

By: Madla

S.C.R. No. 1

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, For many school administrators, teachers, and
2 parents, standardized testing provides an objective means to
3 determine whether schools are doing their job of educating students
4 to the level required by state standards; and

5 WHEREAS, For the individual student, standardized testing
6 also has great value as a diagnostic tool, helping teachers
7 pinpoint specific areas in which that student needs improvement and
8 helping both the student and the appropriate teachers measure the
9 student's progress toward specific academic goals; and

10 WHEREAS, The mandated use of standardized testing in Texas
11 public schools began in 1979 when the Texas Legislature passed
12 Senate Bill 350, which required the Central Education Agency to
13 adopt and administer appropriate criterion-referenced tests for
14 students in grades three and five and a secondary exit-level test
15 for students in grade nine; because the legislature also required
16 the reporting of the aggregate results of this test, which became
17 known as the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS), the test
18 marked the beginning of accountability for school campuses and
19 districts; and

20 WHEREAS, Conceived partly as a diagnostic tool for both
21 students and schools, TABS was superseded by a series of other
22 tests, each more rigorous than its predecessor, with the current
23 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) being administered
24 for the first time in spring 2003; in addition to raising the bar

1 for measuring student academic performance, the succession of tests
2 repeatedly raised the stakes for students, teachers, school
3 administrators, and even school board members as testing became a
4 cornerstone of the state's nationally recognized public school
5 accountability system in 1993; and

6 WHEREAS, Not only have the stakes been raised as a result of
7 the state's use of TAKS results in its accountability system, but
8 the proliferation of other tests has raised concerns about the
9 amount of time being spent on testing students and preparing them
10 for the various tests and about the actual benefits of such
11 extensive testing relative to the expenditure of resources; and

12 WHEREAS, While the TABS was designed to measure basic skills
13 competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics for students in
14 grades three, five, and nine, today's TAKS is given to students in
15 grades three through 11 and requires students to demonstrate
16 proficiency in science and social history as well as reading,
17 writing, and mathematics; and

18 WHEREAS, In addition to the state-mandated TAKS, some
19 districts administer certain national norm-referenced tests such
20 as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills or the Stanford Achievement Test;
21 many Texas schools also participate in the National Assessment of
22 Educational Progress (NAEP) program, which administers tests in
23 various subject areas at regular intervals to students in Texas and
24 across the country; and

25 WHEREAS, During the 4th Called Session of the 78th Texas
26 Legislature, legislation was proposed that would have expanded a
27 school's burden with regard to the testing of students by requiring

1 each school district to administer a college preparation test such
2 as the SAT or the ACT to every student in the recommended or
3 advanced high school programs in grades eight, nine, and 10; and

4 WHEREAS, Although the measure failed to pass, Texas educators
5 must be mindful of the testing schedule as well as of the level of
6 test-readiness among those students in their charge who are
7 candidates for those tests because the set of performance
8 indicators used to evaluate the quality of learning on a campus and
9 to determine a district's accreditation includes student
10 participation in and performance on those two tests; cognizant of
11 that fact, some districts encourage students to participate in
12 testing and test preparation programs as early as eighth grade; and

13 WHEREAS, While many of the stakeholders in public education,
14 including teachers and members of the legislature, believe that
15 standardized tests are helpful, appropriate, and desirable, it
16 nevertheless is true that teachers are becoming overwhelmed by the
17 increasing number of standardized tests for which they must prepare
18 their students; and

19 WHEREAS, The possibility that more school districts may add
20 to this burden by requiring further benchmark testing threatens to
21 compound the problem; it is time therefore to consider whether
22 schools can achieve their desired outcomes as well as those desired
23 by the public and the legislature by reducing or consolidating
24 testing instruments; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas
26 hereby request the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house
27 of representatives to create a joint interim committee to examine

1 the impact of public school assessment instruments on the quality
2 of instruction, teacher morale, and students' motivation to learn;
3 and, be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the study shall include the following
5 analyses:

6 (1) the usefulness of the various tests in elementary
7 and secondary schools as predictors or indicators of student
8 success;

9 (2) the impact of testing on the amount of
10 instructional time and on the content of instruction offered at the
11 elementary and secondary school levels;

12 (3) the amount of classroom time required to prepare
13 for and administer multiple tests in public schools;

14 (4) whether teachers would benefit from a reduction in
15 the paperwork requirements associated with mandatory testing in
16 public schools;

17 (5) whether there is a need to adjust the timing of the
18 tests' administration in the public schools to optimize student
19 success; and

20 (6) the extent to which teachers and students might
21 benefit from a reduction or consolidation of the current number of
22 mandatory tests administered at the elementary and secondary school
23 levels; and, be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the committee's proceedings and operations be
25 governed by such general rules and policies for joint interim
26 committees as the 79th Legislature may adopt and that such rules and
27 policies supersede the provisions of this resolution to the extent

1 of any conflict; and, be it further

2 RESOLVED, That the committee submit a full report, including
3 findings and recommendations, to the Texas Legislature not later
4 than September 1, 2006.