



WEST MIFFLIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

3000 LEBANON CHURCH ROAD – SUITE 300 • WEST MIFFLIN, PA 15122-2698
(412) 466-9131 • FAX: (412) 466-9260

Patrick A. Risha
Superintendent of Schools

March 12, 2008

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

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

2008 MAR 17 AM 9:52

RECEIVED

To Whom It May Concern:

At the Regular Meeting of the Board of School Directors of February 21, 2008 the Board unanimously approved/ratified the SHASDA Resolution Opposing the Proposed High School Graduation Competency Assessments. Attached is the executed copy of the resolution.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick A. Risha".

Patrick A. Risha
Superintendent of Schools

PAR/es

Attachment

Cc: Dr. Bart Rocco
Dr. Janet Sardon
Mr. Dennis Cmar
Mr. Philip Martell

RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS
BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
West Mifflin 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

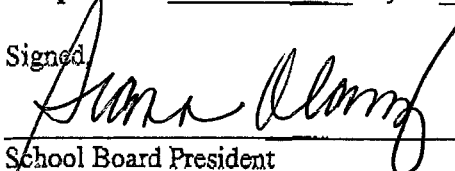
WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis or fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 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.

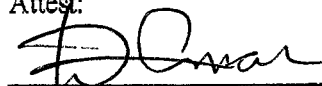
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the board of school directors of the West Mifflin school district opposes the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments and any other regulation or legislation that usurps the authority of local school districts to determine whether 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 21st day of February, 2008.

Signed


School Board President

Attest:


Board Secretary

(seal)



WEST MIFFLIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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(412) 466-9131 • FAX: (412) 466-9260

Patrick A. Risha
Superintendent of Schools

February 27, 2008

Mrs. Mary Ann Kraus
Baldwin-Whitehall School District
4900 Curry Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15236-1817

Dear Mary Ann:

At the Regular Meeting of the Board of School Directors of February 21, 2008 the Board approved/ratified the SHASDA Resolution Opposing the Proposed High School Graduation Competency Assessments. Attached is the executed copy of the resolutions

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick A. Risha".

Patrick A. Risha
Superintendent of Schools

PAR/es

Attachment

cc: Dr. Bart Rocco
Dr. Janet Sardon
Mr. Dennis Cmar
Mr. Philip Martell
Payroll

RECEIVED

2008 MAR 13 AM 11:00

Mr. Risha

RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS
BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
West Mifflin 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

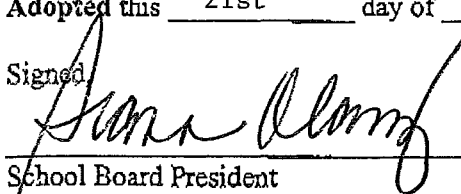
WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis or fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 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.

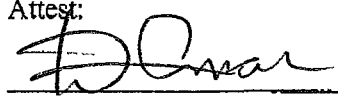
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the board of school directors of the West Mifflin school district opposes the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments and any other regulation or legislation that usurps the authority of local school districts to determine whether 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 21st day of February, 2008.

Signed


School Board President

Attest:


Board Secretary

(seal)