

UPPER PERKIOMEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

TIMOTHY F. KIRBY, Ed.D
SUPERINTENDENT

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SECRETARY-BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

June 4, 2008

2696

Pennsylvania Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Mr. Arther Coccodrilli, Chairman
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Chairman Coccodrilli:

Attached, please find a resolution opposing high school graduation competency assessments that was unanimously approved by our Board of School Directors on May 29, 2008.

It is our hope that you seriously consider this District's opposition to any regulation or legislation that usurps the authority of the local school districts to determine whether their students have earned a high school diploma.

Sincerely,



Dr. Timothy F. Kirby
Superintendent of Schools

RESOLUTION
OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS
BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE UPPER PERKIOMEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has approved a proposal to revise the current high school graduation requirements under the Chapter 4 regulations to require students to pass a series of standardized high stakes Graduation Competency Assessments in order to get a diploma; and

WHEREAS, these new requirements and exams will be the same for all students, whether they are taking college prep or vocational courses, are English language learners or participating in individualized programs, and all students effectively will be required to take the same courses in order to pass this new battery of state tests; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 4 currently allows districts to use either the PSSA or rigorous local assessments for their students to demonstrate proficiency of the state academic standards; and it is misleading and incorrect to make the assumption that because students demonstrate their achievements on local assessments rather than the PSSA that there is a disconnect between proficiency and graduation; and

WHEREAS, although the GCA proposal permits schools to use a local assessment option, it establishes numerous limitations, including the elimination of the ability to use various assessment strategies now available to local entities and requires local tests to be closely modeled to the GCAs; and

WHEREAS, decades of research shows many reasons why standardized pencil and paper test scores should never be the determining factor in making major decisions about students, and that a diploma should be granted based on the coursework, tests and quizzes, presentations, projects and papers throughout the student's career; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis or fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 billion short in helping school districts prepare students to meet the academic standards by 2014; and

WHEREAS, the proposal requires school districts to absorb many new costs related to revising curriculum, professional development, test development and validation, test preparation and administration, remediation and other costs. Given the state's funding shortfall and the Act 1 limitations on tax increases, school districts have limited ability to fund these potential new costs.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors of the Upper Perkiomen School District **opposes the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments** and any other regulation or legislation that usurps the authority of local school districts to determine whether their students have earned a high school diploma. This resolution will be shared with the State Board of Education, state legislators including local legislators and members of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

Adopted this 29th day of May, 2008

Signed,

Attest:

Howard M. Zyzanski
School Board President

Paul M. Tassell
Board Secretary (seal)