



NJPSA Legislative Conference

March 29, 2019

Action Alert

Contact Your Assemblyperson Regarding High School Assessment Legislation!

NJPSA Urges Assembly Support and Prompt Consideration of A-4957 (Lampitt)/S-3381 (Ruiz) - State High School Assessment Legislation

Background

On December 31, 2018, the Appellate Division, NJ Superior Court issued a decision concerning student assessment in high school. The Court found that certain regulations concerning high school graduation requirements did not comply with existing state statute (N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-7) that requires a statewide graduation test in the eleventh grade. The Court provided a 30-day stay of its judgment to permit the NJDOE to seek further review and avoid disruption in the ongoing statewide administration of proficiency exams.

Ultimately, the parties entered a Consent Order that preserves the current menu of options for students to demonstrate their proficiency levels for high school graduation for current juniors and seniors only (Classes of 2019 and 2020).

However, this leaves the current assessment statute unchanged. Absent legislative action, the decision will lead to the quick development, field-testing and implementation of an 11th grade assessment at great expense, which must be in place for current sophomores and freshmen. This is not in the best interests of our students or schools.

The Legislation

A-4957 (Lampitt)/S-3381 (Ruiz) has been introduced as a stop-gap measure to modify the existing statute that continues to require passage of an 11th grade assessment for high school graduation. The bill:

- Eliminates statutory language requiring a specific 11th grade test,
- Appropriately refers the assessment issue to the Department of Education and State Board regulatory process and
- Contains provisions consistent with the Consent Order to effectively “grandfather” current juniors and seniors to the current graduation standards.

NJPSA testified in support of these provisions during the Senate Budget and Appropriations and the Assembly Education committee hearings. We also support the extension of the grandfathering provisions to current freshmen and sophomores.

ACTION NEEDED: CALL OR EMAIL YOUR ASSEMBLY MEMBERS TODAY!

OUR ASK: Ask your legislators to seek the posting of A-4975/S-3381 for a vote at the next Assembly Voting Session. Ask them to vote YES on this legislation!

Talking Point 1: Why Legislation Is Still Needed NOW

If legislation is not passed, the NJDOE by default must act quickly and at great expense to develop an 11th grade test under a very tight timeline during a difficult budget cycle. In our view, that is not the right direction either fiscally or educationally.

- There is no current 11th grade test. The NJDOE has not yet developed an 11th grade assessment. Any new assessment must be aligned with New Jersey's State Learning Standards, must be procured through an extensive time-consuming process, and must be in place for current sophomores and freshmen by 2020.
- If no action is taken, New Jersey may end up with a hastily-developed and adopted 11th grade test at great cost.
- The development of an 11th grade test derails important, long-overdue work to develop the next generation of assessment in New Jersey. The NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) is actively working to transition away the PARCC assessment system in response to extensive public outreach. Currently, collaborative work is underway between the NJDOE and working committees of professional educators to design and develop a new state assessment system that is aligned to our state learning standards, reduces testing time and meets our instructional goals.
- **Implementation - Let's do this right this time!** Our members seek a smooth implementation process on any new assessment system based

upon the missteps of the past. This means we need time, not the rushed development and implementation process that will occur if we scramble to adopt an 11th grade test under emergent timelines. This means time for the procurement of a new, high quality test, time to field test the new assessment, time to update our school-based technology, time to train educators in the content and administration of a new state assessment and critical time to communicate with parents about the goals of the new assessment.

- **State assessments carry significant costs at both the state and local level.** In these challenging fiscal times, funds will need to be set aside in the State Budget for the 11th grade test this year. Additionally, 197 school districts are slated to lose state aid in FY 2020, some at significant levels. The implementation of a new state assessment will further challenge their budgets.

Talking Point 2: A Failure to Act Is Not Fair to Students.

- The Consent Order does not apply to current freshmen and sophomores in the Classes of 2021 and 2022 who must continue to meet existing testing requirements this year and into the future until the State Board of Education adopts a new state test and assessment system. **This results in unnecessary, multi-year testing of these students contrary to everyone's goals for assessment.**
- **This situation is contrary to our past practice of giving fair notice to students of the graduation requirements in place when they enter high school.**
- As our schools work to prepare our students for a broad range of post-secondary options for college or career, **students need to know their graduation landscape upfront to carefully plan their high school course selections, and program options (vocational, dual enrollment, etc.) to pursue their goals successfully.**

Please contact the NJPSA Government Relations Team if you have any questions.

Thank you for your advocacy on behalf of our students!



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