

Subject: Resolution No. 31-14A7

**Formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Testing and a
Community Advisory Committee on Testing to Advise
the Board of Education on Alternative Assessment Systems**

- Commissioners Mark Sanchez, Sarah Lipson, and Eric Mar

Whereas: Resolution No. 25-28A21, *In Support of Alternative Assessments and Multiple Measures of Student Learning*, confirmed the concerns of the San Francisco Board of Education that California's assessment system is not a positive component of an equitable public education system due in part to the following:

The system has been based on a single measure,

The High School Exit Exam, if fully implemented, will deprive many students of high school diplomas that they have earned,

The state has allowed a system of inequitable education to exist which result in urban school districts with high concentrations of disadvantaged students, students of color, immigrant students, language minority students experiencing greater challenges providing adequate curriculum materials, learning and work environments, stable teacher and administrative forces, among other issues,

Assessments are administered only in English,

Standardized tests tend to promote narrowing of the curriculum and "teaching to the test",

The results statewide of the 2001-2002 California HSEE are devastating, including:

approximately 80% of Latino and African American students failing the math portion of the exam,

56% of Latino students and 54% of African American students failing the English Language Arts portion of the exam,

82% of English Language Learners failing the math and 72% failing the English portions of the exam,

78% of socio-economically disadvantaged students failing the math and 60% failing the English portions of the exam,

89% of special education students failing the math and 75% failing the English portions of the exam; and

SFUSD results of the HSEE are similar to the statewide results mentioned above; and

WHEREAS: The San Francisco Board of Education is cognizant of significantly increasing rates of high school drop-outs, particularly among African-Americans and Latinos in states across the country that have implemented exit exams, and

WHEREAS: The goal of closing the educational opportunity and achievement gap cannot be reached without the provision of adequate resources. The State of California is the fifth largest economy in the world while our per pupil funding is judged to be from 33rd to 48th (adjusted for cost of living) in the country, and

WHEREAS: Grassroots student, parent and teacher organizations such as Californians for Justice, the Coalition for Educational Justice, CAL CARE, School Voices and Teachers 4 Social Justice have taken a leading role in resisting the High School Exit Exam and other high stakes testing in California; and civil rights groups such as the NAACP and the Citizens Commission on Civil Rights as well as mainstream educational groups such as the California Teachers Association have also come out strongly against high stakes testing; and

WHEREAS: Research by Audrey Amrein and David Berliner of Arizona State University, (*The Impact of High-Stake Tests on Student Academic Performance*, 12/02) shows that such testing may inhibit the academic achievement of students, not foster their academic growth.

The major findings of this research demonstrate that high stakes testing policies are associated with the following negative and unintended consequences:

- Higher numbers of low performing students being retained in grade before pivotal testing years, apparently to ensure that students are properly prepared to take high-stakes tests; and
- Higher numbers of low performing students being suspended before testing days, expelled from school before tests, or being reclassified as exempt from testing because they are determined to be either Special Education or Limited English Proficient; all strategies to prevent low-scoring students from taking high-stakes tests; and
- Higher numbers of students from whom equal opportunities to learn subjects such as art, music, science, social studies, and physical education are being withheld. Because these subjects are not often tested, teachers and administrators tend to focus less on these subjects as high-stakes testing dates approach; and
- Higher numbers of urban school teachers, in particular, 'teaching to the test' limiting instruction to only those things that are sure to be tested, requiring students to spend hours memorizing facts, and drilling students on test taking strategies; and

- Higher numbers of teachers who leave their public school positions to teach in private schools, free of state testing mandates because state rules make them feel compromised as professionals; and
- Instances of cheating by teachers and other school personnel in response to the pressures of high-stakes testing.

WHEREAS: Assessments should:

-set high educational standards for all children and all schools—standards that deepen and enrich the quality of learning in our schools and classrooms, but do not seek to impose a standardized curriculum, a unitary view of teaching, knowledge, learning, language, and culture.

-contribute to the education of students to the full range of their talents and capacities, providing helpful information to students and their families.

-enhance educational opportunities for all by narrowing the race and social class academic achievement gap.

-help teachers teach better by providing information that enhances teachers' efforts to improve students' learning.

-provide information to the public, the Board, and District leaders that enables them to make informed decisions that serve the best interests of all students.

WHEREAS: The Superintendent has requested that the Board of Education clarify the terms and intent of the previously adopted board resolution No. 25-28A21, *In Support of Alternative Assessments and Multiple Measures of Student Learning*.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED : That the San Francisco Board of Education *rescind* Board resolution No. 25-28A21; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Board of Education is interested in determining what an educationally sound assessment system that is not attached to high stakes consequences could be and how such a system might be used in the San Francisco Unified School District, including the possibility of replacing the current system, absent any legal impediments; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: That the President of the Board of Education will appoint an Ad Hoc Committee on Testing consisting of three members of the Board which may convene open hearings on testing, utilizing the expertise found in academia, community based education organizations, local school communities, and District staff under the direction of the Superintendent, and make recommendations to the Board of Education on improvements that can be made to the assessments used in SFUSD, and report to the Board no later than January 2004 with an interim report within six (6) months (September 2004);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That it is not the intention of the Board of Education to flaunt the state or federal mandates but to provide leadership to the state and education community in the area of assessments, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board will establish a Community Advisory Committee on Testing comprised of no fewer than 23 members, including student and adult representation, with each Board Commissioner appointing three members and each Student Delegate appointing one (1) member to said Committee within thirty (30) days of adoption of this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That development, operation and support of the Community Advisory Committee will be defined according to guidelines developed by the Rules, Policy and Legislation Committee of the Board of Education and passed by the Board according to the Rules of the Board of Education, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: That both of the above referenced committees will complete their work and be dissolved by January 31, 2004.

2/25/03