

Buckheit, James

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From: Charles E Barrett [cbarrett@yesbank.com] 2008 MAY 29 AM 9: 35
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2008 1:09 PM
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us
Subject: Changing High School Graduation Requirements

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
 REVIEW COMMISSION

To begin with, I am strongly against the State of Pa and its Board of education proposing this new testing to students at the senior high level. I am a parent of two elementary school children who will be part of this new program after 2014. I am also a Adjunct Faculty member of County of Bucks Community College. So I have vested interest in my children's education and I have seen and worked with graduated seniors when they come into the world of education in college.

I feel that the government from the highest to the lowest level should stay out of educating our children. Their sole purpose is to provided funding to all public schools, Community and State run colleges.

What this new program is providing is that every student will have ample number of times to take the tests over again in partial stages or the full test in its entirety. What has happened to just teaching the students the subject matter throughout the year that they will be tested on in their class finals. In the publication that is on the web site, it states that 35% and 46% of graduating seniors could not read or write. My question to the State and its Board of Education is this. Why have the public schools been allowed to push these few students through its system all along when they realized that these students were in over their heads in not knowing how to read and add numbers together? Or does it go back to the government wanting to "Leave No Student Behind"? Once you allow the government to get involved, quality of anything becomes laid back and there is no effort being put forth to correct the problem/s and to promote enthusiasm to make changes better for everyone. Case in point, why do you think the Governor wants to sell the turnpike? When you work for the government you are set for life if you keep your nose clean. What motivation do you have to improve your quality of work at your job currently?

Another problem with this proposal is that if passed, teachers will only teach that subject matter that will be on the test. I have seen this now in elementary school. So the school gets a passing grade and possibly more funding, when a child has to take State tests, the teachers JUST TEACH WHAT WILL BE ON TEST ONLY!!!! How is this rounding out the child's education? The government once again dangles money out in from of local school boards and states that if their district does not score above certain percent points, funding will be reduced. Teaching through fear works only with children who are between the ages of 2 - 5 years of age.

What has happened to accountability both at the student and teacher levels. I am sure that you and I went through the system that if we were not proficient in reading and writing and arithmetic, we were either kept behind or were put into classes that handled slow learners or went to summer school to get the grade up to a C for passing. This proposed new testing will allow students to retake all or a portion of a test just to get through. What happened to student responsibility of paying attention in class or working with a teacher to understand the subject matter before falling so far behind they are totally lost? Students have to learn responsibility and accountability immediately from first grade on. By allowing them to retake all or a part of a test does not promote responsibility or accountability. It is promoting the easy way out. How many employers will allow their employee to fail at their job numerous times before showing that employee the door? Not too many in this job market. Put yourself in that situation. Would your current boss allow you to keep making mistakes or would you be out or transferred to a position that meets your short comings?

On the matter of accountability of the teachers, unfortunately with their union, yes even the bad teachers keep their jobs. Once a teacher has tenure, outside of a few major infractions, they will always keep their positions. This type of testing will take away the teacher's ability to make students see the subject matter in a universal way, but, only in a way to make sure the student gets a passing grade on these tests. What happened in allowing students to see the real world through the ways their teachers present the subject matter? Teaching will become less interesting, non-challenging and less imaginative to the leaders of our future. As a student, which class did you want to attend more of? One that the teacher broaden your mind by making the class more challenging or one that had their back to the class and talked to the blackboard? Making teachers just teach the test, you are

promoting a society of future leaders who will expect chances all the time and leaders with no imagination to push our society into a better place to live and work.

My final comment on this matter is simply this. As previously stated above, I do teach at a community college and have been doing so for many years. Yes there are students who can hardly spell and their hand writing is just out there! Yes they fail tests as well. The unfortunate thing for these students is that they are not going to get the opportunity to retake all of a test or a partial test. Reality has to set in and it should be done as it was when we attended school. It belongs in the high school. Accountability and responsibility has to be taught by the teachers and parents as the student/s grow within the school from K - 12th grade. Letting the government run education as this proposal is stating takes away from both teachers and students trying to strive to become better individuals and future leaders. Let the system you and I grew up with live on. If students fail the tests, they fail. The lesson they learn might take them several years to comprehend, but, will they be better parents when their child gets to school. I think they will be because they will have learned the hard way costing them future salaries and positions within the workplace. Then again, there is always a job in government!

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