

## Westchester-East Putnam Region-PTA Statement on Testing

The Westchester-East Putnam Region PTA (WEPR-PTA) strongly believes parents have the right to make informed choices for their children in regards to their education, including the subject of testing. As parents, we should become educated about the entire issue of state testing, understanding both its practice and purpose. We should understand the impact of test refusal on our children and school districts. We see that the issue of NYS testing has brought a greater level of advocacy from parents, educators, and other concerned citizens.

It is our hope that parents and educators will continue all advocacy efforts that demand better and appropriate testing practices. Additionally, we should fight for the full funding of public education by restoring foundation aid to the state budget and ensuring that our government provides a sound and equitable education for our students.

The use of assessments, particularly in New York, has created a frenzy of anxiety, not only for our children but for parents and educators as well. There is so much being said about assessments - many of these statements scare both children and parents. When assessments are provided appropriately, they provide proper evaluation for students to receive special services, including services for English-Language Learners (ELL) and students with special needs. We do know that the assessments developed and used in the past were not proper for our children. But we also must recognize that revisions have been presented and recommended to the Board of Regents, with some of those revisions already being implemented.

The voices of 220,000 parents have been heard and have given rise to the recognition that these parents' voices are important and cannot be ignored. We must remember that our work as advocates is not done. We must remember that as advocates, we educate ourselves and then inform our education partners, our elected officials, our allies, and even those who oppose our issues. It is important to always remember that it is not only critical to understand the side of an issue we favor but to understand the side of an issue that we oppose. This allows for greater levels of respect, dialogue, and the ability to move our issues forward.

WEPR-PTA recognizes that National PTA represents all of the 50 states in this country and in European countries as well, but WEPR-PTA also recognizes that New York State is unique and has been on an increasingly difficult road for many years in regards to state testing, implementing common core curriculum and learning standards, and with the evaluation of teacher effectiveness. Our region, state, and National PTAs recognize that assessments - when used appropriately - are only one of many important and effective tools towards educational success for our children.

WEPR-PTA believes:

- 1, Parents need to be informed (and inform others) about assessments, their purpose, and how they are used in local school districts and the state

2. We must advocate for education reforms that are developed by educators, with input from parents, and with the thought of what is best for children at the heart of all decisions.

3. We must be educated on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the federal education law that covers our funding and specifies the requirements of assessments. The mandates in the ESSA currently state that 95% of all children in every school must participate in state assessments in order to receive funds from the federal government – this is the only method through which states get education funding.

4. We believe that the leadership of the New York State Education Department has listened to parent and teacher concerns and is moving in the right direction with regard to curriculum, testing, and teacher evaluation. We encourage our membership to remain vigilant in their advocacy but also recognize that steps are being taken to reflect their concerns.

5. With the recent election of Regent Betty Rosa as the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, coupled with last year's election of Regent Judith Johnson, we believe we have the right people in place who are grounded with sound backgrounds and careers in education and with a great respect for advocacy and parent voices.

6. We know that our NYS PTA leadership supports parents' rights to make informed decisions concerning tests and assessments for their children.

Finally, parents are their children's first and number one advocates! We respect the rights of parents and families to make decisions for their children grounded in knowledge of the issues, respect and a listening ear of other perspectives, and with a passion for wanting the best for all children!