



READING SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dr. Thomas R. Chapman, Jr.

Superintendent of Schools

June, 2008

Jim Buckheit
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Mr. Buckheit,

Taking the time to recognize that our students come first is not something that is new. We all want the very best for the children of this state. There is no reason why every one of our students should not receive a high school diploma. The Pennsylvania High School Requirements are in desperate need of augmenting its standards towards graduation. The Pennsylvania standardized test scores do not mirror the graduation rate and this gives cause for concern. There are many ways in which we can collectively take responsible steps toward addressing this issue. Our new approaches can give flexibility and consistency to our students. Our GCA's (Graduation Competency Assessment) will be used by being administered multiple times a year, giving students a chance to take the test over again if they fail it, or even a part of it. This option can also replace final exams in some courses. The new GCA's will ultimately give our students a test that is designed to target weaknesses and not just stop there, but to also target remediation which is what education should focus on. Learning should not be about getting it right the first time, it should about giving all students the instruction needed to improve so they do not get it wrong a second time.

We must continue to reset the proverbial bar to make sure that the value of our diploma does not go down. Simply handing over diplomas and not preparing those students who receive them with the tools necessary to succeed is irresponsible. We want our students to hold that diploma with great admiration and have the diploma regarded with a sense of worth and validation. The Reading School District is proud to say that we are the only urban school district in the entire commonwealth where every grade achieved over one year's growth. This is a wonderful moment for us; however our work is not done. Standards are rising year to year. If we raise those standards we must also raise the amount of support we get for our schools. Governor Rendell has proposed a \$2.6 billion investment in public education over the next six years. If we can get the resources necessary, we are very confident that our students will be able to continue turning the corner and continue moving in the right direction. Funding our schools and giving our students the very best is essential for success. If the state standards remain on this course, we are worried that our children will continue to be left behind. I thank you for hearing my concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas R. Chapman Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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General Resolution
Mrs. Karen McCree, President
Dr. Thomas R. Chapman, Jr., Superintendent

March 19, 2008

Res. 5 WHEREAS, the continued growth of Pennsylvania's economy depends on a well-educated workforce and citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania has made unprecedented investments in public education in recent years to ensure our students are prepared and ready to succeed after graduation; and

WHEREAS, the PA Department of Education, under the leadership of Secretary Gerald L. Zahorchak and Governor Edward G. Rendell, is committed to ensuring all students in the commonwealth demonstrate academic proficiency by 2014; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has given preliminary approval to regulations that would bolster graduation requirements by instituting a series of optional end-of-course high school exams collectively known as Graduation Competency Assessments; and

WHEREAS, these assessments would give school districts an additional method, starting with the Class of 2014, to ensure students demonstrate proficiency in the core academic areas of math, science, English and social studies; and

WHEREAS, such assessments could be used in place of existing final exams and would not create additional testing; and

WHEREAS, the commonwealth is committed to fully funding costs associated with developing and administering GCA's, as well as providing supports in the form of voluntary model curriculum and other school-based instructional tools, strategies for identifying students who need additional help, and enhanced teacher training; and

WHEREAS, The State Board of Education voted unanimously in support of the proposed regulations; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's high school graduates deserve the assurance that every diploma awarded has meaningful, substantive value and represents the academic skills every graduate needs to succeed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of School Directors of the Reading School District supports the State Board of Education's proposal to strengthen graduation requirements and related efforts to better prepare our students for success beyond high school.

Adopted this 19 day of March 2008.

Karen H. McCree
President of the Board

Linda A. Smith
Secretary of the Board (Seal)