

END HIGH STAKES STANDARDIZED TESTING, MANDATORY 3RD GRADE RETENTION, PUNITIVE EVALUATIONS, GRADING SCHOOLS, AND MERIT PAY

- WHEREAS:** AFT Michigan has publicly called to end high-stakes testing as exemplified in RESOLUTION #6 of the 73rd AFT Michigan Convention on May 17, 2014; and
- WHEREAS:** Since the 2014 convention, Michigan legislators have ramped up the stakes attached to standardized tests in our state; and
- WHEREAS:** The Michigan School Code as currently written requires that third graders be retained based on test scores, requires that teacher evaluations incorporate test scores as a significant factor, and requires that schools be ranked/graded based on test scores; and
- WHEREAS:** High stakes associated with standardized test results has stifled the ability of educators to provide creative and individualized instruction and has narrowed curriculum offerings at all levels; and
- WHEREAS:** Standardized testing is an incomplete measure of student learning; and
- WHEREAS:** The Michigan School Code includes a merit pay provision that requires teacher compensation to be based in part on test scores; and
- WHEREAS:** None of these requirements have been found to improve the quality of teaching and learning in public schools; and
- WHEREAS:** Retention can harm students' academic motivation, achievement, and general self-esteem. Retention is also correlated to an increased risk of dropping out of school altogether (Sprouse, 2017, p. 55)^{1*}; and
- WHEREAS:** Michigan's teacher evaluation system is subjective and punitive in nature, requiring termination of teachers deemed to be "ineffective" by a combination of subjective determinations from administrators and high-stakes test scores; and
- WHEREAS:** Ranking or grading schools by any criteria generally results in the lower-ranked schools being singled out for punitive measures; and
- WHEREAS:** High-stakes test scores correlate most strongly with privilege, not teaching and learning. M-STEP scores in particular correlate strongly with economic status and race (Sprouse, 2017, p. 55). High-stakes decisions based on these scores inevitably single out poor and minority districts; and
- WHEREAS:** Student performance on standardized tests is influenced by many factors beyond the control of educators and often beyond control of the student; and
- WHEREAS:** AFT Michigan's purpose is "to fight all forms of racism and discrimination in education" (Constitution of AFT Michigan Article II Section 6); and
- WHEREAS:** Basing school grades and teacher evaluations on high-stakes test scores effectively

^{1*} Sprouse, Michelle L. (2017) "The Consequential Validity of the M-STEP and Third-Grade Retention," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 32: Iss. 2, Article 10. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.2140>

punishes teachers and students in poor and majority-minority districts; and

WHEREAS: A growing list of states including Alaska, Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Washington, D.C. have abandoned the use of high-stakes test scores in teacher evaluations; and

WHEREAS: New Mexico eliminated their A-F school grading system last year; and

WHEREAS: The national model for merit pay implemented in Newark, New Jersey in 2012 was abandoned as a failure last fall; and **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED: AFT Michigan reaffirms its call to end high-stakes standardized testing; and **BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: AFT Michigan supports and encourages teachers and administrators to use multiple measures of student learning to improve instruction and provide opportunities for professional growth; and **BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: AFT Michigan opposes the use of standardized test-based and subjective evaluations to punish educators. AFT Michigan especially opposes the use of so-called “value-added measures” of educator “effectiveness;” and **NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED: AFT Michigan calls on the Michigan Legislature to amend the Revised School Code by removing the third-grade retention requirements, the punitive evaluation requirements, the school grading requirements, and the merit pay requirements and by prohibiting the use of standardized test data for punitive measures at the local level.

Submitted by Benjamin Royal, Detroit Federation of Teachers Local 231

Revised and recommended for approval by the Legislation and Resolutions Committee

Approved by the 76th AFT Michigan Convention (May 16, 2020)