

2696

RECEIVED

2008 JUN 30 AM 9:45

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

957

RECEIVED

JUN 18 2008

PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

416 Barberry Drive
Hanover, PA 17331

Mr. Jim Buckheit
Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

This letter is in response to the proposed changes to graduation requirements for high school students as stated by the State Board of Education in the May 27, 2008 edition of The Hanover Evening Sun.

In June 2007, I retired from the teaching profession after thirty years of working with high school students in the areas of Business Education and Social Studies. My double major allowed me to teach in the state of Florida for two years at North Fort Myers Junior-Senior High School in North Fort Myers, Florida and twenty eight years at South Western High School in Hanover, Pennsylvania. Prior to this, I was educated in the public school system of Syracuse, New York. Due to my educational and professional background, I feel very qualified to challenge the idea of every high school student having to pass an exam before they can graduate.

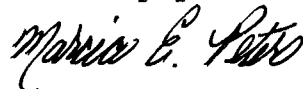
Within every classroom, a teacher finds strengths and weaknesses in each student that make the student a unique individual. A caring and qualified teacher strives to design courses of study to meet each of those individual needs. If an exam is a requirement for graduating from high school, how will it be designed to meet those individual needs in order to be fair for each and every student taking it. It seems to me that teachers will be forced to change their methods of teaching in order to prepare young people to be able to pass the test. This is already happening with the advent of the PSSA Tests that all juniors must take here in the state of Pennsylvania. It took place in the state of New York when I was a high school student and had to take several Regents Exams in order to graduate.

Another factor to be considered is the student who does well in every part of each course taken, but is very weak in the area of "test taking". These students are excellent in areas of each course such as projects, verbal presentations, research, written assignments, etc but absolutely "freeze" when faced with tests. The student is faced with a lower grade in each course due to the tests and becomes frustrated which can lead to a feeling of personal failure accompanied with an attitude of "why bother to work diligently in each course when I know I will due poorly in the area of tests which will pull down my overall grade". The requirement of a final exam to be taken in order to graduate will have a negative effect on this type of student.

Another area to consider is the test itself. Who will write this test and how many areas of subjects will it cover. Example: English (Reading & Grammar), Math, Science, Social Studies or just one of those areas. How will the test be constructed. Example: Multiple Choice, Matching, True/False, Short Answer, etc. How many questions and how much time allowed to complete the test is another area to be explored. Will the test be given within the classroom or at a central location like when students complete SAT tests. The options listed in the newspaper do not state details of this proposed test.

I would be more than happy to speak with or write to anyone who shares the idea of a test for all students in order to graduate. I am sure that there are many thoughts and ideas being expressed on this subject and I would be open to learning and sharing with others. The student's best interests are most important in the decision on this proposed mandated test.

Sincerely yours,



Marcia E. Peters