

Buckheit, James

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From: Sheri Scholl [sscholl@kasd.net]
Sent: Tuesday, June 03, 2008 8:12 AM
To: all-lea@lists.cas.psu.edu
Subject: Kane Area School District Resolution Opposing Mandate of PSSA/GCA's as a State Graduation Requirement

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

PENN*LINK

Below is the Resolution adopted by the Kane Area School District on February 21, 2008, opposing the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments.

Kane Area School District Resolution Opposing Mandate of PSSA/GCA's as a State Graduation Requirement

Whereas, the Board of School Directors of the Kane Area School District recognize the significance of accountability, the need for high academic standards, and assessment of such for providing Adequate Yearly Progress as per The No Child Left Behind Act we wish to affirm our opposition to the newly proposed concept of mandating the PSSA/GCA's as a high school graduation requirement for the following reasons:

1. The PSSA throughout the years has been shown to contain significant irregularities and serious flaws in scoring and processing that invalidate the test to be utilized as a high stakes exam for the purposes of students demonstrating proficiency of the academic standards as well as for graduation purposes. Past experiences, as well as, the multiple use of PSSA scores and consequence established throughout the years have raised considerable concerns over the high stakes nature of the test.
2. This proposal calls for the PDE to develop model curriculum in each of the content areas assessed by the 10 GCA's thus narrowing the curriculum of local school districts and shifting to a state wide uniform curriculum whereas all students will be required to learn the same information and in the same manner. Contrary to the process, we take great pride in providing students of the Kane Area School District a broad based curriculum menu of course offerings, some of which are not mandated but helpful in providing well rounded students and preparing them to meet the needs of the 21st century. Furthermore, we believe our own local standards and criteria for graduation are more rigorous and far exceed those of the state standards at this point in time.
3. We believe the affordability factor will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets and taxpayers. Despite no cost analysis completed at this point in time, estimates are beginning at \$86 million+ as the initial cost for pursuing this statewide endeavor. The recent costing-out study did not take into account the costs for this new proposal. Costing-out study results indicate the state is already \$4.4 billion short of where it should be in helping students meet the academic standards. Furthermore, how will the state pay to develop, validate, and score 10 GCA's of each student in Pennsylvania annually? How often will the GCA's be revised and at what cost? Will there be various versions of each of the 10 GCA's as there currently are of the PSSA formats? How much will that cost be for various versions of the same test and on an annual basis? How long will the state dedicate funding to this plan once implemented before being passed onto school districts and the local taxpayer?

This school board recognizes the adverse administrative and staffing implications associated with implementing this proposed plan. GCA's would be offered three times a year (end of fall, spring, and summer semesters) in addition to the regular PSSA schedule which consumes an inordinate amount of student-instructional time.

Students who fail to achieve proficiency on the 11th grade PSSA or in one of the content areas can only retake the content module in which they were unsuccessful. Accurate record keeping, organization, and scheduling will be critical in ensuring all students are provided every opportunity to graduate with their appropriate class. Students who do not score proficient on the 11th grade PSSA or a GCA administered in any grade must be provided remediation and supplemental instructional support. The tracking, record keeping, scheduling, and administration of this testing process will require all schools to hire additional staff exclusively to manage the administrative operations of this testing process.

4. The Kane Area School District Board of Directors recognizes that the State Board of Education has included language which allows schools to use a local assessment but does so in a manner which impedes those efforts by design thus creating obstacles and disincentives making the "local assessment option" too expensive, burdensome, and not likely to be selected, therefore, abolishing the local assessment option as contained currently in the Chapter 4 education regulations.
5. The Kane Area School District Board of Directors oppose the adoption of a state driven curriculum, assessments, and graduation requirements which infringe upon the local control of public school districts vested in locally elected school boards. Anything that comes in between that right and authority is clearly an erosion of local control. This is an "implied right" as vested in the General Assembly. The Pennsylvania School Code supports the statutorily defined autonomy of local school boards to determine curriculum and graduation requirements.
6. It is our belief that efforts to help students should begin in early childhood grades and should not focus on a high stakes test with serious life-changing consequences in secondary school when testing results are only required to be given to senior students ten days prior to graduation commencement.
7. It is our belief that this testing proposal provides the State government a mechanism to allow the State to manage the state economy based on meeting specific needs, as a gatekeeper for students in determining who succeeds and goes onto college and who enters the labor workforce. This is no different of a time than in 1999 when the State Board of Education proposed the silver and gold colored sticker seals to act as a steering mechanism and encouraged the state-owned colleges and universities of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to use the results of this one-time PSSA/GCA process as a basis of admission to these state-owned schools.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors of Kane Area School District directs the School Superintendent to send copies of this resolution to the State Board of Education, the Office of the Honorable Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to the chairs of both the Pennsylvania House and Senate Education Committees, and to our local representatives in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Senate.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Kane Area School District hereby directs the Superintendent and our Board President to communicate this resolution to other school districts within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, setting forth the views of this Board, and encouraging other school boards to take similar action in support of this issue.

RESOLVED, this 7th day of February, 2008.

Larry Lamping, President

BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS OF
THE KANE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

ATTEST:

Vickie Chapman, Board Secretary