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June 17, 2008

Via e-mail: in care of jrbuckheit@state.pa.us

Karl Girton
President, State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Mr. Girton:

Quality education is critical to providing qualified candidates for the workforce of the 21st century and informed citizens to preserve our democratic form of government. I am troubled to learn that a lot of our public high school graduates in Pennsylvania are not reading, writing and doing math at grade level by the time they graduate.

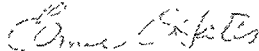
As an employer we now have to provide expensive training in high school level skills to incoming workers. I believe I have the right to expect high school level skills when I hire high school graduates and I'm not getting it now!

I ask you to support the new high school graduation requirements recently proposed by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education. These regulations, if enforced, will help ensure that students coming out of high school will have high school level skills in English, math, science and social studies. The proposal calls for a new final exam type of assessment called graduation competency assessments or GCAs.

I understand that GCAs are like the traditional end of year final exam, pass fail, with an opportunity to retake the parts that a particular student does not pass on the first try. This seems a reasonable way to measure what students should know.

The economic realities of the workplace have changed in the last 20 years and our schools need to change too if America is to remain competitive. It's time administrators, teachers, the teacher's unions start performing! I would hope that we can find a way to hold teachers and administrators accountable for their failure. They are responsible, in large measure, for outcomes and more money won't solve the problem.

Very truly yours,



Elmer D. Gates
Chairman

EDG:edp80

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