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Buckheit, James

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From: sang dejazzd.com [sang@dejazzd.com]**Sent:** Tuesday, June 03, 2008 2:08 PM**To:** jlbuckheit@state.pa.us**Subject:** Please oppose GCAs

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Sir,

I am writing to urge you and the Pennsylvania State Board of Education to oppose requiring Graduation Competency Assessments (GCAs). I teach in Reading, the poorest school district in the entire Commonwealth, and I witness every day excellent teachers trying to raise up our socio-economically disadvantaged students. I see them trying to encourage these students to succeed. We send them the message every day that if they work hard in school, study diligently, get good grades, and complete all of their work, they will be successful.

We tell these students that despite the obstacles that they face every day, academically and otherwise, they can make something of themselves by earning that high school diploma. We tell them that it is not enough to just show up, but to work towards the goal of graduating from high school. Many of these students may well be the very first ones in their families to reach that goal... unless the GCA requirement is adopted.

For if GCAs are mandated, all these positive messages regarding discipline, dedication, and determination will have no validity. Instead, GCAs will serve as just one more obstacle to hold these students down.

Whether members of the Pennsylvania State Education Association, the Pennsylvania School Board Association, or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, it is our job as education professionals to gear ALL of this state's students toward achieving success and graduating high school. With the recent mandates of No Child Left Behind and other aspects of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it is harder than ever to reach that goal. Rather than helping our students learn more, GCAs would instead eventually become a way to further punish students who have otherwise performed anywhere from satisfactorily to brilliantly in school.

Thus, it is with the utmost earnestness that I implore you to reconsider the concept of requiring GCAs. We need a philosophical change in public education - one that tries to reward hard-working students, rather than one that forces them to work even harder. You and the Board of Education have the opportunity and power to affect that change!

I thank you for your time, and for your consideration.

Most sincerely,
Mr. Bryan Sanguinito

6/4/2008