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Gentlemen:

I am writing regarding the PROPOSED STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULATION 22 PA code, chapter 4 academic standards and assessment [006-312].

First: I have a Down syndrome grandson. He was fed through a tube in his nose for a period of over two years, because when he was born the muscles in his face and throat were not developed thus he could not suck or swallow.

Now at the age of 9 he can eat, but needs speech therapy, since he still does not talk well enough to be understood. This child will never be able to pass an exit test that includes the academic subjects as proposed.

The enactment of these regulations in my judgment will be punitive to all these similar students. They don't need exit testing, but instead give them training in vocational skills.

We have many groups in our school structure with I E P's to insure them the best education possible and these regulations will negate the I E P plan as agreed to by the parents and school.

GROUP A E.M.R. Educationally Mentally Retarded. They are trainable.

GROUP B L.D. Learning Disability. These students have good math skills but lack the capabilities in the language arts.

GROUP C S.E.D. Social Emotional Disturbed. The pace needs to be adjusted and individualized in the learning process for their success.

GROUP D General Slow Learner. This group will not go to college but need work study skills training.

These children could make up 10 to 15 percent of a schools enrollment and don't need the interruptions in their class work for more testing. My grandson gets very upset with any changes in his schedule or routine.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES:

I had two young men years ago both by the ~~name~~^{NAME} of Jerry. Jerry #1 had an I Q of about 89! When we met as teachers to identify those who were to receive poor work notices half way through the report period -- the others all said failing. I said he was making an A in my math class. THIS BOY GRADUATED AND TOOK A JOB AS A DISPATCHER IN A TRUCKING FIRM. He later told me [I would be fired if I sent a pickup for a job that required a semi or a semi to do a pickup job.] I can do this job!!

Jerry #2. He came to me as an absolute nonreader in the eighth grade. I put him in a special math book that we kept in my file cabinet next to his desk at the rear of the room. I worked with him individually. His friends were into sniffing glue. Remember those days??? They are now housed in a state institution as vegetables with no semblance of who or where they are.

His grandfather had a plumbing business and grandmother took him after school to the plumbing shop each day.

He now has his own renovation and repair business. He put soffit and fascia as well as gutters on my house as well as repairing a roof leak caused by another company cutting corners!

Neither of these young men would have a chance under these proposals if enacted when they were in school.

COPY CATS:

My daughter who teaches in West Virginia has experienced the exit testing for the past 2 years in their county. THE DROP OUT RATE HAS INCREASED 5% EACH OF THESE YEARS.

At a time when schools are trying to increase their graduation rate, it does not make sense to install a program that is counter productive.

Their students are not stupid. They realize that they would loose 3 years of wages by staying in school until they are 21. They can work in the mines, drive truck, do lawn care, or clerk in a store without that diploma.

Why would we waste our money and time on a procedure that is not working for others?

My father often told me there are two ways to learn...

One is to make all the mistakes there are in the world to learn not to make them again.

The other is to observe the mistakes of others and learn the less expensive way.

Cc. Jim Burckheit

Walter R. Zurasky
Principal Retired

