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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

I would like to tell you about the misunderstandings that are occurring within our school district over Chapter 16 regulations. Our district seems to have a minimal understanding of the definitions of certain terms within the document. Whether this comes from apathy or lack of training is something I can not determine. Without proper monitoring and training of educators and administrators all gifted children in our district, and more specifically my child, are not getting a meaningful education in our public school system. We neglect our greatest resource when educators are not equipped to empower young minds. Ultimately, our nation could fall behind in the world market place as we graduate children who have been held back from reaching their highest level of ability due to a little red tape.

Our district is a very rural, low income district. Our elementary school is K-6 with a student body of about 220. Classes are no larger than 26, most are around 15. My son is the only one identified at the second grade level in our elementary school.

At the beginning of his Kindergarten year we asked to have him evaluated for giftedness. Our district began the testing process and came back with a recommendation to include him in the program. In the meantime, we had been doing much research about gifted children. We realized he was probably an excellent candidate for whole grade acceleration. When we went to the initial GIEP meeting we planned to ask about acceleration. After the district presented the GIEP to us, we asked if it might be a good idea to start him in second grade instead of first grade for the fall of 2007. The principal said, **"Do you mean grade skipping? We don't do that here."** We briefly explained why we thought he'd be a good fit. All of our arguments were shot down with explanations of little value.

Because we had been doing some research, we knew they should not be saying that acceleration was against district policy. *Section 16.41.b.3* indicated to us that the school district should *"provide opportunity to participate in acceleration or enrichment, or both, as appropriate for the student's needs"*. We took the NORA with us to think about it. In a few days, we sent a letter outlining our arguments for acceleration and said we would sign the NORA, for now, but wanted our son evaluated specifically for acceleration. Our principal replied with a letter. She said they would use the IOWA Acceleration Scale to evaluate him. She said she would use the data from it to better meet his needs within his current setting. She also reminded us again that **"the district does not accelerate by "grade skipping"."**

That letter was written in January. The school finished the testing in April of 2007. We could not get a meeting lined up with the GIEP team. Eventually we had to file Due Process to get anything accomplished. I informed the principal that I believed the district was violating Chapter 16 regulations. She chose to ignore my comments. However, when push came to shove, with the filing of Due Process, he was accelerated to second grade the following school year.

What I would like to know is, what can parents who do not have the financial means available for a Due Process hearing, do to get their child an appropriate education? In our district, parents accept the plan offered by the districts, no questions asked. It's not because they think what is being offered is appropriate, it's because they have no other choice. If there was a complaint system in place that could be accessed by all parents, it would make a great difference in the quality of education offered to the gifted children of Pennsylvania.

Our youngest child is now 3 years old. He is also advanced for his age in math and language. He has an October birthday. He will be starting Kindergarten when he is almost 6 years old. If he is as accomplished as his brother when he enters school, will I need to have this same battle again? As long as there is no retribution for violating Chapter 16, districts will not change. Please make the recommendations to include strong language in Chapter 16 regulations for compliance.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story with you today. I ask that you would carefully consider the changes that are proposed to best meet the needs of the gifted children in our state. By monitoring for compliance and enacting a system of accountability we could help to keep America on top of the world in innovation as it had been in the past.

Respectfully submitted by,
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