

Buckheit, James

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From: Smith, Carolyn [smica@asd.k12.pa.us] 2008 JUN -5 PM 1:31
Sent: Tuesday, June 03, 2008 9:33 AM
To: jbuckheit@state.pa.us
Subject: GCAs

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

State Board of Education
ATTN: James Buckheit, Executive Director
333 Market St.
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Re: Proposed Chapter 4 Regulations
Graduation Competency Assessments

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

I am extremely concerned about the proposal to institute Graduation Competency Assessments. There are several reasons why these should NOT become standard practice in Pennsylvania.

- Students with IEPs --- many students in special education programs do not take the classes they would be tested in due to learning disabilities. This could end up frustrating these students and causing behavior issues for many of them. It may also increase the amount of money and time that school districts have to spend on testing students for special education placement.
- Test anxiety --- many students (not just those in special education) suffer from test anxiety -- they can tell you all the information required but tense up to the point of incapacitation during testing.
- Cost ---- what exactly would it cost the taxpayers to implement ANOTHER set of standardized tests? We already have the PSSA tests. How would schools that are currently struggling to keep up financially be able to implement any needed remediation programs or preparatory programs for the "at-risk" students to succeed?
- At-risk students ---- there are students who wrestle with the decision of dropping out or staying in school every year. If they do not think that they can pass these tests, we are pushing them into the only choice they would see as making sense, dropping out.

As a teacher, I can tell you that our time and monetary resources are already spread thin due to remedial work to improve student achievement in the areas tested with the PSSA. We are struggling to get through curricula that cover so much material in a very limited amount of time. If we have to take more time to prepare students to achieve in these areas, we will be taking away from content that also needs to be covered. We also run the risk of reducing or eliminating elective classes in art, music, family and consumer science, foreign languages, business or technology education due to the students need for preparation or remediation for "proficiency" in other core content areas.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Smith

6/3/2008