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Buckheit, James

From: Terri Koenigsberg [tkoenigsberg@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2008 5:01 PM
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us
Subject: graduation requirements

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Sir:

I am an elementary school teacher and I would like to take this opportunity to weigh in on the graduation test requirements. First, I do believe that the "test" now has become the be all and end all of education. We spend the first 6 – 7 months of the school year teaching math, reading and now science skills to prepare students for PSSA tests in the spring. Nothing else is important until after those tests. Since the testing window changes each year, the time frame in which to teach those skills differs by several weeks from year to year. Since Social Studies is another area that will be testing through these graduation tests, will that also trickle down to a Social Studies PSSA test? We now give PSSA tests each year, plus 4Sight tests several times a year for practice.

I do not have a fundamental problem with standardized tests that determines whether a senior graduates high school, but I would propose at that point that the 11th grade PSSA test be eliminated, since it only tests math, reading and science. I would also then propose that these high school exams be accepted at any Pennsylvania institution of higher education in lieu of SAT scores. One other question arises - if a student passes all four tests at the end of their 9th or 10th grade year, can that student then opt out of high school?

I would also like to know what consideration has been given to those students who attend a Vocational or Technical program. Will these students be denied a education that includes hands on training in a trade, so that they can prepare to take a set of tests? What plans have been made for special needs students who cannot pass a test without accommodations? It is so disheartening at the elementary level to see a learning disabled student who works hard to achieve at his or her level forced to take a test that is above their frustration level.

There is so much more to be learned in school than math, reading, science and social studies. I believe that these tests coupled with rising costs to taxpayers for transportation and health care will result in the elimination of a well-rounded education that include art, music, drama and foreign languages. I believe that funding for education should be the highest priority.

Teresa Koenigsberg