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Buckheit, James

From: Anne McCrory [AMcCrory@gvsd.org]  
Sent: Sunday, June 15, 2008 7:20 PM 2008 JUN 23 AM 10:15  
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us; Katherine Pettiss  
Subject: RE: A Ticket To Success - June 2008

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Buckheit,

I am writing to you regarding the current concern over the conceived notion that Pennsylvania's school systems are moving children through to graduation unprepared for their futures. I am an elementary school teacher in the state of PA and have three children that I am extremely proud to say have gone through our own school district. State standardized assessments have been with us since my oldest daughter, now 24, was attending public school. These tests already pull a lot of time from the curriculum to assure children are completely prepared for "the test". I am concerned that this new set of tests being created by Governor Rendell's staff will add to the time away from actual teaching and learning. I am also very concerned that, as the past record reflects, ideas, "solutions" are created for a conceived "problem", and immediately implemented, without a trial period. Those students that are graduating next year deserve tried practices, those that are discussed, shared with the experts in the field - (ie the teachers actually working with these high school students) and possibly gradually, if found to be valid, implemented, if still felt necessary.

A local paper presented their view recently stating: "Unfortunately, the proposal is getting panned by school districts and teacher unions. They warn against burdening already test-weary students and fret that more students will drop out if standards are raised." This misconception that teachers do not want to raise the bar for their students is a result of poor communication on the part of our government...our government that is for the people, by the people (not the few). The misfortune of any abrupt government action upon education, is that it usually involves "text-book" educated citizens, making decisions that do not always reflect best practice for the students and teachers actually in the "trenches". Then the public opinion becomes swayed by the fear that these government officials are putting forward. The same paper also stated "Seems to us local standards are much too weak if students who can't pass basic skills tests are getting diplomas anyway." I'm not quite sure where these papers are getting their information, but in our district, if a student does not pass the PSSA in their junior year, then they are required to take a remedial class the following year. If the student passes this course (specifically designed to address the weaknesses of these students), then they do graduate. Instead of creating another "standardized" test, doesn't it make sense to leave it in the hands of those working with these children to deliver a tested program?

In closing, Mr. Buckheit, please have faith in your educational system. The educators care greatly about their students and are not only working so hard to identify and meet the needs of these students, but are working toward a common mission statement and objectives: "The Mission of the District is to ensure that every student is inspired and prepared to be a passionate lifelong learner and a productive invested participant in the local and global community. Strategic Objective 1: By 2013, each student will continually acquire and apply new skills and knowledge as he/she pursues personal and challenging goals. Strategic Objective 2: By 2013, each student will demonstrate an understanding of, and actively participate in the local and global community.

As you can see, our students are being trained, molded into becoming our future local and global community members; it's a shared passion for you and our community. Please come into the schools and meet your future.

Thank you for your time,

A concerned community member of today