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**Buckheit, James**

**From:** Wright Cynthia [wright@wilmington.k12.pa.us]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 02, 2009 12:32 PM  
**To:** 00statbd@psupen.psu.edu  
**Subject:** Graduation Compentency Exams

Dear Pennsylvania Board Members;

I strongly oppose a graduation competency testing program. This is another example of a misuse of high stakes tests. These tests are not in the best interests of children as a whole. Since you have already approved a 6-year contract with a contractor to produce the tests and an accompanying model curriculum for each of 10 subject areas, I'm going to assume that you don't really care about the actual damage of the testing process, and only care about the appearance of standards. Since the amount of this contract is more than \$200,000,000, I cannot let this pass by without some comment.

According to NCLB and accompanying state regulations, schools are expected to use only those programs that are supported by sound research. The use of high stakes tests for graduation purposes is solidly opposed by the available research.

- \* Research shows that relying on a single test as a criteria for graduation results in increased dropout rates for students, lower retention of teachers, and a general decline in student performance.
- \* The results of prior state testing programs such as EQA, TELLS and now PSSA have not shown that standardized tests are useful in the case of individual students, although they may be a valuable source of group data.
- \* Research shows that the factor most closely related to improved student performance is equity of financial resources. Until this is achieved, districts , teachers and students should not be held accountable strictly on the basis of test results.
- \* Some students do not perform well on tests despite the ability to do quality work within the classroom.
- \* High stakes tests are strictly punative in nature rather than providing an incentive for improvement of either student performance or classroom instruction.

I sincerely hope you can all sleep at night with the amount of money that you are spending on something that benefits nobody but the people making the test while we continue to do bake sales and provide for basic materials out of our own pockets for students. That money could be put to a far greater use in actual services to students that would make a difference in their education. But then again, that would make sense.

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