

Buckheit, James

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From: Suzadail, Karin [KSuzadail@ojrsd.com]

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Sent: Monday, June 02, 2008 1:49 PM**To:** jrbuckheit@state.pa.usINDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION**Subject:** GCA's

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

I am writing to relate to you my opposition to Graduation Competency Exams. I object to these exams for two basic reasons.

First, these exams will cost millions of dollars to develop and administer. This huge investment could be far better spent to help students in a variety of ways. Parental involvement programs could be developed, smaller class sizes throughout all grades, tutoring and summer school programs, improved funding for school basics such as books and buildings. These tests represent a financial burden to the state and the taxpayers when indeed we already have the PSSAs as a measurement tool.

I also have dire concerns that there may be students who drop out because they feel they won't graduate if they have to score proficient on GCAs. Standardized exams are a stressful even for any student and especially when such high stakes are placed on a test. Students may just prefer to drop out rather than be labeled a failure at the end of high school. Conversely, there may be those who take the test and due to test anxiety or poor test taking skills are below the proficient level, but they can demonstrate their knowledge well in class or on other types of assessments – would these students be prevented from going on to college without a high school diploma even if they can pass the college entrance exams? There are many scenarios, but indeed there will be many students that for reasons beyond a lack of ability will be unable to get a decent job without their high school diploma, even though they have proven over 12 years of education that they reliably came to school every day, reliably did their homework, reliably worked as a team where appropriate, reliably researched and wrote in clear, understandable language. Aside from the disastrous personal cost to the student, what are the costs to the community in coping with these struggling young people? What programs will need to be put in place above this testing regimen to prepare and remediate students, and then further programs to deal with those students who are then out in the community without a diploma?

I feel that at this time there are more pressing educational needs rather than another testing regimen.

Karin Suzadail

Latin Teacher, Owen J. Roberts HS

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