA believes assessments are essential to ensure all students receive a high-quality education and help guide instruction to better meet the needs of students. The information gathered from assessments can also help to make sure students and schools are receiving the necessary resources and supports in order to reach their full potential.

National PTA supports a state assessment system that is appropriately aligned with each state's academic standards. A sound and comprehensive assessment system should include multiple measures of student growth and achievement that reflect the depth and breadth of knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire, as well as their capacity to perform critical competencies. When used appropriately, diagnostic, formative and summative assessments provide critical data to help teachers inform and align their instruction, support student learning and readiness for postsecondary education and training, guide professional development and target evidenced-based interventions to students and schools.

National PTA does not support state and district policies that allow students to opt-out of state assessments that are designed to improve teaching and learning. While we recognize that parents are a child's first teacher and respect the rights of parents to make decisions on behalf of their children, the association believes the consequences of nonparticipation in state assessments can have detrimental impacts on students and schools. Nonparticipation can result in a loss of funding, diminished resources and meaningful interventions for student subgroups, which would have a disparate impact on minorities and students with special needs and widen the achievement gap. Opting out also stalls innovation by inhibiting effective monitoring and improvement of programs, instructional strategies and exams, and could thwart transparency by providing incomplete data sets for states and schools.

National PTA recognizes that federal, state and local policymakers, and all education stakeholders—including parents and families must be stewards of effective assessment systems. All students should participate in high-quality and comprehensive assessment systems

that measure their growth and achievement so all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

National PTA recommends that:

- Federal policy maintain the requirement that states annually assess students in grades 3 – 8 in reading and math and once in high school. Students should also be assessed in science once in grades 3-5, 6-8 and 10-12.
- State-determined accountability systems provide for multiple measures of student growth and achievement.
- The federal government incentivize states and school districts to conduct audits of their assessment systems to reduce low-quality, misaligned and redundant exams.
- States develop a strategic assessment system to eliminate unnecessary exams, in consultation with district leaders, educators and parents that is aligned with academic standards and supports college and career readiness.
- States obtain the necessary resources and have appropriate policies and procedures in place to develop, validate and implement high-quality assessments with fidelity.
- States and school districts clearly articulate to parents the assessment and accountability system in place at their child’s school. Parents must be notified through multiple communication efforts of required assessments, their purpose, when they will occur, and when results will be available. Additionally, families shall be notified on how educators will use assessment data and how parents can use the information to support their child’s academic growth and achievement.
- States ensure assessment results are delivered to parents and educators in a timely, actionable and understandable manner.
- States provide clear and easily accessible information to parents, educators, school districts and the community regarding nonparticipation in state assessments and the consequences it may have on students, schools and educators. States should also collect data on the number and frequency of students who opt-out of state assessments and report on the impact to instructional practices, teacher and principal evaluations and school accountability measures.
- States and districts annually evaluate and review assessment systems to certify it accurately and fairly measures student achievement towards college and career standards and provides valuable data to parents, teachers and school leaders.

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- States and school districts deliver professional development to teachers and principals to ensure assessment data is used appropriately to guide instruction and support evidenced-based interventions for identified students, subgroups of students and school improvement.
- School districts should work collaboratively with schools to design the assessment calendar to guarantee minimal disruption to classroom learning opportunities.
- Schools and families meaningfully engage in two-way communication regarding assessments, including how schools and families can work together to use assessment data to support student growth and learning.
- Assessments must accommodate the needs of all students, effectively address digital and connectivity issues to ensure equity and adhere to the most recent federal health and safety guidelines.
- In the event of a national emergency or crisis that disrupts the public education system, local, state, and federal authorities should allow for flexibility in the delivery and administration of assessments.

Adopted: by the 2016 Board of Directors
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