



Chairman, Education Committee

Caucuses

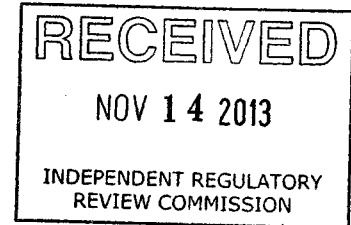
PA Higher Education Assistance Agency, Member Board of Directors
PA Historical and Museum Commission
Black History Advisory Committee, Member
PA Legislative Black Caucus, Member

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2976

House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG



November 12, 2013

Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III
Chairperson
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Chairperson Lutkewitte:

In regards to the new Chapter 4 regulations, we want to make it clear that we support the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards because we believe in increased academic rigor for all of our state's students. The revised Chapter 4 regulations on academic standards and assessments are based on these Pennsylvania Common Core Standards and we support them. The facts are that there never has been or ever will be included under the revised Chapter 4 regulations a national assessment. It is also a fact that these Pennsylvania Common Core Standards do not include a state required curriculum, nor a required reading list.

Our real educational concerns have never been with the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards or the revised Chapter 4 regulations, but with the need to adequately and equitably provide the necessary state funding for all children in our state to meet these new more rigorous academic standards. Good rigorous academic standards are necessary, but without adequate and equitable funding by both state and local sources all of our students will not be able to meet these important standards.

After its final approval of the revised Chapter 4 regulations, I requested from the State Board of Education that it update "its Regulatory Analysis Form (RAF) to provide a fiscal analysis of the costs that school districts will have to incur to meet not just the testing of students but of providing the required remediation that is needed for our students to meet the higher academic standards. We believe that this is also the desire of both Senate Education Chairmen Folmer and Dinniman as well as the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC)." **Attached is a copy of this letter.**

In the RAF accompanying the final form Chapter 4 regulation changes, the State Board of Education's response to question #20 about providing a specific estimate of the costs and or savings to the local government associated with compliance does not adequately address the concerns that were raised in the letter to the State Board of Education. The Board's response simply states that "New provisions and amendments in the final-form regulation do not increase costs for school districts inasmuch as that they are accomplishing the policy choices set forth when the Keystone Exams were added to Chapter 4 via the final rule published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on January 9, 2010 at 40 Pa.B. 240." The Board added that "Further, requirements related to supplemental instruction, project-based assessment and the administration of 10 Keystone Exams are current requirements of Chapter 4 that took effect in 2010 and do not represent new initiatives and new costs imposed by the final rulemaking."

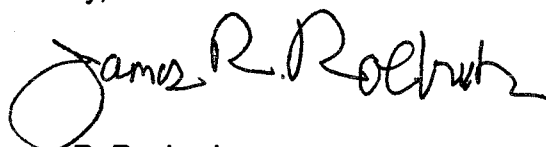
The Board's response to question #20 in the 2013 RAF neglected to note that in the RAF prepared for the Chapter 4 regulations in 2010 (question #18), the Board included in its response state funding to offset local costs that no longer exist in 2013.

In the 2010 RAF on Chapter 4 regulations the Board stated "Districts already have considerable state resources to support this work, including Basic education funding (2008-09 enacted: \$5.23 billion), Accountability Block Grant (08-09 enacted: \$271.4 million) and Education Assistance Program funding (08-09 enacted: \$65.1 million). In 2008, the legislature also enacted a school funding formula, setting a goal in law to meet the state's responsibility for helping all school districts achieve a resource level based on what is needed for student success. These resources could offset supplemental instruction (estimated average per-student cost: \$600) and also fund district- and building-level management of the project-based assessment established under 4.51(n)(1)."

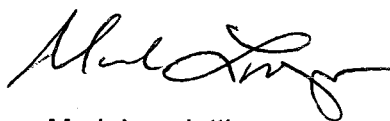
Since 2010, the expected funding from the Accountability Block Grant has been cut by \$175 million and the \$65 million expected funding for tutoring services needed for remediation of students failing the existing and new state assessments through the Education Assistance Program has been eliminated. Equally important, the Board assumed that the state would continue its funding formula that set "a goal in law to meet the state's responsibility for helping all school districts achieve a resource level based on what is needed for student success." The state ended this funding formula in 2011 and has cut overall state education funding by nearly \$1 billion since 2010. In 2010 the Board had assumed that these additional funding sources would provide school districts with the needed funding resources to meet the goals of the new Chapter 4 regulations. With the reduction or elimination of these funds by the state this is no longer the case.

This fact needs to be seriously considered by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission in its consideration of whether to approve these regulations. Requiring school districts to meet the new requirements of these revisions to Chapter 4 regulations and requiring that all students must pass the new Keystone Exams or similar project based assessments without providing sufficient funding resources to school districts to meet these requirements does not serve the best interests of our students or our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



James R. Roebuck
Democratic Chairman
House Education Committee
188th Legislative District



Mark Longietti
Subcommittee Chair on Basic Education
House Education Committee
7th Legislative District

Attachment

Cc: David Sumner, Executive Director, Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Honorable Frank Dermody, Democratic Leader, PA House of Representatives
Honorable Paul Clymer, Majority Chairman, House Education Committee
Honorable Michael J. Folmer, Majority Chairman, Senate Education Committee
Honorable Andrew E. Dinniman, Minority Chairman, Senate Education Committee
Michelle Elliott, Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Scott Schalles, Independent Regulatory Review Commission

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COPY

September 18, 2013

Mr. Larry Wittig
Chairperson
State Board of Education
333 Market Street, 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Chairperson Wittig:

As a follow up to my comments at the State Board of Education meeting on September 12 regarding my concerns about adopting changes in Chapter 4 regulations at a time of reduction of state funding for public schools, I would like to provide the State Board with the attached news article from the Philadelphia Inquirer "Budget crisis shuts libraries at 2 top schools." In my remarks at the State Board meeting I referenced the closing of these school libraries at two of Pennsylvania's top high schools -Masterman and Central high schools due to lack of financial resources.

The closure of these school libraries is evidence of the lack of state commitment to funding our public schools. I believe that before we move forward with these new standards and assessments we need to have a better sense of the costs that school districts will have to incur to meet not just the testing of students but of providing the required remediation that is needed for our students to meet the higher academic standards and more importantly a commitment by the state to fund those needed remediation services for students. I fear that without this commitment, more of our students in financially distressed school districts like the School District of Philadelphia will not meet the graduation requirements in these new Chapter 4 regulations.

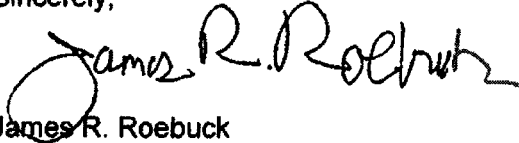
When these Chapter 4 regulations are submitted to the House and Senate Education Committees, I request that the State Board of Education update its Regulatory Analysis Form to provide a fiscal analysis of the costs that school districts will have to incur to meet not just the testing of students but of providing the required remediation that is needed for our students to meet the higher academic standards. I believe that this is also the desire of both Senate Education Chairman Folmer and Dinniman as well as the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC). In its comments on the fiscal impact of the regulation, IRRC stated:

"The Board's response to Regulatory Analysis Form (RAF) Question #20 states that the proposed regulation will not impose any new costs on school districts; however, commentators raise concerns about the costs of this regulation, including costs for such procedures as redesigning curriculum, remediation and project-based assessments. We agree that the RAF does not adequately address fiscal impacts. We ask the Board to consult with the regulated community to gain a thorough understanding of the fiscal impacts of this proposal and include those findings in the RAF submitted with the final-form regulation."

As I have stated many times, I support the Pennsylvania Core Standards but have serious concerns about the future costs to school districts and the failure of the state to provide adequate funding for all students to meet the new graduation requirement in the Chapter 4 regulations. I hope that we can together address these concerns as these regulations move through the Regulatory Review Process.

I thank you for your consideration of my remarks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James R. Roebuck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

James R. Roebuck
Democratic Chairman
House Education Committee
188th Legislative District

Attachment

Cc: All Members of PA State Board of Education

Budget crisis shutter libraries at 2 top schools

By Susan Snyder, Inquirer Staff Writer

POSTED: SEPTEMBER 14, 2013

When Central High School opened its new library in 2005 - a \$4.5 million research and media hub funded by alumni - Apple named it a national model.

Students visited it more than 147,000 times last year, more than 800 visits a day.

Masterman School's library, also bolstered by fund-raising, bustled with students, too, from early morning till late afternoon.

But now both libraries - the academic hearts of two of Philadelphia's most prestigious schools - have been shuttered.

They are the latest victims of the schools' financial crisis. The district did not fund librarians - so principals at Central, Masterman, and any number of other schools had to cut those positions, along with counselors, assistant principals, and teachers.

"I'm going to tear up," Masterman principal Marjorie Neff said at her desk Thursday as she explained the loss. "The library is the center of our instructional program here. People think about things like the library and counselors as extras. They are not extras."

Central's principal, Timothy McKenna, called the library the "hub of learning" at his 2,400-student school, but said the future was beyond his ability to protect.

"A librarian was never even in the mix for us," he said. "In the past, we had a lot more decision-making power. And this year, it was limited."

Over the last 20 years, the School District has lost many of its certified librarians as money got tighter. In 1992, there were 176; by 2011, only 65. After this year's budget cuts - the most severe the district has faced - only 15 librarians remain, according to district spokesman Fernando Gallard.

Some schools have staffed their library with other employees, though most have lost so many other positions this year that finding an available staffer was difficult.

"It's borderline immoral," said Louis Borda, a Masterman social studies teacher and parent. "We can't be expected to have a school without a library. I would have reconsidered keeping my kids in the school if I knew it was going to be this bad."

'Biggest resource'

Principals at Central and Masterman, magnet schools that take in top students from across the city, are trying to figure out how to reopen the libraries in a limited way. Teachers still will take classes to the libraries. But the libraries won't be able to circulate books or offer students the expertise of their former librarians.

"She was really the biggest resource in the library," Evelyn Tsisin, a senior at Masterman, said of librarian Bernadette Kearney.

Tsisin and Katherine Loboda, also a senior, said Kearney helped them find material on their research topics, told them where to find books they needed, kept them informed about databases, and suggested other libraries to visit for additional material.

The principal, Neff, said Kearney also worked with teachers to supply appropriate materials for their lessons and ran student groups, including a book club - Ink Drinkers - and a student library advisory board. The library was open from an hour before school until an hour after school, and was filled.

For many of Masterman's 1,200 students, the library also offered a quiet place to learn and study during lunch periods. Masterman, which has fifth to 12th grades, is crowded, so much so that some students eat lunch in the hallways. When the library was open, 50 students would find study refuge there each lunch period.

On Thursday, Tsisin, of the Far Northeast, and Loboda, of Center City, sneaked into the library and grabbed a table behind some bookshelves, hoping they wouldn't be discovered.

"This is the first time we've had such a great library, and now we can't use it," Loboda said. "I don't think the books will be in circulation anymore. It's a shame they're going to be sitting here collecting dust on the shelves."

Masterman, the top-performing academic school in Pennsylvania, two years ago received a grant of \$18,270 from the Community Design Collaborative to upgrade its library, Neff said. The school held a silent auction and raised \$40,000 to remodel the space, with the district providing free labor.

Parents are upset about the closure. "It's very hard after devoting 15 years of a lot of energy and time to the public school system," said Heidi Segall Levy, an architect at the Community Design Collaborative, whose son, Eli, is Masterman student body president. "It just feels like we're being let down."

Neff understands.

"It feels like our ability to provide a quality education for kids is being chipped away at," she said. "Every year for the past two years, we tried to adjust a little bit more. This year, we just

couldn't adjust. What goes on in the classroom will still be wonderful, but all the supports that make it so rich are not there this year."

Parents, too, are trying to figure out how to get students some use of the library, Neff said. She has offered to be the new faculty adviser to the Ink Drinkers. And Kearney, the former librarian, who now works at Childs School, has started a blog to advise Masterman students on great books and databases from afar.

'Surreal'

At Central, students and staff also are upset.

"It's surreal that so many things are in danger and so many things are being cut," said Robert Gallante, a Central senior from South Philadelphia, who misses librarian Loretta Burton's guidance.

Burton, who now works at Mayfair School as a prep teacher, said many students don't have Internet or computers at home and needed the library.

"When I came in at 7:15, I had kids waiting for me," she said.

At Central, pupils had access to more than 20,000 volumes, 60 computers, and several printers and scanners, she said. The library also has a room designated for college admissions officers to meet students, a staff lounge, and a home for Central's extensive archives. Founded in 1836, it is the second-oldest public high school in the nation.

McKenna said he would bring Burton back if he got more funding. "That is the goal," he said.

For Central alums, whose generosity funded the library, the news has been particularly painful.

"We continue to fund-raise but it's difficult," said Richard Prinz, a 1959 graduate and retired wealth manager from PNC Bank. "When you go to someone, they ask, why are they contributing when the school isn't being supported by the district for its needs?"

Contact Susan Snyder at 215-854-4693 or ssnyder@phillynews.com or follow on Twitter @ssnyderinq.
http://articles.philly.com/2013-09-14/news/42064126_1_new-library-central-high-school-marjorie-neff