



Northampton Area School District  
District Administration Office  
Office of the Superintendent of Schools

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

February 21, 2008

Independent Regulatory Review Commission  
333 Market Street  
14th Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find the resolution opposing proposed high school graduation competency assessments adopted by the Board of Directors of the Northampton Area School District at its meeting on February 11, 2008.

Sincerely,

Linda J. Firestone, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

LJF/pb

encl.

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION COMPETENCY  
ASSESSMENTS BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
NORTHAMPTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has approved a proposal to revise the current high school graduation requirements under the Chapter 4 regulations to require students to pass a series of standardized high stakes Graduation Competency Assessments in order to get a diploma; and

**WHEREAS**, these new requirements and exams will be the same for all students, whether they are taking college prep or vocational courses, are English language learners or participating in individualized programs, and all students effectively will be required to take the same courses in order to pass this new battery of state tests; and

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 4 currently allows districts to use either the PSSA *or* rigorous local assessments for their students to demonstrate proficiency of the state academic standards; and it is misleading and incorrect to make the assumption that because students demonstrate their achievements on local assessments rather than the PSSA that there is a disconnect between proficiency and graduation; and

**WHEREAS**, although the GCA proposal permits schools to use a local assessment option, it establishes numerous limitations, including the elimination of the ability to use various assessment strategies now available to local entities and requires local tests to be closely modeled to the GCAs; and

**WHEREAS**, decades of research shows many reasons why standardized pencil and paper test scores should never be the determining factor in making major decisions about students, and that a diploma should be granted based on the coursework, tests and quizzes, presentations, projects and papers throughout the student's career; and

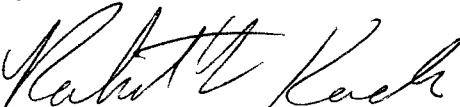
**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis or fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 billion short in helping school districts prepare students to meet the academic standards by 2014; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposal requires school districts to absorb many new costs related to revising curriculum, professional development, test development and validation, test preparation and administration, remediation and other costs. Given the state's funding shortfall and the Act 1 limitations on tax increases, school districts have limited ability to fund these potential new costs.


**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of School Directors of the Northampton Area School District **opposes the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments** and any other regulation or legislation that usurps the authority of local school districts to determine whether their students have earned a high school diploma. This resolution will be shared with the State Board of Education, state legislators including local legislators and members of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

Adopted this 11th day of February, 2008.

Signed,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
School Board President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Board Secretary

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