

Buckheit, James

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From: Donald Warner [d.g.warner@comcast.net]

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Sent: Friday, May 30, 2008 8:23 AM**To:** j buckheit@state.pa.us

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY

Cc: Thomas P. Murt; Stewart J. Greenleaf; Robert Milrod; L. B. Hakes; David Bender; Emily Graupner; Richard Latta; Mark Wenik; Timothy Curran; Debbie Winterberg; Michael J. Braun**Subject:** GCA Regulations

Mr. Buckheit,

My name is Donald G. Warner and I am the Vice President of the Board of School Directors for the School District of Upper Moreland Township, Montgomery County, PA. I write to explain my reasons as to why I am in total opposition to the GCA regulations - at least as have been currently proposed by PDE. The regulations seem to be onerous and do not take into account the testing already done by the students to ensure competency (PSSAs, etc) nor the requirements of "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), which in itself has increased the rigor and requirements for student achievement. Further, the current GCA proposal is almost universally opposed by school districts across the state as yet another mandate that will, predictably, have more negative issues than positives.

The GCA regulations will in all likelihood create the following negatives...

1. Decrease the time allotted to teach non-tested subjects, such as music, art, health, etc., which are vitally important to a child's overall education, as more time will be needed to prepare for the tests.
2. Increase costs to local school districts in yet another "unfunded/partial funded mandate." Local districts are demonized for this by the legislature and the Governor and yet the problem creation is not in the localities' control.
3. Potentially reduce or even curtail co-curricular education (sports, band, etc.) as already cash-strapped districts look for money to cover the costs required from the GCA tests and outcomes.
4. Significantly decrease the graduation rate across the state as students fail to pass the tests. In fact, according to my superintendent, as many as 1/3 of the current graduating students across the state - in all likelihood - would not pass through the GCA tests as currently proposed and require additional school time beyond 12th grade to remediate the issues. This is not because the students are deficient but that the tests are onerous and too difficult as proposed for all students.
5. Increased costs to the taxpayers as districts will need to remediate "failed" students. Further, classroom space and available teaching staff will become a huge issue as effectively a 13th grade will be required.
6. It will increase the dropout rate as the lower achieving students become demoralized when faced with the probability of not graduating. (Not all students achieve at "honors" levels.)
- 7 Major issues with colleges and other schools of higher learning that would be missing new students at the start of their school seasons. (This would also have a financial impact).

5/30/2008

308

8. Employment issues statewide due to dropouts and failed students.
9. A national stigma on students from Pennsylvania.

The list, I'm sure, could go on and on. These items are what comes to my mind immediately.

Please note that I am not flatly in opposition to GCAs, only the current proposed GCAs. If statewide GCAs are to be enacted, please create a committee made up of current superintendents and current educators to find the best mix of tests and other appropriate means of evaluation of student achievement that would be the least disruptive to the educational process, the least expensive to the taxpayers, and have the best likelihood of truly measuring student competency. Keep the bureaucrats out of the process. Allow only those currently working with the students to generate the idea. Then, I believe we could create a GCA requirement that effectively achieves the goals of the current proposal without the negatives. I believe we all could rally around a proposal of that type..

In conclusion and to repeat my very important point, *I implore you and all involved in the decision making process on this issue to "scrap" this proposal.* In my opinion, it is truly bad law/policy. It will have far-reaching negative effect on students, families, the educational system, and the economy. All predictable outcomes. Please don't allow a predictable mistake to happen in the first place.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Donald G. Warner

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State Senator Stewart Greenleaf

U.M. Superintendent, Dr. Robert Milrod

U.M. School Board

U.M. Business Manager, Michael J. Braun

cc: State Representative Thomas Murt

5/30/2008