

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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ANNUAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY  
May 14, 2016

**The following resolution was received from the  
Highland Park Board of Education (Middlesex):**

WHEREAS, Beginning with the class of 2016, the New Jersey Department of Education (“NJDOE”) has proposed new high school graduation requirements that eliminate the Alternative High School Assessment and replace the mandatory High School Proficiency Assessment with the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (“PARCC”) Assessments before the validity and reliability of the PARCC Assessments have been established, and without adequately informing students and parents about the potential consequences for graduation when the PARCC Assessments were administered in Spring 2015; and

WHEREAS, Beginning with the class of 2020, the NJDOE has further proposed additional regulations that would deny parents the right to opt their children out of PARCC Assessments; and

WHEREAS, Beginning with the class of 2021, the NJDOE has proposed requiring students to pass the PARCC ELA10 and Alg 1 Assessments in order to graduate; and

WHEREAS, The Delegate Assembly is the official policymaking body of the New Jersey School Boards Association; and

WHEREAS, Education-related policies resulting from prior Delegate Assembly and Board of Directors actions are codified in the NJSBA’s *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*; now, therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, That the Highland Park Board of Education proposes the following  
2 additional policy language for adoption by the Delegate Assembly and  
3 inclusion in NJSBA’s *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*:  
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5 **The NJSBA believes** that New Jersey should continue to provide multiple  
6 pathways to a high school diploma that include alternatives not based on  
7 standardized tests, and that the State should continue to respect the right of  
8 parents to make decisions about the assessment alternatives that are most  
9 appropriate for their children, and, be it further  
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- 11 RESOLVED, That this resolution be placed on the agenda for consideration at the  
12 May 14, 2016 Delegate Assembly.

Adopted at a regular meeting  
Of the Highland Park Board of  
Education on February 22, 2016

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Ms. Linda Hoefele  
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

## RESOLUTION NO. 1

### SYNOPSIS

Resolution No. 1 from the Highland Park (Middlesex County) Board of Education proposes **additional** policy language for adoption by the Delegate Assembly and inclusion in NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education* requiring NJSBA to continue supporting the provision of multiple pathways to a high school diploma that includes alternatives not based only on standardized tests, and that the State should continue to respect the right of parents to make decisions about assessment alternatives that are most appropriate for their children.

### BACKGROUND

The Highland Park Board of Education submitted two requests for consideration to the "Graduation Requirements Policy Language Resolution" that would include additional policy language for adoption by the Delegate Assembly and inclusion in NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*.

The first request requires NJSBA to continue supporting the provision of multiple pathways to a high school diploma that includes alternatives not based on standardized tests. This request is consistent with policy File Code 6147 supporting an alternative method of measuring whether students have met state and federal requirements.

The second Highland Park request for consideration is desire for the State to "continue" to respect the right of parents to make decisions about assessment alternatives that are most appropriate for their children. Throughout the 2015-2016 school year the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) reported that under current code and regulations, there was no bases in the State of New Jersey for parents to opt their children out of state testing. Since it is currently not a "right," it cannot be continued.

Current NJSBA policy supports parental involvement and input into educational decisions (File Code 1200 and File Code 5020), but does not support ceding the ultimate authority to parents due to local control (File Code 1430).

Current Federal and State code require students to complete a designated assessment; no minimum passing scores were established. Considering that Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment results have not yet been validated and the reliability has not yet been established, it is suggested that the DOE adopt the Governor's Task Force Recommendations to adopt a multi-year phase in of PARCC and delay it as a graduation requirement until PARCC is deemed validated and reliable. A multi-agency task force would be commissioned to review the validation and reliability of the individual PARCC results, and revisit the graduation requirement to include PARCC results.

The elimination of the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA) will cause undue hardship to students and their parents who must take a NJDOE approved alternative assessment. The approved assessments that are aligned with the NJ Common Core State Standards (NJCCSS), (Scholastic Aptitude Test-SAT, American College Test-ACT) are

at an additional cost to the family or the school district if the latter determines they will pay for non-PARCC and NJDOE approved alternative assessments. The assessments that have no or a minimal financial impact, Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (AFCAB) and the (Accuplacer) are not aligned with the standards being taught in NJ schools. Additionally, standardized assessments like PARCC, SAT and ACT put many students who qualify for the AHSA due to being English Language Learners (ELL) at a disadvantage to demonstrate proficiency. These traditional assessments are only administered in English. It is important to note that none of the NJDOE approved written assessments are administered in a language other than English.

### **RELEVANT NJSBA POLICY**

File Code 1200: Parent and/or Guardian/Citizen Involvement in Education states:

**The NJSBA believes** that local boards of education should promote parent and/or guardian/citizen involvement in education. Schools should be made accessible to parents and members of the community; opportunities for communication among staff, parents and/or guardians, and the general public should be encouraged; school-related policies and procedures, data and other information should be provided; parents and/or guardians and citizens should be involved in the development of policies and programs; and parents and/or guardians and citizens should be provided meaningful participation, within reasonable parameters, at all regular public board meetings. *[Authority: DA 12/82-CR Urban Education, DA 6/95-SR, DA 6/81-25, DA 5/01-SR, DA 5/06-SR, DA 5/11-SR]*

File Code 1430: State Role in Education states:

- A. **The NJSBA believes** the authority for management of public schools should rest with local boards of education and State authority over school districts should not exceed the scope necessary to fulfill the constitutional mandate for a thorough and efficient system of free public education. *[Authority: DA 10/78-CR Graduation Requirements, DA 6/80-A, DA 6/93-SR, DA 6/95-SR]*

File Code 5020: Parent Participation states:

- A. **The NJSBA believes** that children learn more when their parents are involved in their education. Local boards of education and school staff should value parental participation and encourage the active participation of parents in the schools and the decision making process of the school district.
- B. **The NJSBA believes** that partnerships with parents should be forged through a policy of inclusion that establishes two-way communication between the school district and the family and provides training to teach parents about how the school system works, how to effectively communicate about their children and school issues, how to develop a home environment conducive to study, and how to help with homework.
- C. **The NJSBA believes** that parent participation can be enhanced by: including parent involvement as a criterion in the evaluation of the superintendent and building

principals; making agendas and minutes of board meetings widely available; establishing a home-school liaison position to facilitate parent involvement and training programs for parents and staff; scheduling of parent involvement activities at the convenience of parents; and ensuring adequate funding in the district's budget to support parent involvement and training activities. *[Authority: DA 6/90-CR (Parental Involvement), DA 5/97-SR, DA 5/02-SR, DA 5/07-SR, DA 5/12-SR]*

#### File Code 6147: School Performance Indicators

- A. **The NJSBA believes** that local district policy should define a set of performance indicators to be used to monitor the quality of each school and that it is important for the State Department of Education to annually collect information from each district that provides the community with a profile of each school's performance on significant indicators.
- B. **The NJSBA believes** that the format for data should permit local boards of education and school officials to compare the performance of their schools to similar schools across the state or in selected districts. *[Authority: DA 12/82-CR (Urban Education) DA 11/97 SR, DA 11/02-SR, DA 11/07-SR, DA 11/12-SR]*

#### Statewide Testing Program

- A. **The NJSBA believes** that a uniform statewide test or an alternative method of measurement should be used as the basic method of assessing whether students have met State and Federal standards.
- B. **The NJSBA believes** that early childhood programs and the assessment of these programs should be developmentally appropriate. *[Authority: DA 6/89-CR (Early Childhood Education), BD 3/90, DA 11/97 SR DA 5/00-1]*
- C. **The NJSBA believes** that assessments should:
1. Be an accurate, valid, and reliable measure of whether or not the student has mastered the New Jersey Common Core Standards;
  2. Measure skills appropriate for graduation (i.e., those skills commonly considered essential for functioning as an adult in American society),
  3. Should provide the district, the schools and the teaching staff with information that can be used to identify the need for remedial intervention as well as identify the opportunity for advanced or accelerated work,
  4. Be designed to ensure that all students have the opportunity, assistance and incentives to meet the state's academic standards. *[Authority: DA 10/78-CR (Graduation Requirements); DA 12/83-1, DA 5/00-1, BD 3/90 DA 11/97-SR, DA 5/00-1, DA 11/02-SR, DA 11/07-SR, DA 11/12-SR]*

### Monitoring of Test Administration Procedures

**The NJSBA believes** it is important to:

1. Monitor the implementation of all statewide tests to assure that the impact on school districts is a positive one on both curriculum and educational gains of students
2. Ensure effective implementation of assessments that are both statistically valid and reliable in accordance with testing procedures that are proven and established.
3. Ensure timely release of useful assessment information so that there can be meaningful remediation for students and appropriate professional development for the instructional strategies.
4. Require the provision of appropriate remedial re-evaluations for students failing to meet the standards.
5. Limit testing so as not to provide undue hardship to students or their instructional program.

*[Authority: DA 12/85-1, DA 12/89-CR (HSPT/Differentiated Diplomas), DA 5/00-1, DA 11/02-SR, DA 11/07-SR, DA 11/12-SR]*

### Statewide Graduation Standards

- A. **The NJSBA believes** that local board policy should set local graduation requirements, and supports local control over graduation requirements. *[Authority: DA 5/99-1a & b. DA 11/97 SR]*
- B. **The NJSBA believes** that all students who meet local and State requirements for graduation should be granted a state-endorsed diploma, including special education students and students of limited English proficiency who meet the requirements of their individual IEP. *[Authority: DA 10/78-CR (Graduation Requirements); DA 1/80-A; DA 12/83-4; DA 12/85-1; DA 12/89-CR (HSPT/Differentiated Diplomas), DA 11/97 SR, DA 5/00-1]*
- C. **The NJSBA believes** that students, who fail the High School Proficiency Assessment (H.S.P.A.) twice, should have the option of having an Individual Student Plan developed that will lead to marketable job skills and receive a state endorsed certificate that delineates the student's training. *[Authority: DA 6/85-CR (Proficiency Test), DA 12/89-CR (HSPT/Differentiated Diplomas), DA 5/00-1, DA 11/02-SR, DA 11/07-SR, DA 11/12-SR]*

### Assessment of Special Education Students

**The NJSBA believes** that any state assessment system must take into consideration the impact it will have on students eligible for special education and related services, and the opportunity it affords those students to meet their full potential. Any State assessment system should reflect the following principles:

1. Special education students should be included.

2. A district's accountability for the proficiency of special education students should be based on incremental progress against standards that take into account the special challenges faced by these students.
3. Schools and districts should not be labeled in need of improvement based solely on the proficiency of special education students.
4. Remedial action that may be required of a school or district because special education students did not achieve proficiency goals should be directed exclusively at those students. [*Authority: DA 11/03-CR (Special Education), DA 11/02- SR, DA 11/07-SR, DA 11/12-SR*]

## **DISCUSSION**

Since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the adoption of the PARCC assessment (Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) by the State of New Jersey that was initially administered in the 2014-2015 academic year, there has been significant public discourse both in support and opposition to these two initiatives.

After completing its review of the CCSS, a Governor's task force has recommended revisions to these standards now known as the NJCCSS. The NJDOE has announced a series of modified graduation requirements tied directly to PARCC that commence with the Class of 2016 and continue with the Classes of 2020 and 2021.

As a condition of high school graduation, Federal and New Jersey code requires students to complete a designated assessment. Prior to the Class of 2016, the required New Jersey assessment was the NJ HSPA (High School Proficiency Assessment). Students who could not demonstrate proficiencies on the HSPA were entitled to substitute an alternate assessment, the Alternate High School Assessment (AHSA). This option ended with the Class of 2015.

Beginning with the Class of 2016 and including the Classes of 2017 and 2018, in order to graduate from high school, students will be required to pass one part of the PARCC assessment. It is important to note that in 2012, 25 states tied their graduation requirements to high school exit exams; currently for 17 states there is a relationship between exit exams and graduation; however, only in NJ will PARCC be used as a graduation exit test.

Additionally, these new NJDOE proposed high school graduation requirements eliminate the Alternate High School Assessment (AHSA). A concern expressed by some boards of education is that this decision was made before the validity and reliability of the PARCC assessments have been established, and without adequately informing students and parents about the potential consequences for graduation when the PARCC assessments were administered in Spring 2015.

Many students who qualify for the AHSA are English Language Learners (ELL) for whom achieving proficiency on a traditional assessment in English puts them at a disadvantage. It is important to note that none of the NJDOE approved written assessments are administered in a language other than English. A second concern is that

the elimination of the AHSA will cause undue hardship to students and their parents who must take a NJDOE approved alternative assessment at an additional cost to the family or the school district if the latter determines they will pay for non-PARCC and NJDOE approved alternative assessments.

Approximately 50,000 New Jersey high school seniors, members of the Class of 2016 who did not pass the PARCC assessments must now access the NJDOE's other options to graduate on time this June, thus requiring districts to devote valuable staff time and resources to help students meet these new requirements through even more tests and a time-consuming new graduation appeals process. These options include the Scholastic Aptitude test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT) both of which requires registration fees. Additional options like the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (AFCAB) and the Accuplacer are not aligned with the standards being taught in NJ schools.

New Jersey is among 17 states that require an exit exam to earn a high school diploma; New Jersey is the only state that will require demonstrating proficiency specifically on the PARCC exam to qualify for graduation. Currently, there is no opt-out clause that permits parents to exclude their children from participating in standardized testing. The NJDOE has directed districts that did not meet the 95% participation rate for the 2015 PARCC assessments to develop corrective action plans for each NCLB sub-group that did not meet that participation requirement.

Beginning with the Class of 2021, the NJDOE has proposed requiring students to pass the PARCC ELA10 and Algebra I assessments in order to graduate.

### **STATEMENT OF REASONS**

1. New Jersey has a long history of supporting students with disabilities and challenges. A provision of multiple pathways to a high school diploma that includes alternatives not based on standardized tests is consistent with policy File Code 6147.
2. Currently, New Jersey is among 17 states that require an exit exam to earn a high school diploma; New Jersey is the only state that will require demonstrating proficiency specifically on the PARCC exam to qualify for graduation.
3. Standardized assessments like PARCC, SAT and ACT put many students who qualify for the AHSA due to being English Language Learners (ELL) at a disadvantage to demonstrate proficiency. These traditional assessments are only administered in English. It is important to note that none of the NJDOE approved written assessments are administered in a language other than English.
4. NJSBA policy supports alternatives to a uniform statewide test as a method of assessing whether students have met New Jersey State Standards.
5. NJSBA policy supports local control of educational decisions including graduation requirements.

1 **RECOMMENDATION**

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3 The Resolutions Subcommittee recommends approval of this resolution with the following  
4 substitute policy language which would create **additional** policy language at File Code 6147 in  
5 the NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*:

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7 **The NJSBA believes** the state should provide alternative methods of achieving state and  
8 federal requirements for graduation, not based only on standardized tests, such as the  
9 Alternate High School Assessment or portfolio assessment.

10  
11 **The NJSBA further believes** that parents should have input into decisions regarding the  
12 methods of assessment used, but that the ultimate authority to decide these methods  
13 must rest with local boards of education.