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Buckheit, James

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From: McCormick, Nicole [McCormickN@PASD.K12.PA.US]

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Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 8:15 AM**To:** j buckheit@state.pa.usINDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION**Subject:** Proposed Chapter 4 Regulations - GCA

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

Good Morning Mr. Buckheit,

I am writing to let you know that I am opposed to the Graduation Competency Assessments. I find the idea of graduating a student based on these tests is absurd. A standardized test will not and does not determine how well one will do in the future. I am a previous student and currently a teacher who has never done well on standardized tests. However, I went to college and earned a Bachelor's degree and went on to earn a certification in Special Education, and am currently pursuing my Master's Degree. If my future was dependent on test scores, I would not be where I am today. Standardized tests do not truly measure a student's knowledge. All students learn differently and retain information differently. I find it ridiculous that a student could possibly not graduate if they did not do well on standardized tests, but yet, if asked they can complete a physics lab or solve a mathematical equation with no difficulty. If teachers are open and in my opinion, truly good teachers, they allow students to demonstrate their knowledge in many ways, for example in research papers, portfolios, etc...so if this is the case why would you approve the idea of passing a student passed on standardized scores? When you get into the work force, most employers do not make you take random tests in order to keep your job? Isn't our job as educators to prepare them for the future? How does a standardized test prepare them for the future?

In addition, being that I am special education teacher, special education students would be harmed as resources are diverted to the unnecessary task of getting regular education students ready to score Proficient on more standardized tests. The proposal does not provide for special education students to be exempt from taking the tests and if a student is like I was and still am when it came to taking these type of tests, it often can take days or weeks to settle down from the trauma of dealing with these to truly start to learn again. Also, many special education students I deal with are not able to take Algebra I or II, but yet would still be required to take a test on this information? I find this idea completely unfair and unjustified.

The amount of money spent could be far better spent to help students with such things as tutoring and summer school programs. We already have the PSSA's, which quite frankly causes enough stress as it is, why would we add another test to the mix?

My biggest concern is for those students who see no point in coming to school anymore because they know they would not be able to pass the test for graduation. A lot of students who already have difficulties in school, come from situations at home that make it difficult to succeed in school. However, if they feel they have no hope, what is the point of them coming anymore? So what happens to them? Will they be on the street? Will they be prevented from going to college or getting a job because they don't have a high school diploma? As these students struggle, where does that leave them and where does it leave the community? If we have kids out on the streets because they couldn't get what they needed from school, don't you think there would be more violence overall? There is already enough violence in schools as it is, do we really need to add more, by adding a test to some students who already think their lives are hopeless?

I often wonder who comes up with these ideas when talking about education. My first question would be, do you remember what it was like to be in school? Would you have wanted the same requirements if you were still in school? Also, have you ever taught in a classroom and had to deal with the daily struggles of these students' lives and help them deal and cope the best way they know how? Have you ever had to teach a student who at 13, takes care of himself, because his mom doesn't care about him and makes no effort to care? If you have, then you would realize that the fact that some of these kids that make it to a school is an achievement in itself. Why not give them credit, where credit is due and graduate them based on their 12 years of school and their many

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achievements and not whether or not they passed a standardized tests? If this proposal passes, in my opinion, you will be losing a large population of students and most likely a large population of teachers, because of the added stress to try to get a student to pass one more test. The enjoyment of teaching has dissipated, because of so many requirements to do well on standardized testing which has become the main focus in the classroom. The joy of teaching *and* learning is disappearing more and more each day. In my opinion, I do not think this beneficial in any way and it would do more harm than good. Hopefully, a large amount of time, consideration and thought is taken into account when deciding what to do with this proposal. With anticipation, the right decision will be made to NOT graduate students based on standardized testing.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Nicole McCormick
Teacher and previous student