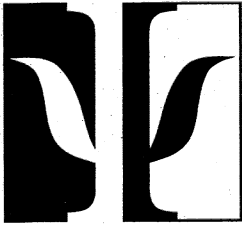


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PENNSYLVANIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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An affiliate of the
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Association

May 27, 2009

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State Board of Education

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Flourtown, PA 19031-0230

Dr. Mr. Torsella:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Psychological Association, I am writing to express our opposition to any regulation that would require passing a general competence assessment as a requirement for high school graduation in Pennsylvania.

While we support the need to improve the educational achievement of our students, we do not believe that a GCA is the optimal way to proceed. Our opposition to GCA is based, in part, on studies and reviews, such as the *Multiple Measures Approaches to High School Graduation* (retrieved May 19 from http://www.srnleads.org/data/pdfs/multiple_measures.pdf) which claims, among other things, that high stakes testing can lead to higher drop out rates for poor performing students and fail to lead to consistently improved performance for other students. In addition, "using a variety of measures to organize and assess student learning— including measures that represent real-life tasks rather than only multiple-choice and short-answer items— provides broader, more complete, and more accurate understanding of what students know than is possible with traditional tests alone"(p. 5).

We support the proposal of the Coalition for Effective and Responsible Testing (CERT) which provides a more flexible program for assessing graduation requirements. We urge you to support the CERT proposal for high school graduation.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. DeWall, CAE

Executive Director