

February 28, 2008

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#2635

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Dear Legislator:

I am the mother of two children who have been identified as gifted in the Derry Area School District. I am writing because I am very concerned about the Chapter 16 reauthorization process and the key points missing from that legislation. It is imperative that we address the following issues to protect and challenge the gifted children in our state! They are a overlooked and underdeveloped group. I was very disappointed to learn through PAGE that no specific language exists in the Working Document or Final Form of the State Board of Education Speical Education for Gifted Students with regard to PROCEDURES FOR COMPLIANCE MONITORING. In this current era of "accountability" and "no child left behind" - HOW CAN YOU LEAVE BEHIND OUR CHILDREN? Furthermore, I am dismayed at the current proposal of a 75 STUDENT CASELOAD PER TEACHER.

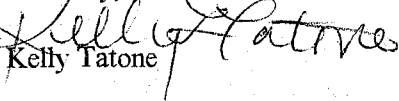
The code MUST include language in the that allows for complaint-driven monitoring of school entities. As the parent of gifted children I have felt the frustration of feeling alone and as if you have no voice. Parents of gifted children want nothing more than a good education for their children - and they, as well as their children, deserve no less. The involvement of parents and their children must be encouraged. When something is clearly not working or an educator is not being effective - parents and students should ABSOLUTELY NOT be dismissed! The lines of communication between the "team members" - including the school administrators, the parents, educators, students - should be open at all time. If a complaint arises - or even if a complaint does not arise - there should be monitoring in these classes and schools. Regular evaluations of instruction and performance assessment should be standard practice.

There must be a more realistic and strict limit to the gifted teachers' caseloads. How can a teacher possibly be effective when overwhelmed by the excessive number of students they are expected to instruct? I have watched as a gifted teaching position was eliminated in our district. Subsequently, the caseload for the remaining teachers grew. There are IEPs being written by educators for students they have never even met!! This is unacceptable. Our brightest students deserve more.

I am passionate about this and have sent this letter to the following: Governor Ed Rendell, Jim Buckheit, Karl R. Girton, Gerald L. Zahorchak, Dr. Linda Rhen, Diane Castelbuono, Dr. Ed Volbrecht, John Tommasini, Mollie Phillips, Ms. Constance H. Davis, Mr. Larry A. Wittig, Luis Ramos, James R. Roebuck, Jr., Patrick J. Harkins, Lawrence H. Curry, Thaddeus Kirkland, Barbara McIlvaine Smith, Mike Carroll, H. Scott Conklin, Richard T. Grucela, Michael K. Hanna, Daylin Leach, Mark Longietti, John E. Pallone, Frank Andrews Shimkus, Chelsa Wagner, Jake Wheatley, John T. Yudichak, Jess M. Stairs, Beverly Mackereth, Bernie O'Neill, Kathy L. Rapp, Bob Bastian, Karen D. Beyer, Mike Fleck, Daryl D. Metcalfe, Duane Milne, Thomas P. Murt, Thomas J. Quigley, Sam Rohrer, Curtis G. Sonney, James J. Rhoades, Jeffrey E. Piccola, Raphael Musto, Joseph B. Scarnati, III, Lisa Baker, Patrick M. Browne, Mike Folmer, Robert M. Tomlinson, Andrew E. Dinniman, Vincent J. Hughes, and Gerald J. LaValle. If there is anyone else I should contact regarding this matter please inform me.

You have the power to touch the future and to shape it. Make the right decisions and we will give these gifted young people keys to unlocking their full potential. Will you prepare them? Will you make the decisions they can not make for themselves? Will you provide the best education for tomorrow's brightest minds? Will you help them become the great thinkers, creative leaders, brilliant creators and productive citizens they were meant to be? I implore you - do not take for granted the power you have today - and consider the effect you will have on the days to come.

Sincerely,


Kelly Tatone