

From: Jane L. Wagner [jlwagner2@verizon.net]

Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 7:12 PM

To: j buckheit@state.pa.us; IRRRC; mfleck@pahousegop.com; jeichelberger@pasen.gov

Cc: cindy.eckerd@psba.org

Subject: GCA

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Buckheit, and State Board of Education Members,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Graduation Competency Assessments. My opposition is based on several platforms:

One: Competency has been established in terms of reading and mathematics with science on the wing through the PSSA exam. If students are competent in reading and writing and mathematics, they are competent to learn. Learning is in part the responsibility of the student.

Two: Days spent in preparation for testing and the testing time themselves consume valuable education time that could be spent learning.

Three: The State will spend a proposed 40 million dollars in preparation of and administration of tests. Could that 40 million education dollars be better spent to reduce class size, provide up to date textbooks and materials, provide laptops for students, and provide hands on learning for students? I say yes, spend the 40 million dollars on education. But spend it wisely -- not just to pay for test development and testing. Spend it on STUDENTS!

Four: Not all students learn in the same way nor can they demonstrate that learning in the same way. Pennsylvania schools have made extreme progress in dealing with individual differences and leaning to teach to multiple learning modalities. Now we want them all to pass the same test? Inclusion of special education students allows for accommodation of those students. Should Pennsylvania be any different?

Five: Although it is stated that Pennsylvania school districts will not need to spend any money for this testing out of their individual budgets, that will never be true. Class schedules and testing schedules will need to be accommodated. Review and remediation are called for. All of those items affect school district budgets. In this time of budget crunches and tax relief calls, to add this unnecessary expense to a tax supported institution is unconscionable. To make matters even worse, it takes 40 million dollars that could be available for school district basic education subsidy and gives it to a private company for making another new test.

Six: Public education is the foundation of this country. Its purpose is to give students the foundation to continue learning through life and to assist them in procuring skills for employment. It is not the purpose of public education to create a line of robots who know the answers to a specific set of multiple choice test questions that they must pass.

Sincerely,
Jane Wagner
Mount Union Area School District
Board of Directors

6/6/2008