

**Buckheit, James**

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**From:** DAWN DUNN [DDUNN@kcsd.org]

2008 JUL 30 AM 9:15

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 22, 2008 10:15 AM

**To:** cindy.eckerd@psba.org; Buckheit, James; irrc@irrc.state.pa.us

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

**Cc:** Michael Finnegan

**Subject:** GCA Resolution

The attached Resolution regarding graduation competency assessments was approved and adopted by a majority vote of the Kennett Consolidated School District Board of School Directors at a public meeting on July 14, 2008.

Dawn D. Dunn  
Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent  
Kennett Consolidated School District  
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KENNETT CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
300 East South Street  
Kennett Square, PA 19348

Whereas, the Board of School Directors of the Kennett Consolidated School District, recognizes the importance of using assessments to measure Adequate Yearly Progress as a reassurance of compliance to The No Child Left Behind Act, and the significance of accountability for the education of the children in our district, we oppose the State Board of Education's proposed revisions to the current Chapter 4 regulations for high school graduation requirements requiring students to pass a series of standardized high stakes Graduation Competency Assessments in order to get a diploma.

This opposition is for the following reasons:

1. Similar exit exam mandates have increased dropout rates in other states, especially among minority groups; have focused classroom teaching on test preparation rather than 21<sup>st</sup> century skills; and, one set of high-stakes tests should not determine a student's future.
2. Decades of research show many reasons why standardized pencil and paper test scores should never be the determining factor in making major decisions about students. Diplomas should be granted based on a portfolio of coursework, tests and quizzes, presentations, projects and papers throughout a student's high school career.
3. The Pennsylvania School Code defines the authority of local school boards to determine curriculum, graduation requirements, and to bestow diplomas. The establishment of state mandated curriculum based on the GCA subject matter would erode the ability of locally elected school boards to tailor courses to best fit the needs and desires of their students in addition to inevitably causing electives in music, the arts and foreign languages to suffer. It would also do disservice to the parents in school districts who currently have a significant input via Curriculum meetings and involvement in Strategic Planning Committees.
4. The cost to the state to prepare these new tests is estimated to be \$86 million. The recent state costing-out study indicates a \$4.4 billion shortfall in the amount needed by the state to properly support and guide students to the current standards that need to be obtained by 2014. The proposed GCA was not included in that study.
5. The proposal would require 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. With

the state's funding shortfall and the Act 1 limitations on tax increases, school districts have *limited ability to fund these potential new costs*.

6. The State Board of Education's proposal does not address the fact that the PSSA has never been validated as a graduation test and that there has never been any analysis or audit of school districts' local assessments.

7. State funds and efforts should be directed to providing better tools for assessing students at a younger age so that problems are identified and addressed to raise the level of PSSA proficiency. The GCA's do not serve this purpose.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors of the Kennett Consolidated School District, agree that the concept of the GCA, as far as not letting students graduate while not being proficient in basic skills, is valid, but the proposed plan does not accomplish that goal without harming other programs and students. We thereby oppose 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 directors 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, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, and other school board in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

RESOLVED, this 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 2008, that this resolution was approved and adopted by a majority vote of the Kennett Consolidated School District Board of School Directors at a public meeting.

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Michael Finnegan  
Chairperson, Liaison and Communications Committee

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Dr. George Drake  
President, Board of School Directors

ATTEST:

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Mark T. Tracy  
Secretary, Board of School Directors