



2696

May 6, 2008

Independent Regulatory Review Commission  
333 Market St., 14th Floor,  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the President of the North Penn Education Association representing 1025 teachers and school professionals, I urge you to oppose regulations proposed by the State Board of Education that essentially would mandate high stakes standardized high school exit exams. The Graduation Competency Assessment (GCA) proposal would result in denial of diplomas to students if they do not score "proficient" on statewide standardized tests.

There are numerous reasons I oppose the GCA proposal, but first and foremost I do not believe that standardized tests are the best determination of student achievement. The thought of denying students a high school diploma - which has long-term negative effects on their lives - because they didn't score "proficient" on a statewide test truly concerns me. I have worked with many students over the years and I have seen first hand the many skills students demonstrate above and beyond what could be measured on any standardized test.

At a time when we know that Pennsylvania's public education system lacks the funding it needs by over \$4 billion in order to help every student meet the state's academic standards, it is irresponsible to impose high-stakes testing on our students. In addition, no analysis has been done on the cost of developing and administering the GCAs, let alone what it would cost to remediate those students who do not score "proficient" on the exam. Certainly much of this cost would be placed upon the local school districts. With Act I it will make it impossible for our board to continue to provide the quality instruction and programs to our community. The financial drain at the state and local level will be devastating.

I believe there are more important places for the Commonwealth to put its resources. Pennsylvania could follow the example of several states that have begun to align their standards according to the work done by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills ([www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org).) This organization, which was formed via collaboration between educators and business leaders, is developing standards and assessments for competencies that include collaboration, innovation, creativity, communication, and critical thinking skills. Education dollars are better spent on programs—head start, full-day kindergarten and technology just to name a few.

Please proceed carefully before a terrible misuse of public funds occurs.

Thank you,

Alan Malachowski  
President,  
North Penn Education Association

RECEIVED  
2008 MAY 27 AM 10:28  
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION