

Buckheit, James 2696

9:15

From: Christian Jaspersen [cjaspersen@mnsd.org]
Sent: Tuesday, July 22, 2008 8:08 AM
To: Buckheit, James
Cc: Lynne Bertolet
Subject: Proposed Chapter 4 Regulations

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

State Board of Education
ATTN: James Buckheit, Executive Director
333 Market St.
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Re: Proposed Chapter 4 Regulations
Graduation Competency Assessments

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

Currently, I am a special education/gifted education teacher at Marple Newtown High School, a suburban high school outside of Philadelphia. As an educator and life long learner, it is clear that assessments do have a place in the ever expanding realm of education. However, the Graduation Competency Assessments proposed do not correlate with all facets of the educational process and the post-graduation choices many young adults will make.

For example, the GCA format as it is currently structured is set to measure 10 new standardized state tests in subjects such as Algebra II and Chemistry. Many young adults who are not only planning to experience success in their choice of vocation, but in many cases are already experiencing success within their selected field prior to high school graduation may not succeed in meeting the competency level of a Chemistry benchmark. After successful completion of 12 grades, several different PSSAs throughout their scholastic tenure, and earning a wage that is commensurate and competitive with peers in the same vocation, the thought of having to not only take the GCA, but meet a competency benchmark will undoubtedly deter many of these students with vocational interests from completing high school.

I have had the extreme fortune of teaching a significant amount of students with vocational interests and when polled, many explain that the currently proposed GCA could possibly deter them from either, 1) Enrolling in a vocational program altogether due to the notion that only emphasis on academics will "get them through" high school; 2) Remaining in high school to pursue their career interests since the state of PA will determine them "incompetent" despite the fact that they are able to build a home, manage clients and marketing at a salon, or weld multiple automotive parts together while reconstructing a car engine. The thought of losing even one of these young people as a student in my classroom is very unfortunate.

I have strong reservations regarding the current format in the interests of these students who have worked so hard both in and out of the classroom to obtain a vocational skill that many outside of the career would not have been able to accomplish. Many of these students excel in such fields as carpentry, automotive technology, and cosmetology to name a few. I do not see the benefit in deterring young minds from growth in these fields of interest or leave high school at a premature age because they are self-defeated at the notion that they will not meet "competency" in subjects such as Chemistry.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christian Jaspersen
Special Education/Gifted Education
MNHS