

Centennial School District

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Superintendent

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May 20, 2008

Mr. Scott Schalles
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street
14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Mr. Schalles,

As the public comment period for the proposed Graduation Competency Assessments has begun, I have enclosed a resolution that was unanimously approved by the Board of School Directors of the Centennial School District on February 26, 2008. I encourage you to consider the concerns and objections contained in this resolution.

Feel free to contact me if I may provide clarification.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Masko, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

MJM/caj
Attachment
pc: CSD Board of School Directors

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION



**CENTENNIAL BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
WORK/REGULAR SESSION MEETING – FEBRUARY 26, 2008**

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CENTENNIAL SCHOOL BOARD APPROVES THE
FOLLOWING RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS:**

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 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 Centennial School District 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 House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.