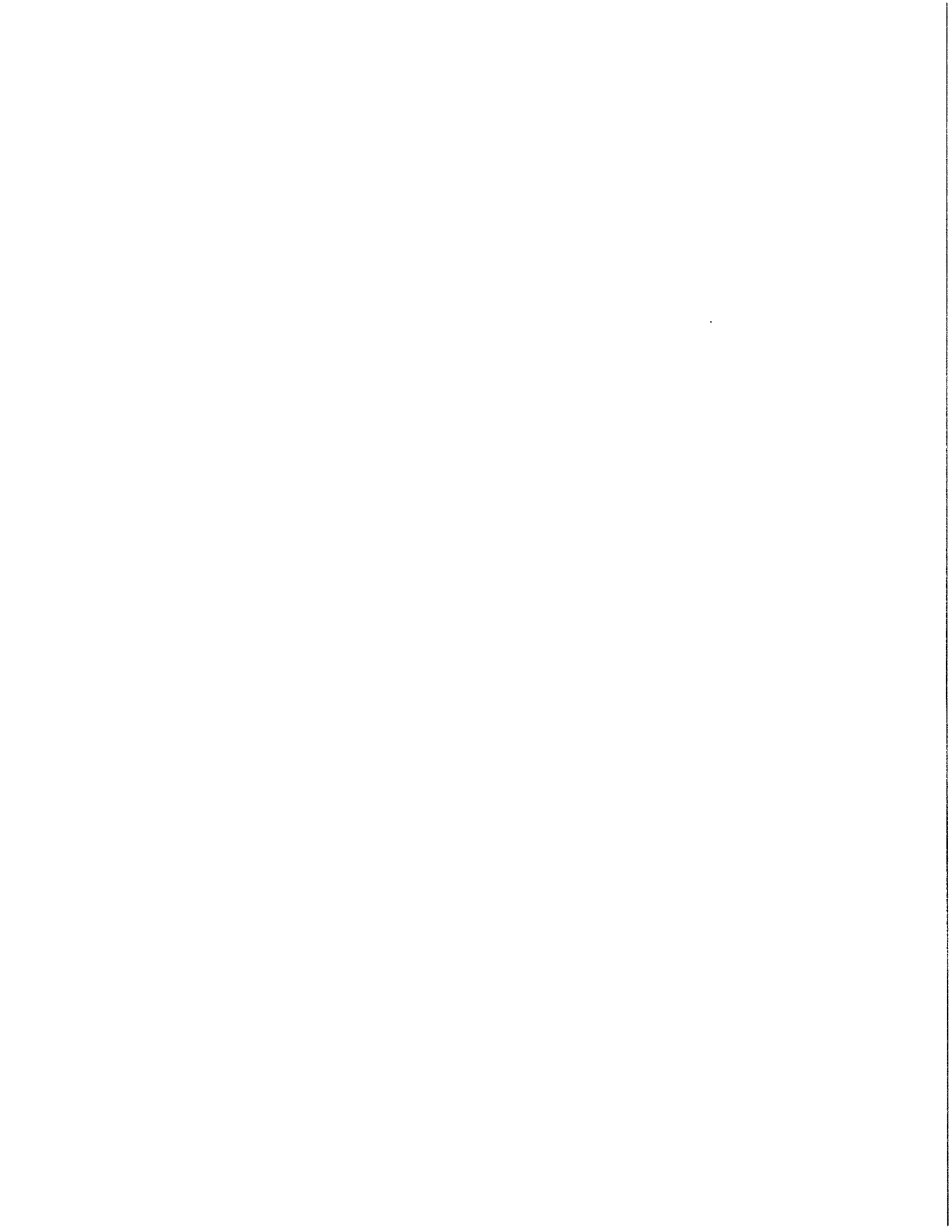


#2696

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
HIGH SCHOOL REFORM
WESTMORELAND COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FEBRUARY 19, 2009
10:00 A.M.

	NAME	ORGANIZATION/ADDRESS
9:50	DAN ROONEY	PITTSBURGH STEELERS GENERAL MANAGER
10:00	DAVE PASTRICK	SOMERSET SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
10:10	TOM McINROY	SHANKSVILLE-STONYCREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
10:20	GEORGE LAMMAY	BENTWORTH HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
10:30	RICK HUFFMAN	WINDBER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
10:40	THOMAS HAZJAS, JR.	PETERS TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT - HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
10:50	FRANK COOPER	CONCURRENT TECHNOLOGIES
11:00		
11:10		
11:20		
11:30		
11:40		
11:50		
12:00	SANDRA DANOFF	UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH MEDICAL CENTER
1:00		
1:10		
1:20		
1:30		
1:40		



I have been asked by Our Governor Ed Rendell to speak today regarding a subject that is critical to all of Pennsylvania and all Americans, The Education of our children, Specifically the need to raise the standards required for students to successfully complete high school.

Governor Rendell heard me speak of the regard I have for a local teacher, my daughter Mary Duffy and He asked me if I would join with him in sharing the passion we both have for the education of all students in Pennsylvania. I am happy to join with him in this effort.

Duffy teaches young children in the Woodland Hills School District. Every year she has several

students in her class who have been labeled “difficult or challenging”. Duffy gives them all the attention she can. She recalls the excitement she received when one of these students came into her classroom, put his arms around her and said “Miss Rooney, we love you.”

The problem is, Duffy often has several such children in that class and it is difficult to give them the attention they need, and also teach the rest of the class.

I understand the conversation can become very complex at this point. Each Student, Parent and school system have many needs and we must

consider those needs and do all we can to fulfill them.

I also need to take a moment and acknowledge the teachers. I know many don't agree with the way these new standards may be enacted. I have great appreciation for their work and share their concern, that the long hours each day they spend with the kids isn't enough. A parents responsibility and accountability to their child's education has to be even greater than the teachers

However to teachers, parent and anyone else who feels that our high school student can't achieve more, must understand we really have no choice. We are not changing the standards for high school graduates. They have already been changed.

That is what the modern world and job market require. We are simply adjusting to the world as it is. You all see children today the way they communicate, interact and engage each other with little regard to national boundaries or political maps, even time zones have little impediments to them. We are truly in a worldwide community. This has and will only continue to expand particularly in regards to the economy.

Today you will hear many folks with more expertise than I on this subject. Their insight and knowledge is critical. I ask that you please keep a couple things in mind.

First, Our Children who seek formal education beyond high school need to go into those classrooms prepared and ready to gain the knowledge and training necessary to allow them to be the innovators that is such an essential part of the American spirit

Second, Our Children who go directly from high school into the work force must be immediately ready to compete within a global market place by providing the skills, work ethic and determination that has made the American work force the pride of the world.

Finally we must never short change our children with shallow expectations. Our children can and will meet any challenge we put in front of them if we give

them the resources and support necessary to overcome those Challenges.

I go back to that young boy who told “Miss Rooney we love you” I believe that heart and desire resides within every child. That spirit is the compassion that has made America great. Our students will always bring the greatness of our nation to the world. We must set standards that allow them to be their best. Maybe this way will show the world we still care.



Office of the Superintendent

Thursday February 19, 2009
Testimony to the State Board of Education

Good morning. My name is Dr. David Pastrick. I am the superintendent of schools for the Somerset area School District and have been in public education since 1997. Prior to 1997, I was in religious education with the Catholic Church serving on a director in a parish and a diocesan level. I had the opportunity to chair state and national committees. My journey in education began in 1971. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you and thank you for freely giving of your time for the sake of our children. I begin my comments with a rhetorical question, "What has taken you so long?" Our current system is failing many students. I know that because we are here today. I cite an editorial comment entitled "Break the Cycle," published this past January 13th in the Somerset Daily American, a local newspaper in my community. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 15 percent of adults living in Somerset County lack basic literacy skills. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania reported that 37 percent of adult rural Pennsylvanians did not complete high school and 21 percent did not go beyond eighth grade. The editor, points out the report was based on data from 2003. Since then the state has poured million of dollars into literacy programs. As we all know, the way to break the cycle of poverty is through literacy; however, the last step is missing – the competencies needed to become literate. Are they being taught and, more importantly, are the students learning? We don't know. Yet, we have an obligation to know.

645 South Columbia Avenue, Suite 110 • Somerset, Pennsylvania 15501

Tel: (814) 445-9714 • Fax: (814) 443-1964 • www.sasd.us

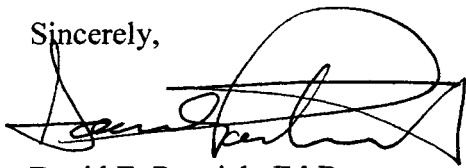
Equal Opportunity Employer

The Pennsylvania Graduation Competency Assessments, as proposed, are the missing piece. Adopting the graduation requirements would put value back into earning a Pennsylvania high school diploma.

Critics of the proposal assert that the state should stay out of this arena; however, the state is involved in giving certificates to individuals that meet certain criteria for a particular job. All of us can name many positions that require state certification, which is a good thing. It guarantees to the consumer that the person earning the certification demonstrated mastery of a list of minimum competencies. Competencies are part of every job, from the Wal-Mart greeter to the waitress. One does not attain a position if he or she can not demonstrate the ability to do the job.

When more is demanded, more is produced. I am convinced that unless these assessments are enacted, many students will continue to be underserved and yet will continue to graduate. I ask that you break the cycle and break it now. Be assured of my personal support as well as that of the Somerset Area School District. With personal best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David E. Pastrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end.

David E. Pastrick, Ed.D.

Shanksville-Stonycreek School District

P.O. Box 128
1325 Cornerstone Road
Shanksville, Pennsylvania 15560-0128

Thomas R. McInroy
Superintendent

Sidney M. Clark
Business Manager

District Office – (814) 267-6499
High School Office – (814) 267-4649
Elementary Office – (814) 267-7140
District Fax - (814) 267-4372
<http://www.sssd.com>

Samuel J. Romesberg III
Secondary Principal

Reno J. Barkman
Elementary Principal

Comments on the Proposed Changes to the State

High School Graduation Requirements

As provided in Chapter 4 (Academic Standards and Assessment)

Before the State Board of Education

February 19, 2009

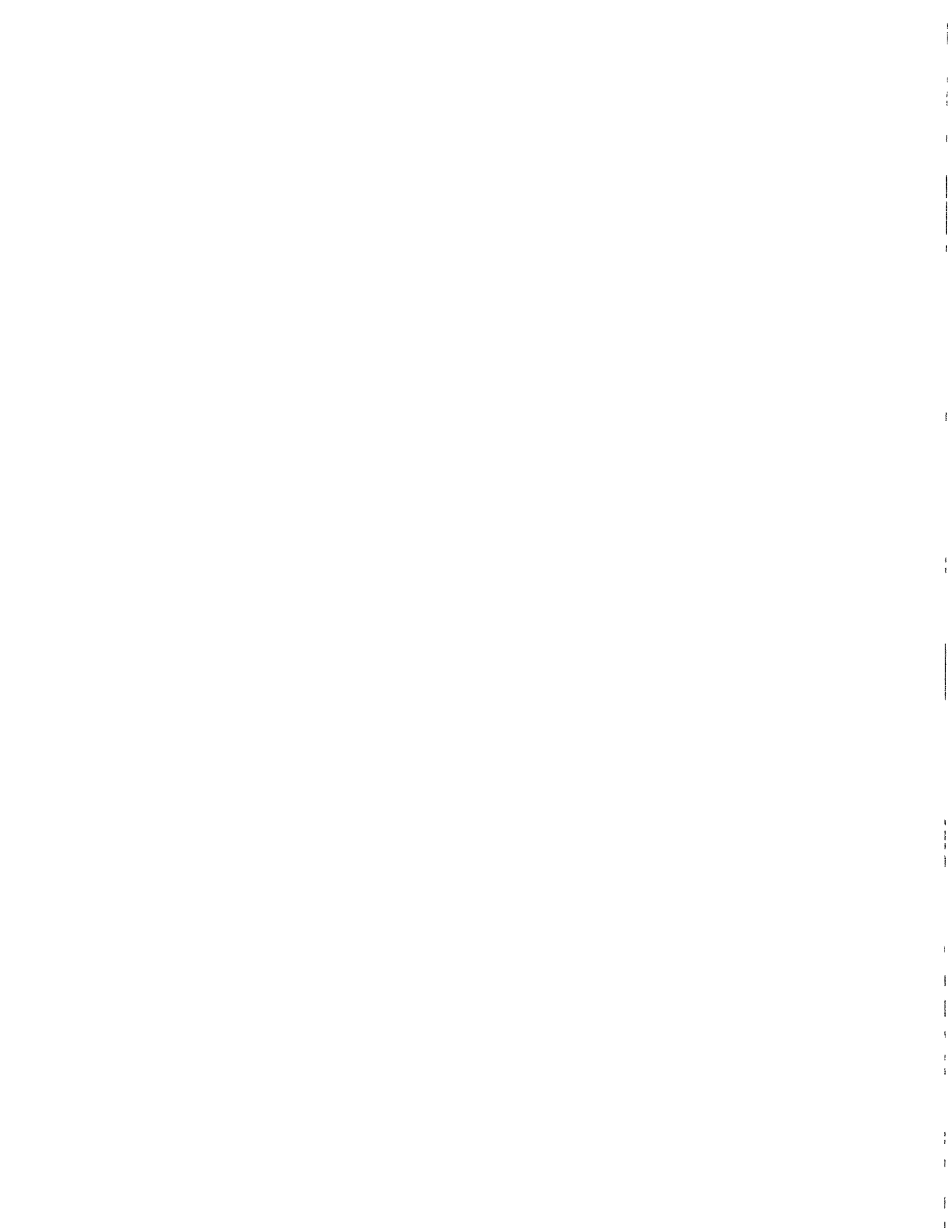
Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony concerning the proposed legislation centered on the changes to Chapter 4 and the Graduation Competency Requirements. My name is Thomas McInroy, Superintendent of the Shanksville-Stonycreek School District. It is my sincerest belief that the proposed changes will help to strengthen the academic rigor for our students by organizing the time the assessment is administered and clearly assessing the standards which follow best practices.

It is the duty of the Public School System to prepare our children for their future by providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in the global economy. To help achieve this goal, schools have taken the appropriate steps by implementing standards and anchors at all grade levels. Standardized assessments are helpful for teachers to better determine the students' ability to understand and apply the lessons taught in the classroom. However, they should not be the only means for determining students' ability.

The PSSA examinations have evolved since their introduction over a decade ago. However, they have never been able to be used efficiently and effectively by educators as a tool to assess students' knowledge. The PSSA examinations have serious drawbacks which inhibit their effectiveness. These include the time of year they are administered, the type of questions asked, and the time it takes for schools to receive the test results.

"Equal Opportunity Employer"

It is the policy of the Shanksville-Stonycreek School District not to discriminate in employment or program services for reasons of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, or handicapping condition.



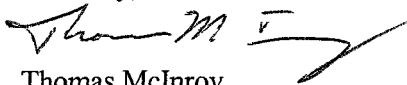
The proposed legislation for the Graduation Competency Assessments (GCA) will provide an important tool that educators can use to help ensure that our children will be competitive in a global economy. Currently, at the Shanksville-Stonycreek School District, our students spend several hours a year taking standardized tests. These exams are administered mid-school year, which presents a loss of continuity of the curriculum and high anxiety levels for students as well as educators.

The GCA's will provide flexibility in helping to determine students' proficiency in state academic standards in areas including reading, writing, mathematics, science and technology, and ecology. Educators will be able to administer the PSSA's as well as other locally administered criterion referenced assessments in 11th or 12th grade for retesting.

The Shanksville-Stonycreek School District's students will greatly benefit from the change in the Chapter 4 Regulations as it relates to GCA's. Parents have entrusted our school district to prepare our children for the next stage in their life upon graduation. Students need a base knowledge comprised of superior academic rigor to enable them to be competitive in the global economy. The diploma they receive at graduation should represent a triumph of individual student achievement as it relates to academic success. The GCA's will provide teachers with the information necessary to help ensure student success upon graduation.

High school education provides the base necessary for our children to be lifelong learners. As Superintendent of the Shanksville-Stonycreek School District, I am pleased with the proposed changes of the Chapter 4 regulations. It is my sincerest hope that these proposed changes will provide educators with the tools necessary to help our students be successful in their career of choice.

Sincerely,



Thomas McInroy

Superintendent

Shanksville-Stonycreek School District

PUBLIC HEARING ON HIGH SCHOOL REFORM
February 19, 2009

Members of the State Board of Education, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the issue of high school reform.

High school reform, more specifically the graduation competency assessments, has become a great concern to high school teachers and administrators. My testimony today will focus on the current structure of high schools heavily influenced by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment and other factors as I perceive them as a high school administrator for over a decade.

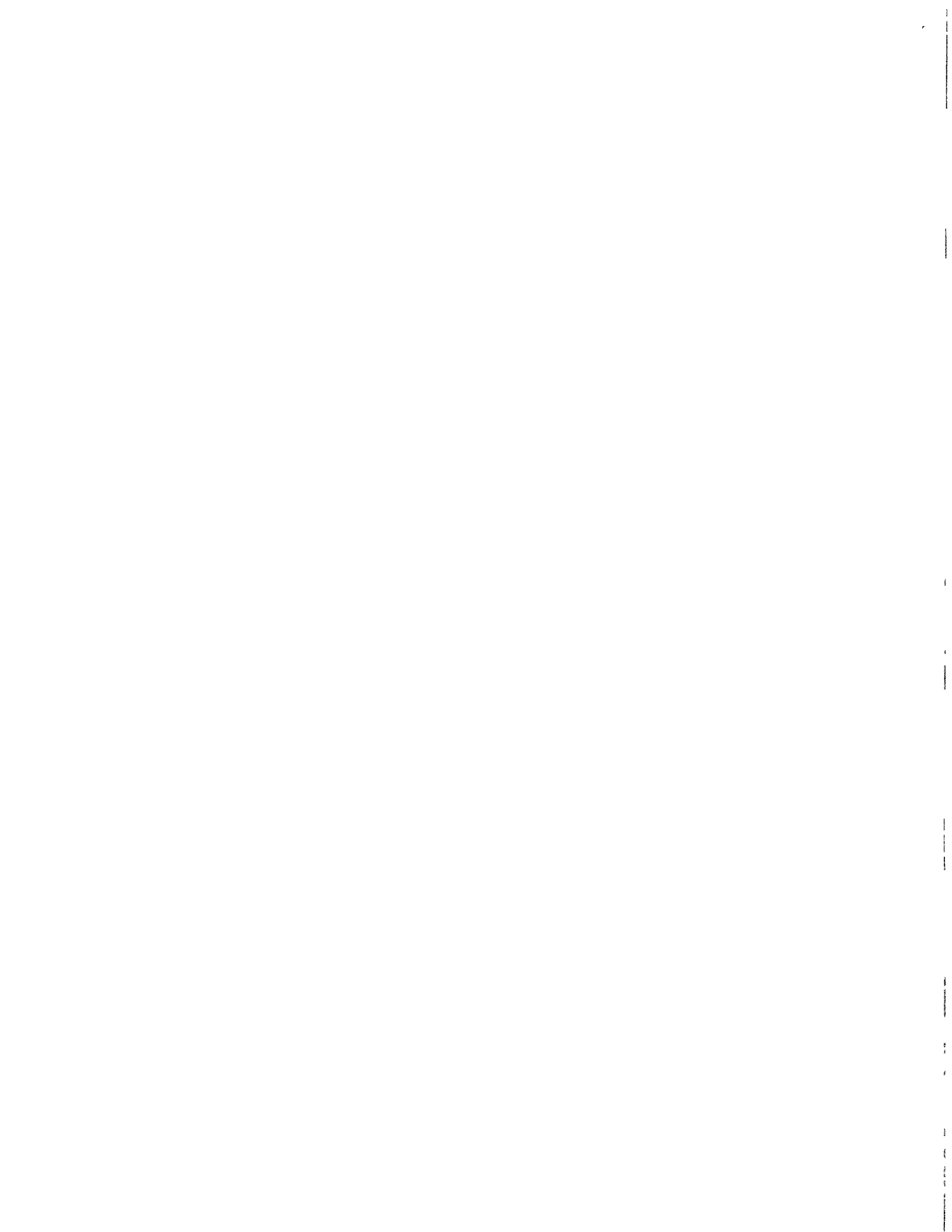
The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment has influenced the structure of curriculum and assessment in school districts to a large degree. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment does not, however, preclude the movement of students defined as basic or below basic to the next grade. Parents and students may infer from this that it is not important to excel on these tests. Based on the current structure of PSSA results, there is no sense of urgency for students or their families until it is virtually too late.

Last week, the Governor of West Virginia proposed the retention of third and eighth graders that are not proficient on their state system of school assessment. I have never been a proponent of retention. With that said, if our state board of education enacts the graduation competency assessment at the high school level, students that have been permitted to progress through school systems unchecked by PSSA exams may now find themselves at a dead end.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education recognizes growth in students as an acceptable means of assessing school performance. Yet, this same opportunity will not be afforded to students at a time when they are anticipating their departure into their adult lives. The pressure this board is proposing to place on high school students, high school teachers, and high school administrators, in the name of educational accountability, is unfair considering you are not creating the same level of accountability at other levels.

Curriculum development must also be a major consideration when discussing the graduation competency assessments. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment has had a strong influence on the curriculum decisions of public schools during the last decade. A major adjustment has been made in many districts regarding their delivery of math instruction.

An integrated philosophy of math instruction has been adopted to provide students with the content knowledge to perform well on the eleventh grade math assessment. I now read that the graduation competency assessments in math will be in Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry as individual courses. To my knowledge, there has not been notification that schools will be released from the PSSA testing requirement at the high school level. That raises the question: What should the high school math curriculum focus be?



Integrated to meet the PSSA or isolated math courses to meet the graduation competency assessment?

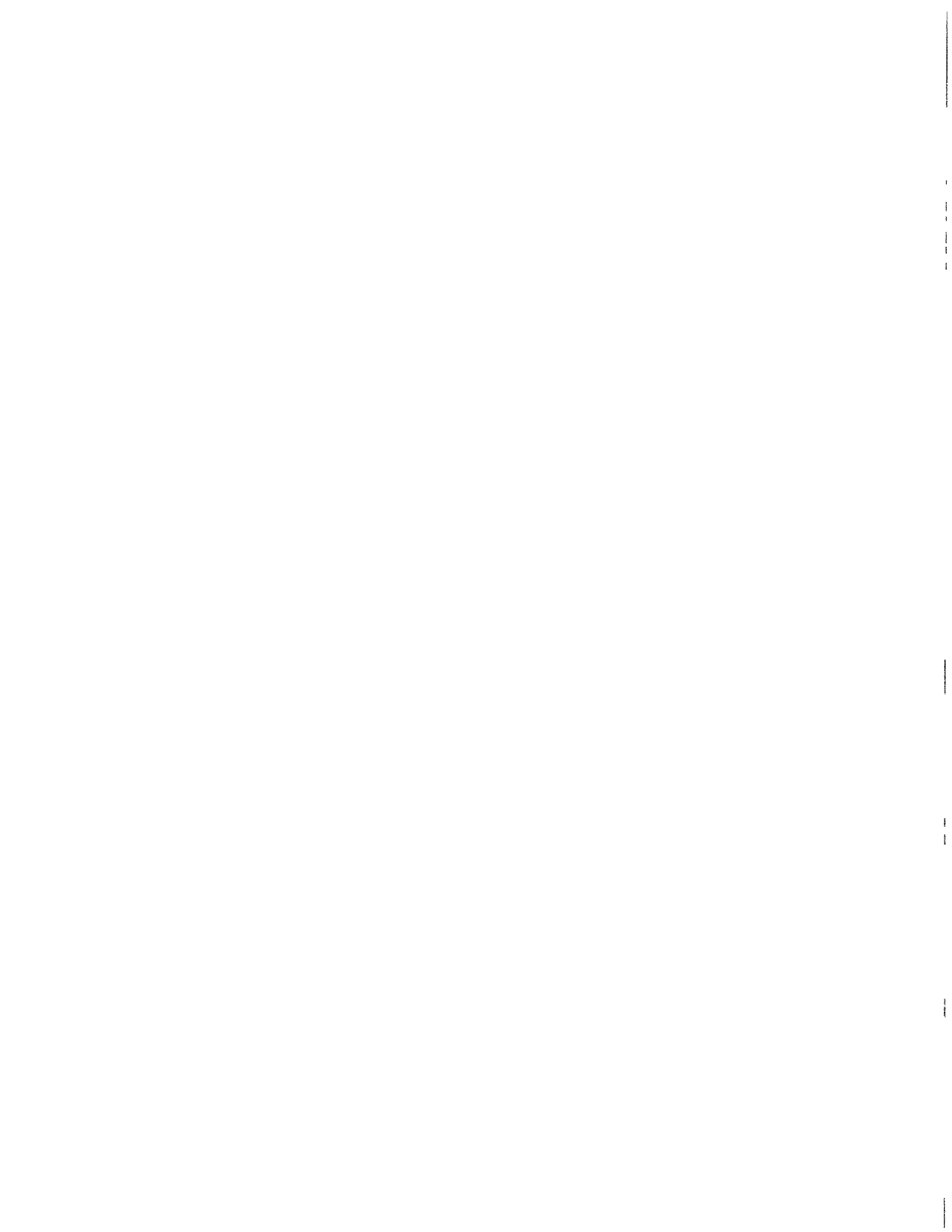
The GCA proposal sets 2014 as the target date to implement these requirements. Curriculum changes would need to be enacted to meet students' needs by September 2010. The potential for budgetary constraint also exists regarding these changes. The curriculum implications are large and require far more planning and thought to give students a legitimate chance to succeed.

I would also pose this question: Do all students need to reach the same proficiency in subjects such as math and science? All students reach an end to their math competency at some point. To say that all individuals need an advanced degree in math to be successful in the world of work is simply not accurate. Consider how many individuals in the room today use Algebra II concepts in their work life. If we asked for a show of hands, we might be surprised to see how few do. Yet a case is being made that this is a mandate for graduation. Would we not be better served to encourage students to make certain that their future vocational interests align with their courses in the math and science fields? The state department of education is essentially dictating a state wide curriculum for all students when they set certain courses that must be assessed by the graduation competency assessment. This initiative will greatly limit opportunity for students in vocational programs across the state. They will need to remain in their home schools simply to attempt to pass a state mandated test with little to no correlation to their current vocational programs.

In the initial document from Secretary Zahorchak's office, a fact verses fiction page was included. The first fictional point addressed was the issue of high stakes testing. The document counters the idea the graduation competency assessments are not high stakes tests because students may take the assessments repeatedly. While the ability to retake the test may help in some cases, the fact remains that the test is an all or nothing proposition. Counter to this type of assessment is a growing body of knowledge supporting diverse types of authentic assessment. The graduation project would be an example of such an effort.

I believe most individuals in this room today can think of a person or persons that are academically capable, but struggle on traditional types of assessments. The graduation competency assessment, based on time and funding, must be a traditional type of assessment. There will be students that will fail to progress toward a diploma simply because they are not strong test takers. This is precisely why schools across the commonwealth are encouraging teachers to use multiple types of instruction and assessment. A single graduation competency assessment is contrary to this type of thinking.

The effort to raise student achievement is certainly laudable by all involved, but will the graduation competency assessments truly increase student achievement throughout the commonwealth? My experience in public schools leads me to believe that academically



advanced students are not challenged by these tests. This is due to the rigorous standards our schools have developed for advanced and honors courses.

Likewise, I am not convinced standardized assessments necessarily challenge our students to do their best. A recent review of our individual writing scores brought me to this conclusion. I was surprised to learn some of our strongest students were only proficient. Upon further inquiry, I discovered our students know the standards to become advanced in their evaluation. They are unwilling to take the risk to achieve a higher rating for fear of making a mistake. Thus, the test may actually motivate students to take the safe course, achieve a lower rating, and be able to graduate.

I believe it is also important to note that students with IEPs will graduate no matter what their scores are on the graduation competency assessments. The Department of Education already recognizes this fact. Ironically, many students with IEPs don't score well on the PSSA exams because they are usually denied the daily accommodations they are required to receive by federal law in their regular classes.

If the academically advanced students and students with IEPs will graduate, then who is adversely affected by the graduation competency assessment proposal? The answer to this question is quite important as it has far reaching implications.

Students that struggle on standardized tests are often non-traditional learners. They may gravitate to hands on learning environments. They don't always enjoy the rigor of the traditional math or science program. Yet many of these students flourish in vocational programs or other programs of a similar nature. My greatest fear regarding the graduation competency assessment proposal is that the non-traditional learners will see these assessments as a barrier they cannot overcome. I fear that we will see major increases in drop out rates.

I observed a student who was classified mentally retarded make a graduation project presentation. His verbal presentation was outstanding, while he struggled to write his paper. Based on his oral presentation, he passed the graduation project. I can assure you this student would not pass the graduation competency assessments.

The final concern I raise today is to draw attention to the Department of Education's recent vigilance regarding local assessments. In eleven years as a high school administrator, I have not seen this type of effort to determine district approaches to local assessments as proscribed by Chapter IV. We were required to submit, in writing, our approach to the local assessment of seniors not yet proficient. A follow-up phone call was made from PDE to clarify statements. The questions asked were pointed and the intent was clear. There is no local discretion any longer. The graduation competency assessment proposal makes clear that any local assessments must pass muster with independent evaluators. I have no way to know what that means specifically, but generally it tells me that the local district's discretion is a thing of the past. When school districts have no capacity to select methods of assessment to provide their students the best possible means of achieving proficiency, truly these assessments are high stakes. In

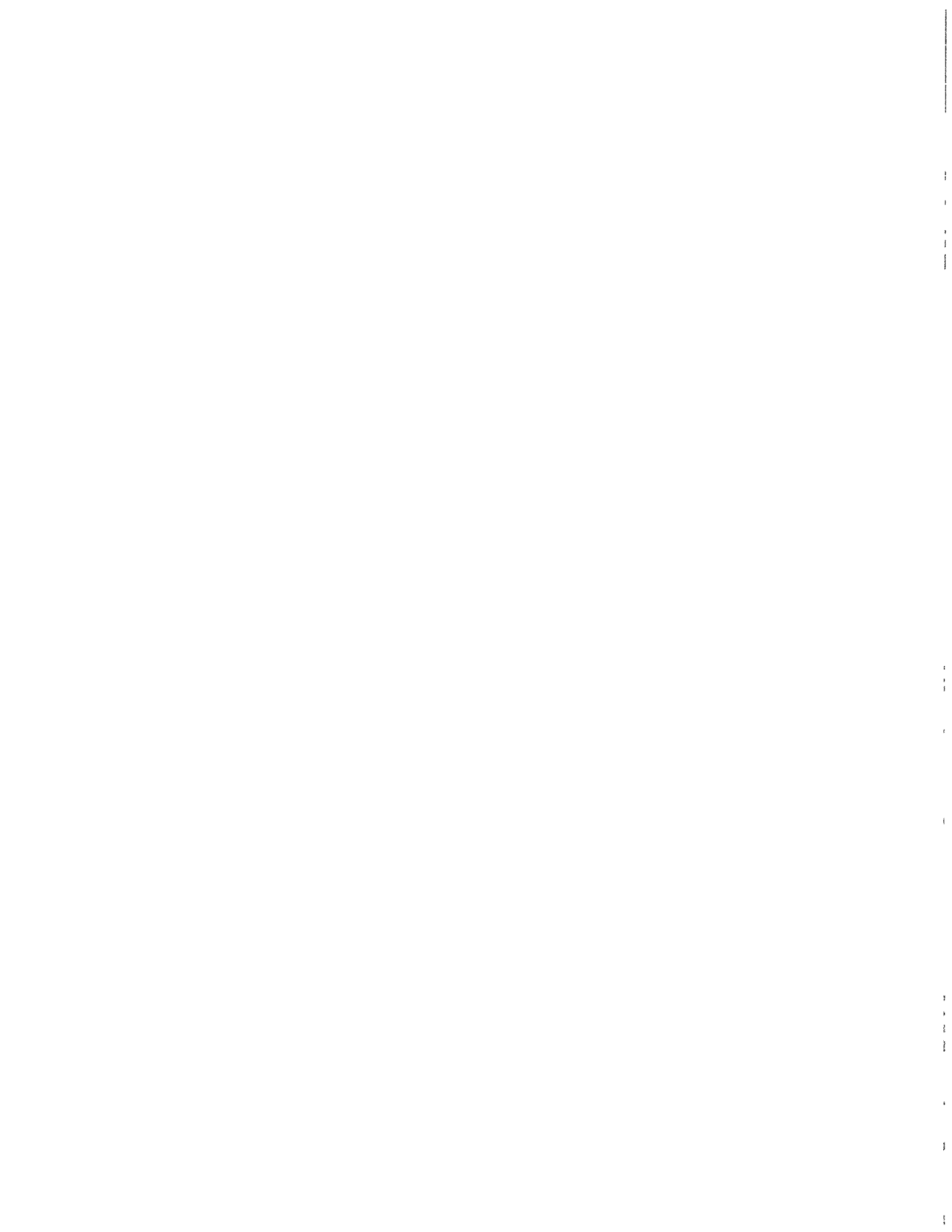


the high stakes world of the graduation competency assessments, I fear students have much to lose.

Thank you again for this opportunity and for your continuing commitment to public education.

Respectfully submitted,

George Lammay
Bentworth High School Principal
glammay@bentworth.k12.pa.us
75 Bearcat Drive
Bentleyville, PA 15314



Testimony of Rick G. Huffman

Superintendent of Schools, Windber Area School District

Pennsylvania State Board of Education

February 19, 2009

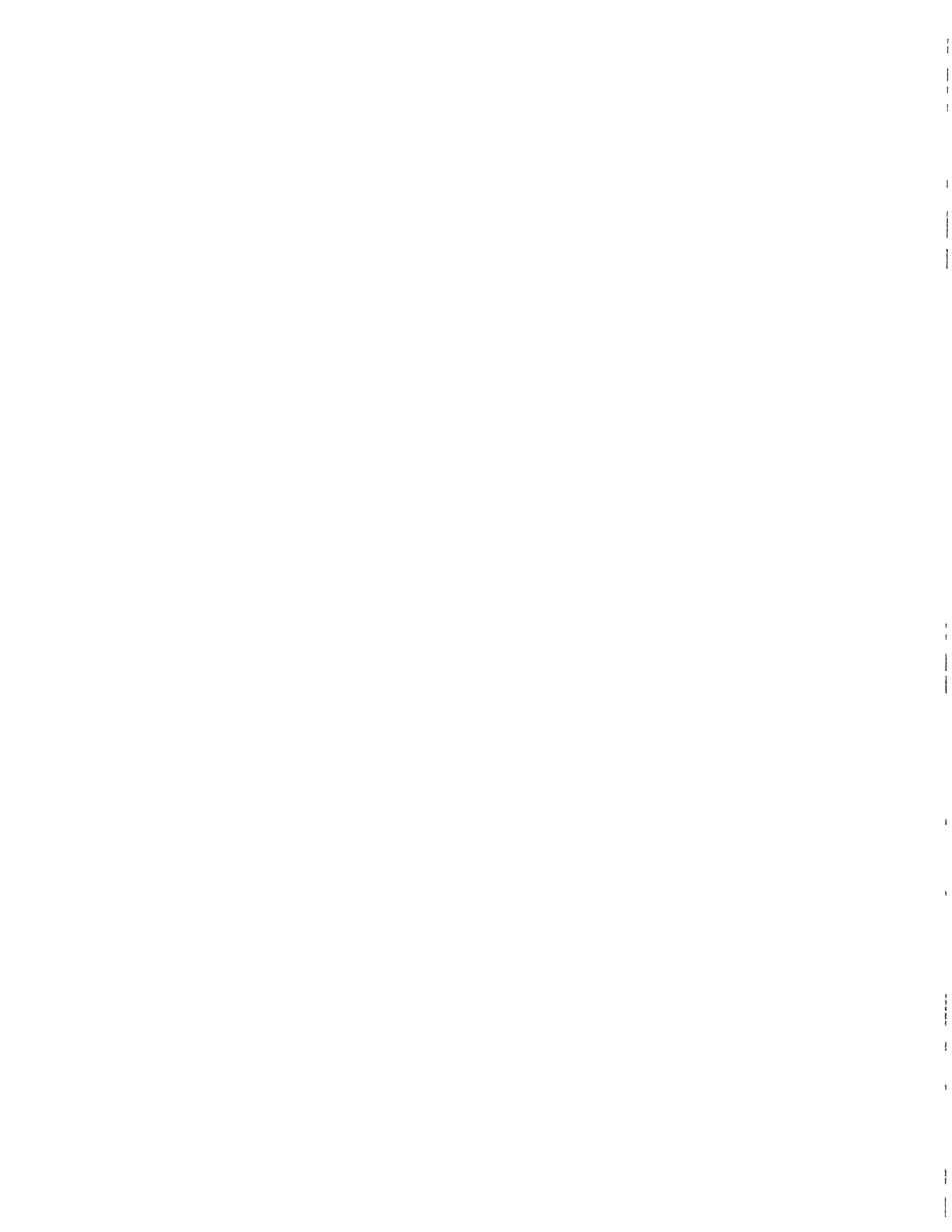
Dear Board Members,

I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Board, the Department of Education, the Legislature and the Governor for their commitment to making our educational system the very best that it can be for Pennsylvania's great natural resource – our children. As an educator with experience at the elementary, middle and high school levels and as a father, it is heartening to see that Pennsylvania gets it. Pennsylvania understands that mediocrity is unacceptable when it comes to the quality of the educational experiences that we provide to our children. Furthermore, I, specifically, appreciate your reflections on this matter. It is a difficult task to separate the emotional reaction to change from any effort toward progress. The bridge between the perception points is often not easily crossed, but the journey toward consensus will be invaluable.

This morning I would like to focus my comments on the adjustments to Pennsylvania's system to measuring student progress. We all agree that no child in Pennsylvania deserves an ordinary effort. We know in our hearts that every child is

will allow classroom teachers, student and administrators to apply “real time’ data analysis and instructional adjustment. The flexibility afforded by multiple assessment points and the ability to retest will also reduce the anxiety associated with the current system. As with any improvement, there will be implementation challenges but I see this as opportunity for growth. I am sure that the department will follow an inclusive development model and invite input from classroom instructors and administrative as they develop the GCAs.

To close, I again would like to express my gratitude for all of your efforts. Education is an arena where the status quo is not an option. It is the collective effort to advance our culture. As we move students toward being calculators, creators, collaborators and communicators, we need to be mindful that it requires a collaborative communal effort. This is the right time and right place for the Graduation Competency Assessments to become an option for Pennsylvania educators and students.



Comments of Dr. Thomas Hajzus
Principal of Peters Township High School
Before the State Board Of Education
On Proposed Changes to the State High School Graduation Requirements
As Provided in Chapter 14 (Academic Standards and Assessment)
February 19, 2009

1. Good morning, My name is Dr. Thomas Hajzus. I've worked in public school education for over 30 years. I've been a practicing administrator for nearly 26 years. I share this with you so it's clear that I speak from great depth and experience in relation to the implementation of state requirements and initiatives.
2. I'm here today to speak in favor of the proposed changes to the state high school graduation requirements, as provided in Chapter 4 (Academic Standards and Assessment). Specifically, I'm here in support of the proposed Graduation Competency Assessments (GCA).
3. I believe that the State Board of Education has acted responsibly as readings support that they have, or are addressing, concerns such as the validity and reliability of the GCA, staff development of teachers, involvement of teachers in assessment construction, remediation for students, incorporation of multiple opportunities for students to take the GCA, and provisions in IEP's for students with disabilities. This care demonstrates the seriousness with which this Board has approached the task of offering an added tool for individual districts to design their graduation assessment packages.
4. I believe very clear measures have been taken to preserve local control when considering the GCA and Chapter 4 requirements. Students will be able to demonstrate that they have knowledge in their core subject areas through an assortment of ways. Preserving this local control and choice makes the entire proposal even more appealing.
5. I believe after extensive reading, that the goal of the GCA is to award every single student a high school diploma, and for that high school diploma to have meaning and worth in the fast-paced, ever-changing world our students will face. Sadly, we have all

seen the international statistics that reveal our graduating seniors skills behind our international competitors in subject areas such as mathematics.

6. I believe that the GCA's encourage local school districts to have access to the same core content. This appears to be done without limiting school districts, like mine, from setting even higher standards.
7. I believe that by raising the graduation assessment bar, our administrators and teachers will respond accordingly by raising their own professional expectations. Higher assessment goals will provide excellent opportunities to move our students toward a more competitive edge nationally and internationally.
8. I believe the GCA's offer an additional consistent and sound solution to inconsistent local assessments throughout the Commonwealth. Consider for a moment how, in many high schools, there are assessment issues with teachers teaching the same course, similar issues with departments not offering the same array of assessment strategies, and schools not having a standardized platform for the measurement of learning. The GCA's take us one step closer to resolving these problems. The GCA's will provide a much needed road map for successfully overcoming inherent obstacles in the appraisal of student performance.
9. I believe the GCA's provide another valuable "choice" to be used as part of a graduation assessment repertoire. All of these are important and create a mechanism for accountability in delivering the tested component of the curricula. In this sense, the GCA's offer an outstanding means to further identify curricular areas in need of change or improvement and/or validate successful, positive, thriving practices.
10. If used appropriately, I believe the GCA's will provide local districts the ability to monitor individual courses, classrooms and schools over time. Utilizing longitudinal data in a positive proactive manner the GCA outcomes may promote legitimate change in ancillary corners not intended as the primary focus. By applying the same assessments over time, a pictogram of what is happening within individual courses, classrooms and schools appears to be a reality. This permits accountability to become more refined. If approached properly, the accountability of classrooms and schools will be nothing but a positive by-product of the GCA. I touch on this topic lightly as discussions about accountability tend to bring with them a sense of panic and uneasiness. However, if we're to move into the 21st Century with the thrust and burst we'll need, no page can be left unturned.

11. I believe the implementation of the proposed GCA will be one step towards a bigger, brighter future for education in Pennsylvania. Eventually, we must consider additional assessment options at all levels and not just at the high school level. I see the GCA as an excellent starting point for assessment considerations for students in grades K-8. We cannot continue to have discussions around drop-out rates and other negative issues facing urban schools or rural schools and leave two-thirds of the students in the Commonwealth out of the picture. If we do, young students will continue developing at-risk academic behaviors before they even get to high school. The GCA template has the potential to be formatted to meet the challenges of grades K-8 in improving assessments which directly impacts teaching, learning and life during and after high school.
12. I believe that references to the GCA's as high stakes testing is a distortion to cause alarm and cloud reality. If one would consider the final examinations given every year across the Commonwealth it's more realistic to declare that those finals represent high stakes testing to a much higher degree than do the GCA's. Every year many who take final examinations need a passing grade on this "single test" in order to get their high school diplomas. In my opinion, final examinations are high stakes testing. Given the additional option of offering the GCA's in their place makes sense and is good for students.
13. I believe that the GCA's will support more standardization in reporting individual student data. They also appear to offer a more in-depth assessment of knowledge in each subject area compared to the broader design of the PSSA. Greater standardization and more depth can only help those at the grassroots level when considering career, college and other life options. Furthermore, those who have tried to place students into courses or programs from other districts within the Commonwealth understand the difficulties. The GCA option offers an excellent mechanism to make this task much easier and more germane to the student. The GCA will remove barriers between school districts and offer more uniform points of reference and a universal assessment language. This continuity will establish a tremendous benefit for students faced with the challenges of moving to new high schools. In my opinion, if just this one point holds true then we have indeed done something wonderful and special for the students throughout the Commonwealth.
14. In 1990 we in Peters Township had a dream. We dreamed of transforming our high school, just another high school in the Commonwealth, to something special. We embarked on a journey that was not easy. The debates were heated at times. Most recently we have taken on the matter of more stringent graduation requirements. Our efforts over the years have been very fruitful as we have been chosen by MSNBC as one of the "Best of the Best" 1000 high schools in the United States, while locally the

Pittsburgh Business Times has ranked our high school as high as the third best in Western Pennsylvania. I see the GCA as falling within the same pattern that transformed our high school from just another high school to one of the most competitive within the state and across the nation.

I say to the powers that be to push on and to push us on.

I am convinced that we need initiatives like the Graduation Competency Assessments if we are going to improve education across the state of Pennsylvania.

15. Thank you so much for allowing me to address this assembly today and I wish you great fortune in this exciting proposal. I am prepared to take any questions at this time.

February 19, 2009

Testimony Statement

Good morning, my name is Frank W. Cooper, Jr.; I am the Vice President and Chief Technical Officer for Concurrent Technologies Corporation (*CTC*), a not-for-profit organization with approximately 50 offices throughout the United States focusing on providing technical solutions to the United States Government. Our primary corporate office is in Johnstown, Pennsylvania where we employ approximately 800 personnel.

I welcome the opportunity to talk to you today about what we perceive as the need for educated personnel coming out of high school and especially for those going on to college or supporting local business in a technical role. As a Technical Professional Services Organization, *CTC* primarily employs personnel who have a college degree; however we have a very strong intern program where we hire interns to supplement our professional staff and to gain experience as they progress through their educational activities. When we hire interns, some of these being at the college freshmen or in some cases at the high school senior level, we look for those that have a well-rounded education and can express their thoughts in a clear and concise manner. We also look for those that have the basic understanding of mathematics, science and especially good communication skills, both written and oral.

It has been my experience over the last 20 years of recruiting in Pennsylvania, that the quality and capability of the average high school student has decreased with respect to basic understanding of math, science, writing and grammar skills. It is critical that the students coming out of high school have a good understanding of basic mathematics at least through first-year algebra and it is absolutely imperative, no matter where they fit within our business structure, that they can communicate in a clear and concise manner. We also believe that it is critical to reinvigorate the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics curriculum in our high schools as the nation continues to fall behind in this area compared to our foreign competitors, and without this basic capability, the ability to correct for issues of the past will not be possible with the new employees entering the workforce.

One of the questions I have been asked to address, is what would the reforms that are being considered mean to our business or our employees and I would like to comment that if we must assure that students coming out of high school are properly educated, and I mean educated not trained, and understand the basics of mathematics, basic science and have good oral and written communication skills, then we will continue to enhance the overall viability and productivity of the nation. I believe that it is critical that our secondary schools provide a basic minimum educational basis for all students, not just those going on to college, so that they can compete in a world where the world-wide competition is significantly more attuned to educational practices than we appear to be in U.S.

I have found that a majority of the college interns that I employ have a weakness when it comes to communicating both orally and especially in written prose. I must correct

February 19, 2009

grammar, sentence structure and context continuously on papers that are drafted by my interns so that their thoughts come across in a clear concise manner. It is obvious to me, in reviewing the work of numerous interns, that something has been missed in regard to reading comprehension, syntax and writing skills at the high school level. In a similar manner, I find that those students that I am trying to use in a technical vain lack the basic understanding of the principles of mathematics versus the rote application of mathematical formulas. This lack of the basic understanding in both mathematics and science puts them at a disadvantage, in my mind, compared to students who I've had participate as interns from foreign countries.

I firmly believe that testing is a way to determine what people have learned, however I am opposed to teaching and focusing on teaching methods just to make students capable of passing a given exam. It is by having a broad breadth of knowledge and understanding the fundamental basics of writing skills, mathematics and science that students have the capability to become more productive for industry. As a business person, I expect to hire students coming out of high school as interns that have good basic skills, but more importantly an understanding of the basis for these skills and the ability to continue to learn and grow in their business assignments.

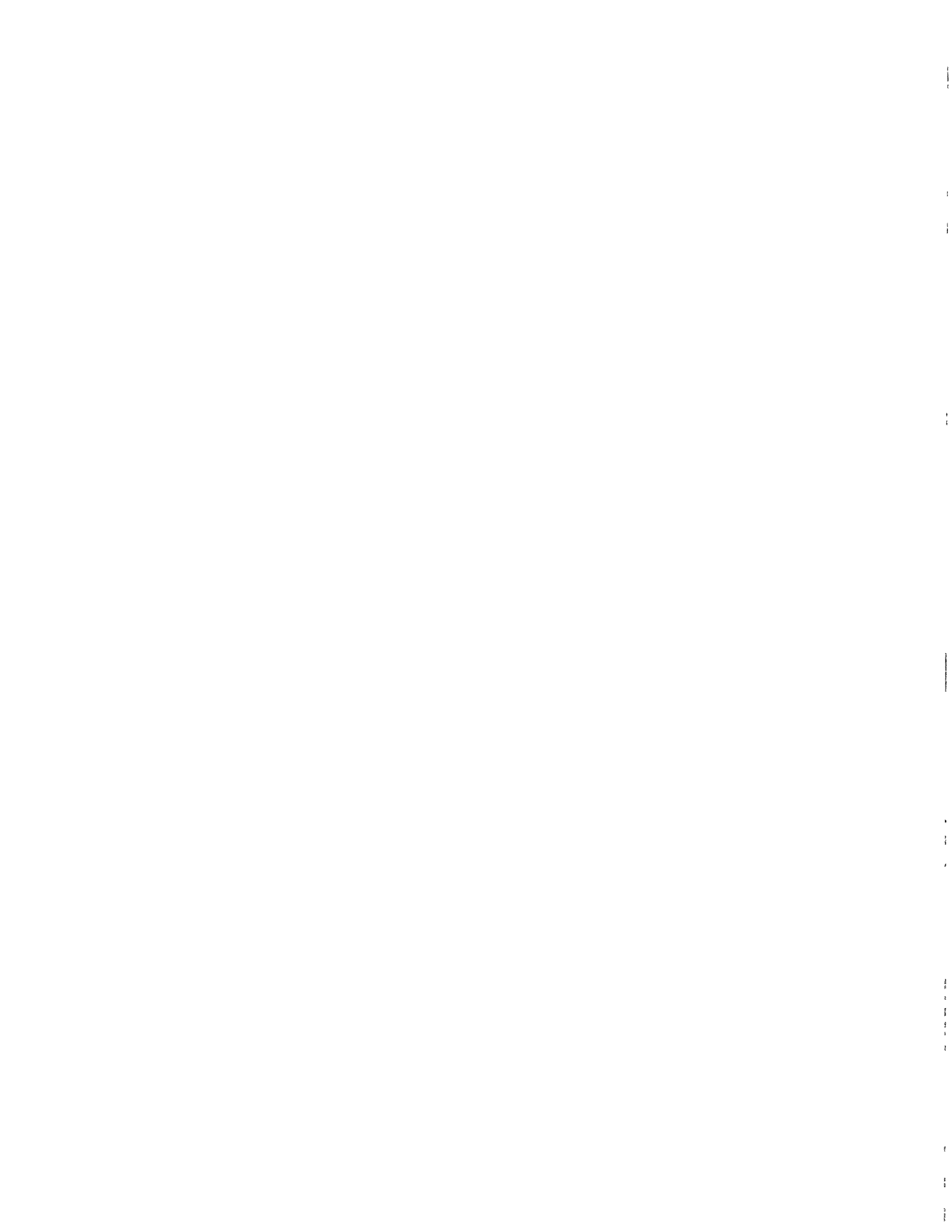
In order to assure that we have the workforce needed to move this nation forward in the future, we must reinvigorate our emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics and this needs to be done both in the primary grades and reinforced throughout high school. It was very disheartening to read a recent article which indicated that less than 10% of the current secondary school students, polled in a national survey, want to go into science and engineering versus becoming lawyers, rock stars or models. I think this says something for the educational basis and norms of this nation and as a trend that will continue to lead us down the path towards a second-class nation when compared to other nations where more than 40% to 50% of the students desire to move into the highly technical arenas. I applaud the Department of Education for considering reforms with regard to training and I firmly support enhancing the educational prowess of our graduating high school students whether they go directly into a trade business or on to college. Even those going into trade schools still need to have the basis of mathematics, science, technology and good communication skills to succeed in today's high paced environment.

I have always been asked what about those students that don't go on to college and I would offer the suggestion that even though a student is not going on to college that they still need to have the basics of mathematics, if not for anything else other than balancing their checkbooks and participating in a modern society, and they also need the ability to communicate in a clear and concise manner. While some of them may not be challenged with writing extensively, they still need to be able to read and understand the written word to do their job no matter what it may be. An example would be a carpenter would still need the great mathematics skills to design and layout staircases, roofs, trusses and other construction details and would have to have the skills to read blueprints, specifications and regulatory rules in order to perform their job in a

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satisfactory manner. A similar statement could be made for the local store clerk or support personnel. One thing that has come to my attention, over the years, is a significant loss of capability from U.S. students as a whole when compared to other foreign nations. An example is the experience gained through the science and technology software challenge where the United States who used to rank number one, two and three for teams submitted to work in this, now are in the bottom, never rank higher than tenth and we continue to slip each year. I believe this is a result of the lack of focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics skills in our secondary schools.

Frank Cooper



Testimony of Sandra Danoff

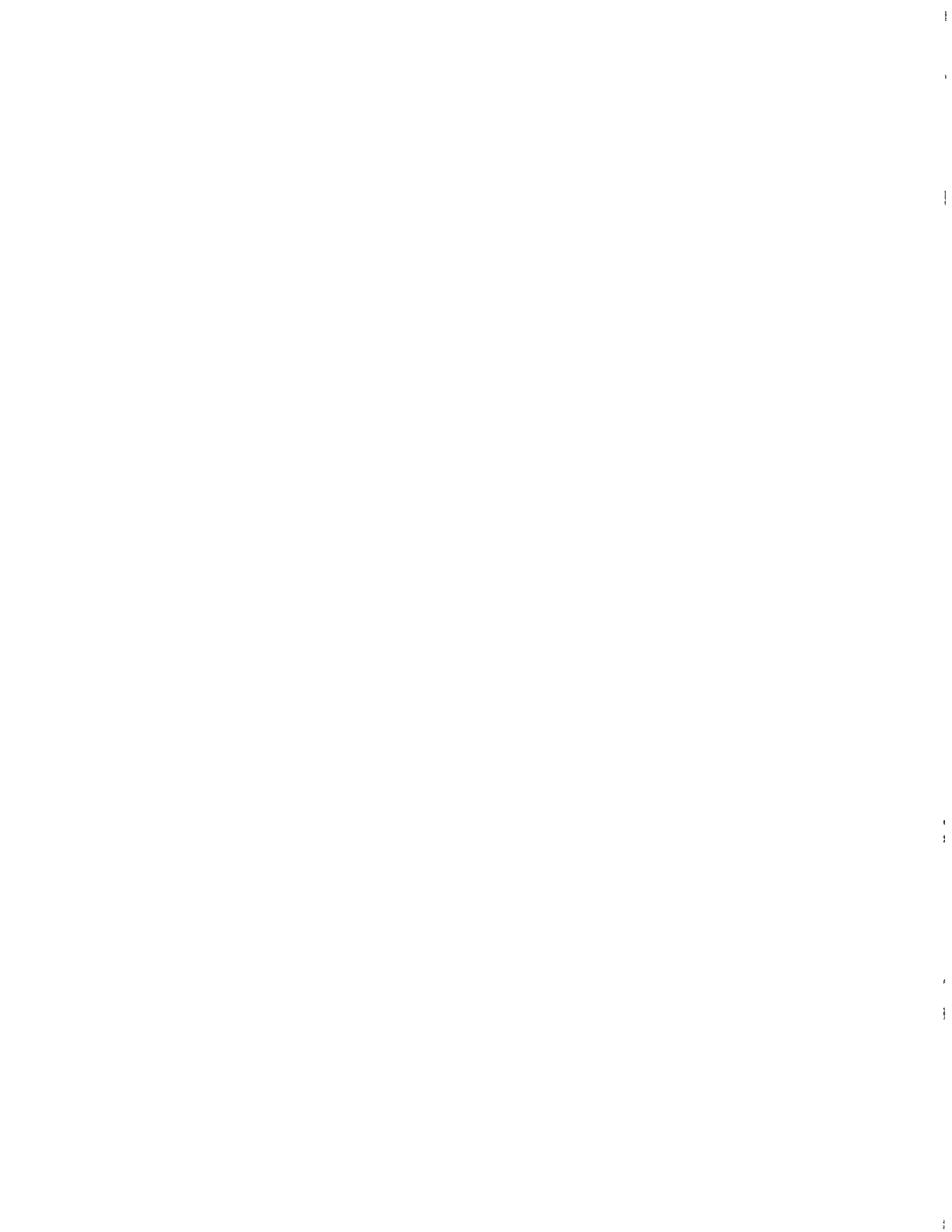
Senior Vice President, UPMC and Chief Communications Officer

Good afternoon, my name is Sandra Danoff and I am a Senior Vice President at UPMC where I lead the strategic research and communications functions. Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments today.

First I would like to thank the State Department of Education and Governor Rendell's administration for their ongoing commitment to enhancing education in Pennsylvania. This is of vital interest to all of us -- community members, parents, and employers alike -- as a community imperative and as a factor in regional business competitiveness.

I am here today, not as an expert in education reform, but rather to provide some insight into the employer perspective on raising educational standards and hard-wiring the system for consistency in demonstrating these standards. Some high school graduates come to us well prepared and ready to enter the work force or to go on to post-secondary education programs, but others with the same diploma do not.

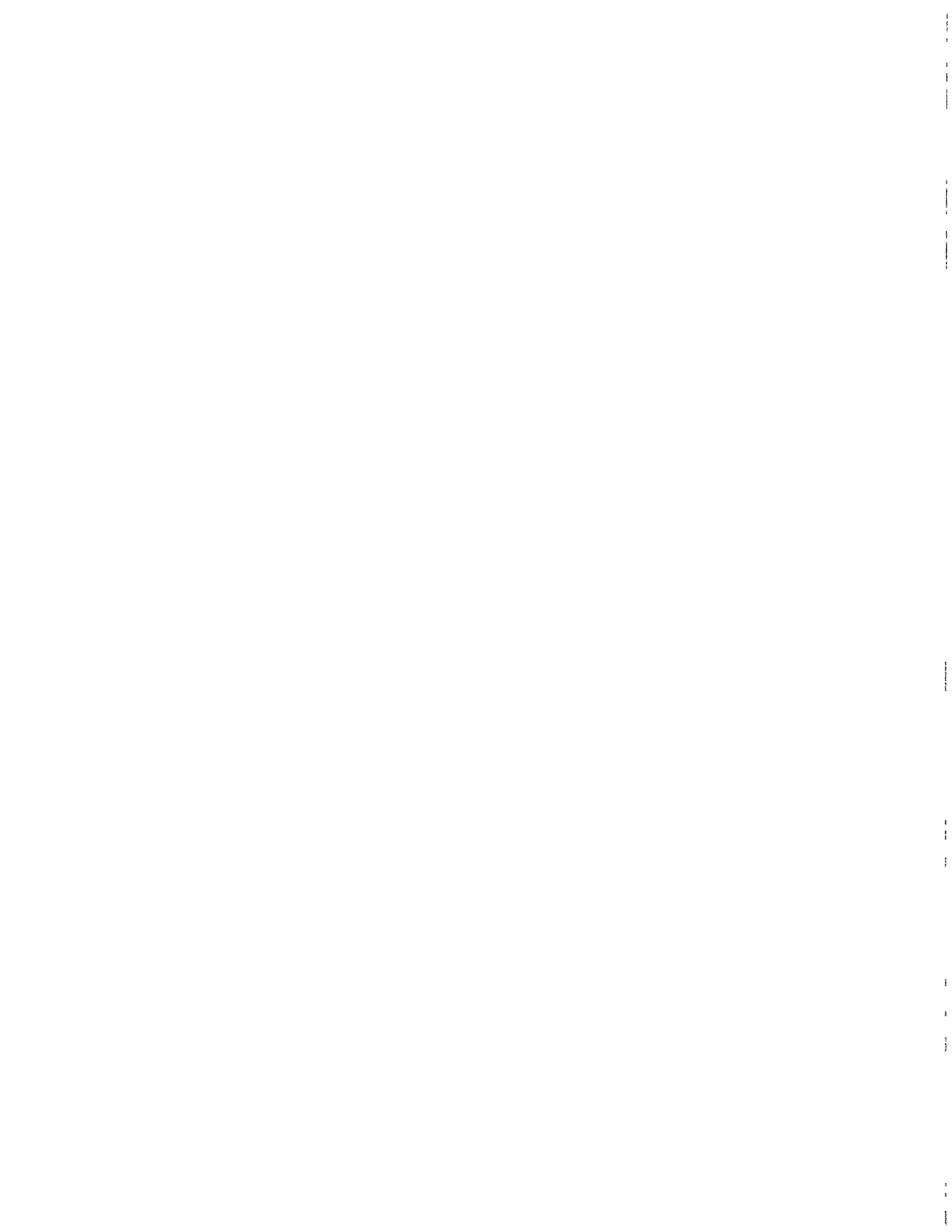
UPMC is a global health enterprise headquartered in Pittsburgh. We employ about 50,000 people. UPMC typically hires about 6,000 people annually (although in the current economic climate the number will be lower this year.) A skilled, well-educated workforce is critical to our success.



The sad truth is, our experience indicates that a Pennsylvania high school diploma does not necessarily imply that the individual is academically prepared to meet our entry-level employment requirements. About 7,000 of our employees are in positions that require only a high school diploma and we hire between 1,500 and 3,000 people at this level annually. Between 25% and 30% of these workers leave within the first year of employment, and the cost of this turnover is estimated to be between \$20 million and \$30 million annually. While there are many reasons for the turnover, one common theme is that they find the job too hard – in many cases because they lack the basic math and reading skills to function in the workplace. Beyond the economic cost, from a patient care perspective, the turnover is costly in terms of patient satisfaction and quality of care.

As an organization, we are deeply committed to developing a strong work force. We offer nursing schools and technical education within UPMC and work with many of the areas outstanding educational institutions and training centers to fashion programs to meet emerging needs. Our work with the Pittsburgh Promise further underscores this commitment to develop a workforce that can transform health care through the pursuit of excellence. UPMC was the lead donor in the Pittsburgh Promise, with a commitment of up to \$100 million to provide support for post-secondary education for Pittsburgh Public School graduates.

However, it is unfortunate, but many students who pursue this post-secondary education are inadequately prepared. Recent data released by the Secretary of Education demonstrated that 33% of students with a Pennsylvania high school diploma are



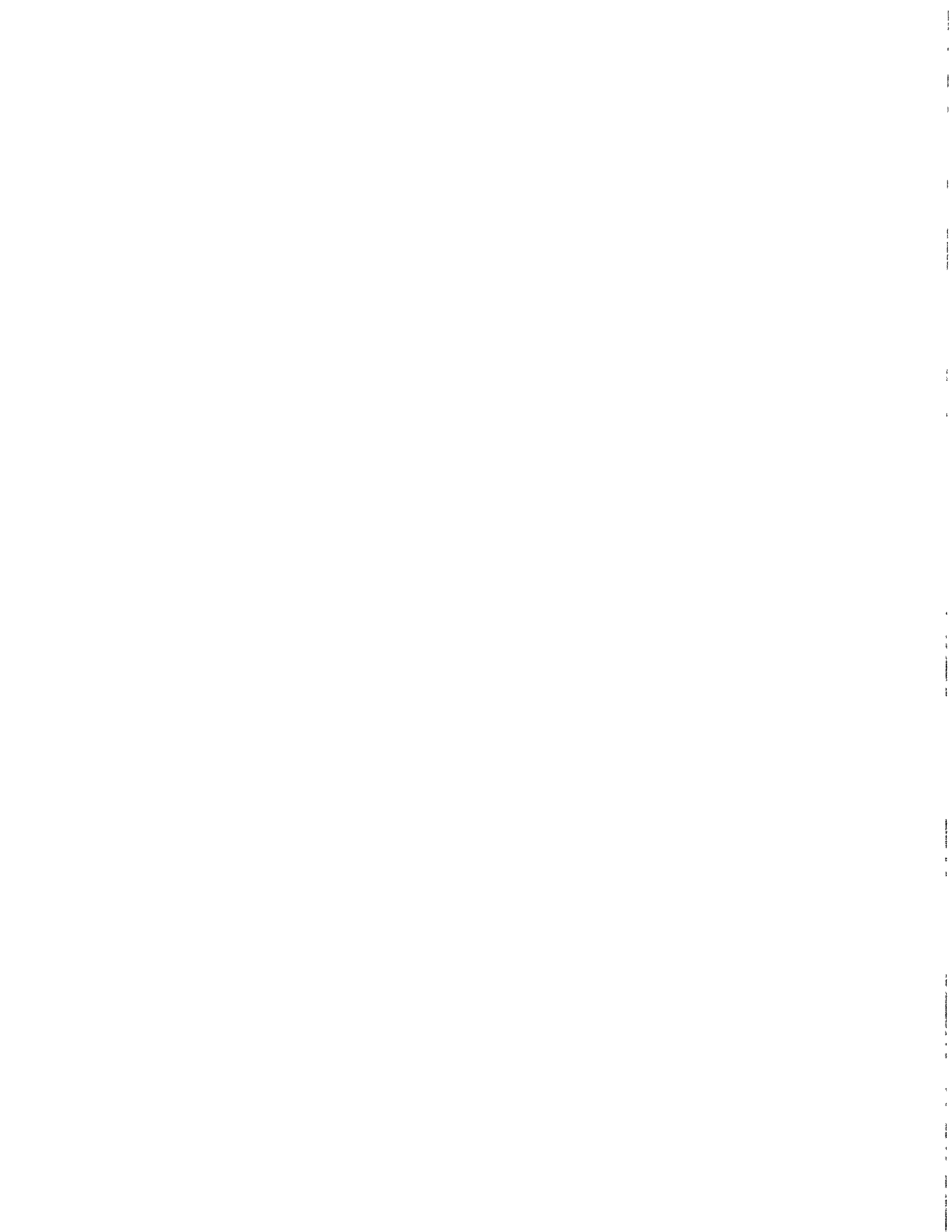
inadequately prepared for entry level college math and English and require remedial education.

In designing the Pittsburgh Promise, the Pittsburgh Public Schools encouraged us to build in some consideration of implementation of graduation competency assessments, and if these exams are implemented, the maximum scholarship award will double from \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually.

Governor Rendell, the Department of Education and the State Board have set forth a comprehensive and impressive plan for reforming Pennsylvania's high schools. At the heart of the initiative is an effort to bring more rigor and consistency to academic expectations at the high school level, including a college- and career-ready curriculum for every student, as well as stronger consistently defined high school graduation requirements.

These reforms will benefit UPMC, the region's other employers and ultimately the economy, in a number of ways:

- They will enable us to build and retain a stronger work force.
- They will provide the foundation necessary for the children of our employees to be successful in the workplace and in academic pursuits.



- It will help UPMC, this region and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be competitive in a national and global economy, which increasingly rests on the education and capabilities of the workforce.

Today as the internet makes geographic boundaries increasingly irrelevant, the need to administer stringent graduation competency requirements is more urgent than ever. The demand for accountability by the taxpaying public must be addressed now, and we thank the Department of Education for taking on this important challenge.

