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**Buckheit, James**

**From:** Marsha Ricke [mricke@gorockets.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 10, 2008 1:06 PM  
**To:** jbuckheit@state.pa.us  
**Subject:** Proposed Graduation Competency Assessments  
**Importance:** High

2008 JUN 16 PM 4:21

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

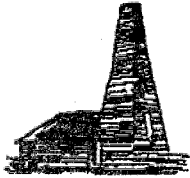
Dear Mr. Buckheit:

Please see the attached cover letter which is accompanied with our school board approved resolution opposing the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Karen E. Jez, Superintendent  
Titusville Area School District

6/11/2008





KAREN E. JEZ  
SUPERINTENDENT

TERRY L. KERR  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

# TITUSVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

221 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET • TITUSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA 16354-1785  
PHONE: (814) 827-2715 • FAX: (814) 827-7761

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PA. STATE BOARD  
OF EDUCATION

DEPENDENT REGULATORY  
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June 10, 2008

Jim Buckheit, Executive Director  
State Board of Education  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg PA 17126-0333

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

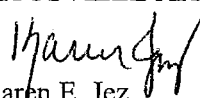
This letter is to express our opposition to the proposed Graduation Competency Assessments (GCA's), IRRC 2696, regulation 6-312. Enclosed for your review is a copy of the resolution opposing enactment of the GCA's which was adopted by our board of school directors on February 18, 2008. The board approved resolution was subsequently sent to Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, the IRRC, and state senators and representatives along with a letter which further outlined our concerns regarding the proposed GCA regulations.

Although it has been indicated by PDE that various changes have occurred since the initial proposal that would support the GCA process, our district continues its position against the GCA's. The numerous levels of testing currently in place from classroom achievement to grade level assessments are proven tools for monitoring and accessing student performance and, ultimately, determining graduation readiness. Graduation requirements that are locally structured and supported through curriculum designed to meet the state standards also promote student achievement, and through the PSSA's another battery of testing is required to determine student proficiency. A very valid consideration is that the addition of another state-mandated testing system undermines local authority for public education.

As we continue to be diligent in our efforts to provide a quality education for our students, equipping them for success in a global society is foremost in our endeavors. We respectfully request that you consider our concerns.

Sincerely,

TITUSVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

  
Karen E. Jez  
Superintendent

enclosure

An Equal Rights and Opportunities School District

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS  
BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
TITUSVILLE AREA 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

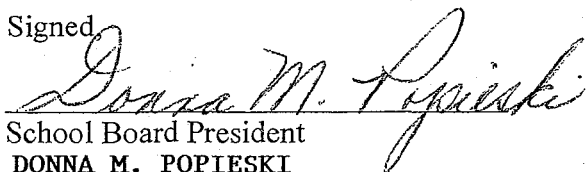
**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis or fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 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 TITUSVILLE AREA 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 18TH day of FEBRUARY, 2008.

Signed

  
School Board President  
DONNA M. POPIESKI

Attest:

  
Board Secretary (seal)  
RONALD G. LYTLE