



Clarion Area School District

Dedicated to Excellence!

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April 18 2008

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

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2008 APR 24 AM 9:19
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY REVIEW COMMISSION

To Whom It May Concern:

The Clarion Area School District Board of Education passed the attached resolution in opposition to the proposed high school graduation competency assessments on April 16, 2008.

Sincerely,

George E. White, Ed.D.
Superintendent

enc.

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS**

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**BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
CLARION AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

INDEPENDENT
FILE

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 as a prerequisite to receiving 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, implementation of GCA's will likely make the PSSA inconsequential in the minds of many students, thus making it more difficult for school districts to attain Adequate Yearly Progress as required under the federal No Child Left Behind Act; 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 money diverted to creating and implementing the GCA could be better used to address school funding inequities in our region; 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 Clarion 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 16th day of April, 2008.


Jean M. Freeborn, Board Secretary

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