



An NSTA Position Statement

Accountability in a

Rationale:

Accountability is not a new issue in education; debates about it can be traced to the late 1970s. What is new, however, is the integral role accountability plays in standards based reform. The premise of standards based reform is that a rise of student achievement is commensurate with clearly defined student standards the attainment of which is measured by carefully chosen assessments. Standards in turn guide curriculum, instruction and the nature of professional development programs that train teachers in the skills they need to meet the standards. The accountability system is tied to assessment scores and is designed to stimulate, where necessary, changes within the system. Ideally, standards based reform is systemic in nature and holds accountable all stakeholders in education from governors and premiers, who influence the money and resources allocated, to district and school personnel, students, and parents.

~~Step 1~~
Wrong
First Step

NSTA believes that individuals are accountable first to those directly affected by their actions and second to all other interested parties. Thus science teachers are accountable primarily to students and parents. The purpose of this accountability ultimately must be to ensure high-level student achievement in science as evidenced by fair and multiple student assessments. The milieu under which science teachers are held accountable should be one of mutual trust and support. In support of this view, the following declarations specify what NSTA believes are the conditions under which accountability needs to take place.

environment

Declarations:

- Teachers must be given the appropriate resources, such as hands-on science materials, textbooks, and access to technology and laboratory facilities, with which to help their students meet the standards for which they will be held accountable.
- Teachers must be given access to high quality professional development opportunities that foster subject mastery and the development of a range of teaching strategies that can reach all students. Furthermore, professional development must be relevant to teacher's needs and part of a long-term program they helped design.
- Teachers must be provided the time necessary to develop skills, discuss issues, and think deeply about the nature of their teaching in a standards based environment.
- Teachers must be given the opportunity to make decisions about the accountability measures that impact themselves and the success of their students.

- Teachers must be given, for any accountability plan that has potential impact on them or their students, detailed information about the plan and a reasonable timeline for compliance.
- Teachers must be given the opportunity to address accountability issues as members of a local network of peers and administrators who support each other in the common goal of high-level student achievement.

*—Adopted by the NSTA Board of Directors in July 1985;
revised January 2000*

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Questions or comments? E-mail handbook@nsta.org.*

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