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Buckheit, James

From: Mary Ann Stabile [mstabile@uscscd.k12.pa.us]
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2008 7:48 AM
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us
Cc: Barbara Bolas; Pat OToole
Subject: Resolution Opposing High School Graduation Competency Assessments



Resolution
Opposing Proposed H
May 23, 2008

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

2008 MAY 27 AM 10:43

RECEIVED

Mr. Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

On February 25, 2008, the Upper St. Clair Board of School Directors adopted the attached resolution opposing the proposed State Board of Education high school graduation competency assessments.

Present at the meeting and voting in opposition were the following Board members:

Angela B. Petersen, Board President
Amy L. Billerbeck, Board Vice-President
Barbara L. Bolas
Carol C. Coliane
Daniel Iracki
Rebecca A. Stern
William M. Sulkowski

Sincerely,

Mary Ann L. Stabile
School Board Stenographer

Mary Ann L. Stabile
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
(412) 833-1600 Ext. 2201
(412) 833-5535 (fax)

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS
BY THE
UPPER ST. CLAIR BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS**

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has approved a proposal to revise the current high school graduation requirements under the Chapter 4 regulations to require students to pass a series of standardized high stakes Graduation Competency Assessments in order to get a diploma; and,

WHEREAS, these new requirements and exams will be the same for all students, whether they are taking college prep or vocational courses, are English language learners or participating in individualized programs, and all students effectively will be required to take the same courses in order to pass this new battery of state tests; and,

WHEREAS, Chapter 4 currently allows districts to use either the PSSA or rigorous local assessments for their students to demonstrate proficiency of the state academic standards; and it is misleading and incorrect to make the assumption that because students demonstrate their achievements on local assessments rather than the PSSA that there is a disconnect between proficiency and graduation; and,

WHEREAS, although the GCA proposal permits schools to use a local assessment option, it establishes numerous limitations, including the elimination of the ability to use various assessment strategies now available to local entities and requires local tests to be closely modeled to the GCAs; and,

WHEREAS, decades of research shows many reasons why standardized pencil and paper test scores should never be the determining factor in making major decisions about students, and that a diploma should be granted based on the coursework, tests and quizzes, presentations, projects and papers throughout the student's career; and,

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis or fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 billion short in helping school districts prepare students to meet the academic standards by 2014; and,

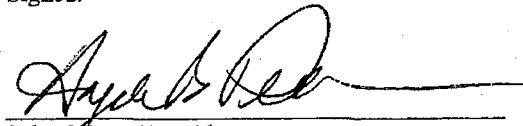
WHEREAS, the residents of Upper St. Clair contribute approximately 81% of the District's revenue, mostly through property taxes and earned income taxes, compared to our state sources of revenue that amount to approximately 17% of the District's total revenue; and,

WHEREAS, the proposal requires school districts to absorb many new costs related to revising curriculum, professional development, test development and validation, test preparation and administration, remediation and other costs. Given the state's funding shortfall and the Act 1 limitations on tax increases, school districts have limited ability to fund these potential new costs.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors of the Upper St. Clair School District who are also members of the South Hills Area School District Association (SHASDA) **opposes the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments** and any other regulation or legislation that usurps the authority of local school districts to determine whether their students have earned a high school diploma. This resolution will be shared with the State Board of Education, state legislators including local legislators and members of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission

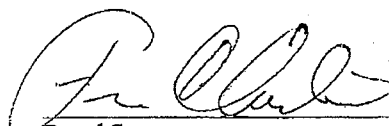
Adopted this 25th day of February, 2008

Signed:



School Board President

Attest:



Board Secretary (seal)