
A CALL TO ACTION FOR ASSESSMENT REFORM

presented by New Jersey's Education and Business Leaders

The Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing and Evaluation (CREATE)

The Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE)

1. Every component of the statewide accountability system, including state-administered, standardized assessments and state-overseen, district-administered, performance evaluations must be aligned with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards as validated through an external, unbiased evaluation.
2. The statewide assessment system must use multiple formats including:
 - ◆ state-administered, standardized, curriculum-based assessments with high quality, intellectually challenging test items (including multiple choice, open-ended and short answer items), and
 - ◆ state-overseen, district-administered, high quality assessments emphasizing performance evaluation, such as student projects, student demonstrations, student competitions and problem solving tasks.
3. New Jersey's accountability system should place equal weight on each of these components. That is, the data generated should be equally robust, the results of each component should be reported publicly, and the data generated should be given equal weight in their use, e.g., in the New Jersey School Report Card, in school district monitoring, in reporting for continuous improvement, etc. For satisfying state and federal reporting and accountability requirements, a single determination of each student's level of proficiency should be made based on the student's combined performance on the standardized tests and performance evaluations. CREATE and the BCEE will develop a joint position statement regarding the methodology for making this determination and for reporting and using assessment results to drive continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
4. New Jersey educators must be involved directly in the development, implementation and monitoring of both assessment components, including the development of RFPs for each assessment. Testing and content experts also must be involved directly.
5. A single state-administered, standardized academic assessment must be implemented in language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics, in conformance with federal requirements, in grades three through eight by the 2005-06 school year. State-administered, standardized academic assessments must be implemented in science, in conformance with federal requirements, at the elementary, middle and high school levels (at a minimum) by the 2007-08 school year.
6. The New Jersey Department of Education should immediately develop and disseminate an RFP to select a testing company to develop a new or modify an existing standardized test of language arts in grade three. This test must be aligned with New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards in language arts and should be implemented in Spring 2003. It must satisfy all federal requirements. The BCEE and CREATE must be involved in the development of the criteria for this RFP (e.g., reliability, validity, manageable in length, provision of timely and useful diagnostic information, aligned with the core standards, high quality, challenging).
7. A high quality, state-administered, standardized academic science assessment should be

implemented in the 2003-04 school year at the third or fourth grade level. The assessment must be aligned with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, whether it is a revision of the current ESPA science test or a new test. With that assurance in place, no science assessment will need to be implemented at this level in 2002-03.

8. The New Jersey Department of Education should immediately launch a pilot project, in accordance with the proposal made by CREATE, to develop high quality, state-overseen, district-administered assessments in all content areas, beginning with language arts, mathematics and science, and including the cross-content/workplace readiness standards. The pilot project should permit statewide implementation of performance-based assessments in language arts and mathematics by the 2005-06 school year, and statewide implementation in science by the 2007-08 school year.
9. The Commissioner of Education should provide a clear message (including a detailed plan for implementation) to educators, parents, employers and citizens that language arts, mathematics and science will be assessed in the manners described above.
10. The state should emphasize and provide necessary support for high quality professional development of educators in the:
 - ◆ development and implementation of valid and reliable performance-based assessments,
 - ◆ use of resultant diagnostic information to improve teaching and learning,
 - ◆ use of effective strategies for addressing individual student needs,
 - ◆ closing of the achievement gap and
 - ◆ implementation of best practices identified through a continuous educational improvement model.
11. The New Jersey Department of Education should take immediate action to develop a student-level database to enable longitudinal tracking on all key student and school outcomes. Such a system will provide educators and the public with fair, relevant and useful information on student and

school performance over time. The Department should work with the BCEE and CREATE to develop an accountability system that facilitates continuous educational improvement in teaching and learning at the school and classroom levels.

Submitted to

*Governor James E. McGreevey
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