

**From:** Debbie Stevens [4tots4me@connecttime.net]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 04, 2008 9:47 PM  
**To:** j buckheit@state.pa.us  
**Subject:** Graduation Competency Assessments

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Mr. Jim Buckheit,

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

My name is Debbie Stevens and we live in Allegheny County in the Pine Richland School District. We have 3 children who currently attend our school and another who will follow along in a few years. Two of our three school-aged children in grades 3 and 5 continue to excel in Pine Richland. They continue to achieve excellent academics as well as appropriate emotional and social growth. Our third child attending, unfortunately, experiences a speech delay as well as auditory memory and language processing difficulties. I understand that the GCA's have not taken into account some of the learning issues that many of our children have. Forcing a child to take a test under those circumstances quite frankly is abusive! We spend so much time accommodating her learning styles to make the information in the classroom more pliable for her to learn that she is able to be successful! A test like this will only show that she does not take tests well, especially under the pressure of not being granted her diploma if she is not proficient.

You can not measure a person's success based on a test. We all learn differently and respond differently to test taking. We have all seen schools modifying their curriculum to teach to the PSSA's instead of teaching appropriate curriculum. Granted, some schools do need to be made accountable and I agree with that, but some schools are excelling and should continue to be able to provide their students with the curriculum they see fit. I do not believe that enforcing this test will provide us with children better equip to handle the demands of college and adulthood. I think you will see children who test well soaring through with no difficulty. However, I believe this could make the high school drop out rate increase. Students will question why they should try so hard at their academics when Suzy had a 3.8 grade average, but was unable to score proficient in the GCA so consequently was not given her diploma. I believe this will cause students who are struggling to look at dropping out of school because if Suzy couldn't do it, there is no way I will be able to so all of these classes are a waste of time.

I really see little benefit to this test. Not only will it tear at the core of our children's self-esteem, provide immense anxiety, but will also cost the tax payers money for a test that will not benefit anyone. We can not allow our schools to teach to yet another test. There is a lot more learned at school than what can be measured on a test. If a student has based all of their academic requirements, then they should be granted their diploma. If Governor Rendell is concerned about some of the schools' performance in Pennsylvania, then I suggest he form a task force to look at successful school districts in our state and assist the schools that are struggling with the positive information they learn from the successful schools.

Please consider my request, as well as our school board's request, to not allow the Graduation Competency Assessments to go into effect. Please consider why people are opposed to this and see if there is another way to reach your goals, but not force the schools to enforce this test.

If you have any questions about my view points or my e-mail, you can e-mail me or contact me at 724-940-0219.

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Thank you for your consideration,  
Debbie Stevens