



NORTH ALLEGHENY SCHOOLS

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Board of School Directors
200 Hillvue Lane
Pittsburgh, PA 15237-5391
412-369-5437

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

March 4, 2008

COPY

Ms. Kim Kaufman, Executive Director
The Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Ms. Kaufman:

On behalf of the North Allegheny Board of School Directors, I am writing to convey our disappointment that the State Board of Education has given its initial approval to amending the Chapter 4 regulations to implement the high-stakes Graduation Competency Assessments. Both our Board and our Administration advocated repeatedly and strongly against the plan prior to its approval by the State Board of Education. We are aware that as a result of the State Board's preliminary approval, the proposal has now moved into the regulatory review process. It is our understanding that the Independent Regulatory Review Commission and the House and Senate Education Committees will have an opportunity to consider the proposal.

At our February 27, 2008 meeting, the North Allegheny Board of School Directors unanimously passed a formal resolution opposing the implementation of Graduation Competency Assessments Exams for the reasons that are detailed in the resolution. A copy of the resolution is attached. We urge you to oppose this controversial measure that usurps the authority of local school districts to grant high school diplomas. For North Allegheny, this is an unnecessary and potentially costly mandate that will do nothing to improve education in our school district.

We appreciate your consideration of our input on this extremely important matter.

Sincerely,

Linda Bishop, President
North Allegheny School Board

LKB/rmr
Attachment

c: Board Members
Dr. Green

NORTH ALLEGHENY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Resolution Opposing Mandate of PSSA/GCA's as a State Graduation Requirement

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

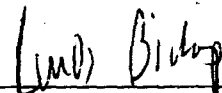
WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis of fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 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 North Allegheny 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 legislators including local legislators and members of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

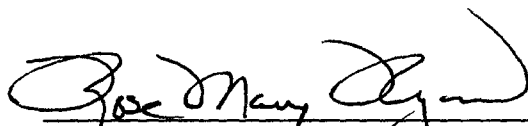
RESOLVED, this 27th day of February 2008.

BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS OF
NORTH ALLEGHENY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Linda Bishop, President

ATTEST:



Rose Mary Ryan, Board Secretary