



# University of Pittsburgh

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Ms. Karen Farmer White  
State Board of Education  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126 0333

Via Courier (Overnight)

RECEIVED  
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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Ms. White:

I write concerning the Board's consideration of a graduation examination requirement for high school.

This is a very good idea, and I am especially receptive to the efforts of the Pittsburgh Schools to help pilot such an effort. In order to represent a major step beyond existing examination programs such as PSSA, though, it is essential that any local examinations produced by school districts help the public understand the real goals of the State standards. Specifically, it is essential that test items directly capture the application of high school curriculum to success in real life. This means that the products of project-based education are especially appropriate. Also, tasks that involve applying high school subject matter to real life tasks should be strongly encouraged. The idea is that students and their parents should see the examination as a *demonstration that they have acquired and can use the key knowledge and skills of effective citizenry, further self-directed learning, and everyday life.*

It might be very helpful if the State were to promote some demonstration projects that illustrate ways in which tailored examinations can fulfill this goal of demonstrating successful learning in practical terms. Should there be, for example, a version of the graduation exam that is tied to skilled apprenticeship? Should there be one that is a combination of demonstrated readiness for college (e.g., writing and math) and preparation for full participation in civic functions (e.g., writing an effective letter to a legislator, writing a summary of available research on a consumer issue, etc.)?

Hopefully, the new graduation requirement will be consistent with the important need for the public to better understand how schools prepare our children for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Sincerely,

Alan M. Lesgold  
Professor and Dean