
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 322 Session of
2018

INTRODUCED BY AUMENT, KILLION, RAFFERTY, YUDICHAK, VOGEL,
RESCHENTHALER, BAKER, BARTOLOTTA, WHITE, WARD, MARTIN AND
MENSCH, APRIL 18, 2018

REFERRED TO EDUCATION, APRIL 18, 2018

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study
2 standardized tests in public education.

3 WHEREAS, Standardized tests have been used in the United
4 States since the early 1900s by schools, colleges and the
5 military to test student achievement as well as mental ability;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, In 2002, amid growing concerns about racial
8 education inequity and poor performance of United States
9 students on international measures of achievement, the President
10 of the United States signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
11 into law which required states to test students in math and
12 reading every year from third to eighth grade and once between
13 tenth grade and graduation; and

14 WHEREAS, In 2009, a separate effort to create consistent
15 curriculum standards led to the creation of Common Core State
16 Standards, and under the Race To The Top grant program, states
17 were provided incentives to adopt Common Core standards and

1 begin evaluating teachers and principals based on student
2 performance on assessments; and

3 WHEREAS, According to a 2015 study by the Council of Great
4 City Schools, the typical United States student takes 112
5 mandatory standardized exams between pre-Kindergarten and high
6 school graduation, roughly eight exams per year; and

7 WHEREAS, Standardized assessments in this Commonwealth have
8 been used to measure student growth and achievement, to comply
9 with Federal accountability, and are part of the State's teacher
10 evaluation system; and

11 WHEREAS, In recent years, debates have been waged over
12 whether there is an over-reliance on testing in schools at the
13 expense of a broader, well-rounded education, and this
14 perception of over-testing has led to successful opt-out
15 movements where parents are refusing to allow their children to
16 take standardized exams; and

17 WHEREAS, As Pennsylvania looks to make changes to
18 standardized testing, it is important for the General Assembly
19 to understand the amount of time spent on standardized testing
20 as well as how the results of those tests are used; therefore be
21 it

22 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and
23 Finance Committee to study the following:

24 (1) the intended use of all State standardized tests
25 when they were originally created or authorized under Federal
26 or State law as compared to how they are used today;

27 (2) the valid and research-based uses of State
28 standardized tests as indicators of student achievement,
29 school building performance and educator effectiveness;

30 (3) the amount of time devoted to test-taking skills and

1 practice test items for federally required tests;

2 (4) the amount of time devoted to test-taking skills and
3 practice test items for State required tests;

4 (5) the amount of time devoted to test-taking skills and
5 practice test items for locally elected tests;

6 (6) the source of State standardized tests (State-
7 specific, Smarter Balanced, Partnership for Assessment of
8 Readiness for College and Careers, Scholastic Aptitude Test
9 and American College Testing) used by all states for Federal
10 accountability and the states' rationale for each test's use
11 in a State plan, using plans submitted under the Every
12 Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95, 129 Stat. 1802);

13 (7) a comparison between Pennsylvania and all other
14 states in the use of standardized tests in teacher
15 evaluations, including, but not limited to, current trends
16 and the research basis for the inclusion of standardized test
17 results in the evaluation systems;

18 (8) whether a realignment of State academic standards,
19 Pennsylvania's voluntary model curriculum and individual
20 public school entities' curriculum would be necessary if
21 Pennsylvania required each student to take the Scholastic
22 Aptitude Test instead of the Keystone Exams, along with
23 associated costs of new curricular materials, new benchmarks,
24 Statewide instructional supports, redesign of Statewide
25 instructional supports and staff realigning local curriculum
26 plans;

27 (9) whether Pennsylvania can obtain a continuous
28 longitudinal growth measure for public school entities and
29 teachers in math, science and English language arts based on
30 student performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test compared

1 to the value-added assessment system established under
2 section 221 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14),
3 known as the Public School Code of 1949;

4 (10) a comparison of universal design principles and
5 accommodations available to students with disabilities for
6 all State standardized tests and a determination of whether
7 the availability of instructional accommodations impact the
8 validity of the tests as a growth measure; and

9 (11) the impact on compliance with federally required
10 tests and accountability measures such as school building
11 performance and educator effectiveness if Pennsylvania
12 expanded the options to be excused from State assessments to
13 include objections on philosophical grounds or due to health
14 concerns for the child;

15 and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That, in conducting the study, the committee
17 consult with education stakeholders, classroom teachers in
18 public school entities and faculty at the State System of Higher
19 Education and State-related higher education institutions with
20 expertise in assessments and psychometrics; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the committee be prohibited from consulting
22 with entities who currently or have the potential to contract
23 with the Commonwealth in any manner related to this study or any
24 private entity that could financially benefit from a policy
25 change that could result from the findings of this study; and be
26 it further

27 RESOLVED, That the committee prepare and submit a written
28 report to the Senate within one year of the adoption of this
29 resolution.