

Legislation Text

File #: 210457, **Version:** 0

Authorizing the Committee on Education to hold hearings on the benefits of the Pennsylvania System School Assessment (PSSA) testing and the administration of these tests by the Philadelphia School District.

I have heard from teachers at diverse settings across the district among them Honey Polis (CTE at comprehensive H.S.), Luigi Borda, (Social Studies, Magnet Mid-H.S.) and Amy Roat, (ESOL neighborhood Middle School) and they are unanimous in their belief that administering standardized tests such as the PSSA will not provide any useful information about students to their parents and teachers.

WHEREAS, The School District of Philadelphia is administering the PSSA to third through eighth grade students who are returning to the classroom. It must be understood that the PSSA is not the Big Test I took back in my school days. Rather, it is a drawn-out process, 3rd, 4th and 6th graders take 6 sections over three days. 5th and 8th graders take 8 sections across 4 days. For immigrant students learning English, they will also take the ACCESS - an assessment with 4 parts that will take 1- 2 days to complete; and

WHEREAS, Parents wanted their children to return to school so they could connect with their friends and teachers. Many parents rightly believe that there is no substitute for in person instruction, no matter the herculean efforts of our teachers, and that a return was necessary for the best education of their children. What is *actually* happening is that students who returned to the classroom on May 10th will spend 3-7 days on testing, out of 8 or 9 days in the school building; and

WHEREAS, The PSSA results will not be shared with teachers in the beginning of the next school year. The PSSA will also not be used as criteria for entrance into competitive high schools. To make matters even worse, parents “in the know” can choose to opt out their children from these tests, while other parents, who are unaware of this laborious testing schedule, do not have that privilege; and

WHEREAS, Some say we need an objective measure of what our students are learning. In the SDP, students took *Renaissance STAR* assessments in Reading and Math four times this year. We have data to share with parents and teachers for next year. We know it was a tough year and parents, kids and teachers must have the information that they need to move forward; and

WHEREAS, The School District claims that we are compelled to take these tests because it is a mandate of the Federal Government and the district fears losing funding. The truth is that there has NEVER been a school or district that has lost federal funding when they opted-out of standardized tests. In fact, the Biden Administration has a desire to double Title One funding for districts like ours that have a high number of students that live in poverty. I suspect that many administrators in the SDP worry that they will be rendered obsolete if we finally stop the madness that is standardized testing; and

WHEREAS, How much money will be spent to administer these tests? How many staff hours will be spent preparing the test booklets and administering these tests rather than actively interacting with our children? The most important question is: How will our children benefit from these standardized tests?; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the City Council of Philadelphia hereby authorizes the Committee on Education to hold hearings on the benefits of the Pennsylvania System School Assessment (PSSA) testing and the administration of these tests by the Philadelphia School District.