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Buckheit, James

From: Burke, Susan [BurkeSus@ssd.k12.pa.us] 2008 JUN 16 PM 4: 23
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2008 1:36 PM
To: jrbuckheit@state.pa.us
Subject: GCAs

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

I am writing to inform you of my strong opinion against the implementation of GCAs.

- 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. (If a class has 20 regular education students who will not graduate unless they score Proficient, and five IEP students who will graduate whether or not they score Proficient, the pressure to focus attention on the 20 regular education students will be extreme.)
- This would very likely cause a flood of students attempting to get into special education as a way to avoid the GCA requirement, taking time and resources from the children who truly need special education services.
- Although the proposed regulations allow IEP teams to exempt special education students from *scoring proficient* to graduate, it does NOT provide for special education students to be exempted *from taking* the tests. If you are a parent of one of the many children who become emotionally distraught from taking standardized tests that are far divorced from their instruction, or a special education teacher who sees first-hand the impact these tests have, tell the State Board that more standardized tests are not harmless. Your children suffer emotionally and academically (as it often takes days or weeks for students to settle down from the trauma and start to learn again).
- There are too many unanswered questions. For example, what if a special education child does not take Algebra I and II? Will he still be required to take those GCAs? There is nothing in the proposed regulations that would exempt him from having to take them. If they do take a GCA and fail it, will they have to take remediation in that subject, even though they don't need to score proficient to graduate? The regulations aren't clear on this.

Sincerely,
Susan Burke