

Speaker Script – PTA’s College and Career Readiness Local Member Education Event

As parents, one of our goals is to make sure our children receive a high school diploma. Although overall graduation rates are rising, many students are not graduating high school “**college and career ready**.” National PTA launched its College and Career Readiness Initiative in 2009, and has since rolled out an initiative that helps parents understand the key components of college and career readiness, including high standards, aligned assessments, quality implementation and accountability including the new law ESSA. We are here today to share this important information with you and give you some of PTA’s parent resources that will help you better understand these topics and the importance of this work to ensure every child receives the high quality education that they deserve.

In our ever changing world, the educational experience hasn’t kept pace with the demands in a competitive, knowledge-based, technology-driven society. **How do we know that?**

- In 2016, only 39% of ACT-tested graduates met three or more of the four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in English, math, reading and science.
- Millions of dollars are spent on remediation course work - classes that are not credit bearing, but cost the same.
- Nearly one-fourth of the students that try to join the military cannot pass the entrance exam.
- Businesses are lacking a highly qualified workforce prepared for jobs in the 21st century.

College and Career Readiness means that a student is prepared to go directly to work or enroll and succeed – without remediation – in a variety of postsecondary institutions so that they are ready to enter a career of their choice.

College and career-ready high school graduates must have the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities to succeed in life. Students must learn critical thinking and reasoning skills, and have the academic knowledge and employability skills necessary to engage in our complex work environments and compete in our global economy. Goals and expectations are critical to student achievement, so states have adopted higher, more focused standards and aligned assessments to better prepare students for college, technical schools, the military and careers.

Students need standards to ensure a strong foundation in Math, English Language Arts and other core subjects. Academic standards tell us what students should know and be able to do in the classroom. They are important because they provide goals for teaching and learning. **Standards** are clear statements about what students must know and be able to do. Much like when you are building a house, you must first begin with a strong foundation. All states have renewed their efforts to give each child a quality education by evaluating and in many cases overhauling their state education standards. By now, most states have adopted higher College and Career Ready Standards; some have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), some have opted for a hybrid of the CCSS, and others have created their own standards entirely. Whichever standards a state uses, the goal is the same: to ensure that every child graduates high school ready for college or career.

What are the benefits of the new state standards for students?

- Provide consistent and rigorous standards for all school districts
- Require curriculum to build problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Are internationally benchmarked to higher performing education systems

Standards provide the goals for learning, and **curriculum** is the day to day activity that helps a student meet those goals. Curriculum is affected by lesson plans, classroom assessments, textbooks and more. Curriculum is developed and approved by states, local school boards, districts and schools.

New standards also require new tests that allow students to show what they know and what they can do. Although goals and expectations are critical to student achievement, outcomes and measures are essential milestones and benchmarks that can be used to determine progress and future potential for success. For years, most year-end

tests were mainly multiple-choice exams that focused on basic skills. These tests did a poor job measuring the skills students need for success after high school—like writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. With new education standards, states have developed new tests aligned to these standards, built to let parents and teachers know how well students are learning the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in today's world. Year-end tests are just one type of assessment. There are different types of assessments, different purposes for student assessment, and different assessment methods used in the classroom. Schools can use quality assessment practices to help overcome inequities, narrow achievement gaps, promote universal high school graduation, help struggling learners find their own success, ensure digital competence and make sure all students are ready for college or workplace training.

Newly aligned **state assessments or tests** replaced the previous tests in Math and English and other core subjects, and are one of several measures showing how well a student is progressing against the new standards. Results from the assessments can be used to let teachers know where students are doing well or where they need support. State tests are like an annual academic checkup to provide meaningful information to parents and teachers. Most state tests are being done on computers and include components such as short answer, technology enhanced and multiple choice questions, along with longer multi step questions including essays where students solve real world problems.

State Student Report Cards are a student's exam results or **score reports**. Districts/Schools receive the reports from the testing company after scoring is complete and then shortly after, districts and schools send the reports home to parents/guardians. Each assessment has an interpretive guide that explains in detail the scoring and reporting process. States use **district and school report cards** to provide information to families about their local schools. These report cards measure important pieces of data that shed light on how a school or district is doing or where it can improve. This information can help families talk with educators about their child's school experience and engage in local activities to support school improvements.

While the word often brings to mind state-mandated standardized tests, **assessment** is simply a process of gathering evidence to inform education-related decisions and to advance student learning. The recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages educators to use assessments in this way.

The Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA was signed into law on December 10, 2015. It reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was most recently known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The goal of ESSA is to make sure state and local accountability systems and education programs provide the necessary supports, interventions and resources to students and schools based on their unique needs. States are in the process of developing a state plan and involving stakeholders in the process – including parents. Parent involvement means *the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities*.

PTA's focus on college and career readiness supports our mission to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. By working together to ensure America's youth are prepared when they graduate high school, we ensure they are ready for life!

PTA has many resources available on standards, assessments, accountability and ESSA on the PTA website-pta.org/ccr. We're passing out a few handouts today. In addition, materials and instructions are available for more in-depth trainings on these topics. Please contact the state PTA office for more information.