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Subject: IRRC Website - New Message

A new message has arrived from the IRRC Website

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Subject: Chapter 4 Regulations #6-326

Message:

I would like to offer a rebuttal to the Norwood School District's letter to the IRRC, dated October 15, 2013, in support of PA Core Standards via Chapter 4 regulations. Dr. McNelly mentions that adoption of PA Core Standards and aligned assessments are important reforms which will help ensure high school graduates in Pennsylvania have a strong educational foundation needed to transition to post secondary life. Prior to the implementation of PA Core Standards, were graduates of Pennsylvania not ready to meet the challenges of post secondary life? Allow me to remind her that in my seven decades of life I have witnessed many Pennsylvania (and other state) graduates succeed in postsecondary life extending into colleges, universities and direct placement into industry. I recall the design and fabrication of the first nuclear submarine without PA Core Standards. I recall research and development, design and fabrication of our first earth satellite, landing and returning a man on the moon all without the use of general purpose computers or PA Core Standards. Let's not forget the medical, scientific, recreational and PC advances ensuing from NASA related programs ... all resulting from the ingenuity, inventiveness and creativity of Pennsylvania high school graduates. These examples, to name a few, occurred during the mid 20th century until the late 1970's all without PA Core Standards. I might add that all these examples supported a global economy. One begs to ask, what is so different today as compared to the mid 20th century when spectacular achievements were accomplished by graduates who were taught "the old fashion way" without PA Core Standards or its identical twin, the federal Common Core? The answer ... the federal Department of Education was created and opened for business in 1980. Shortly thereafter educational standards and student performance declined and continued to decline for thirty plus years to where we are today. Education "experts" are now looking for new ways to teach our students when in fact we had a proven track record of success over 60 years ago. The PA Core Standards way is not inexpensive. It throws good money after bad, trying to build a new structure on a foundation of sand. Dr. McNelly states that "as compared to previous academic standards, the PA Core Standards are rigorous, internationally bench-marked standards developed by Pennsylvania teachers and are aligned to the Common Core State Standards." The proponents of PA Core Standards or Common Core have used the word rigorous all too many times to describe the content of their standards. In fact when one looks at the PA Core Standards and compares them to the federal Common Core Standards one

notices that the two standards are near identical twins bench-marked internationally to a lower level. Certainly, to a level lower than what existed 60 years ago. It was mentioned in the Norwood School District letter that their teachers wholly support the PA Core Standards. The teachers I have met at school board meetings have welcome my involvement to oppose PA Core Standards and to be their voice of opposition to state authorities. A claimed "benefit" of Keystone Exams is the ability of a student to re-take the exam should the student fail the test. This option is available again should the student fail the test a second time. After each failure the student shall receive supplemental instructions followed by a demonstration of proficiency on a project base assessment. Preparations for each re-test requires the student to receive special remediation "where teachers review data, make decisions about the needs of their students, re-teach concepts and skills, and then provide students an opportunity to test again." Could this be a version of "No Child Left Behind" or everyone gets a trophy? Does it ever occur to the educators that not every child will succeed? Has the cost of special treatment of those requiring remediation ever been addressed? The PDE has not addressed the cost and if they have they have not released the cost analysis. How can a board move forward with this program not knowing the cost impact to its community? Let's address the waiver provision. There is a provision in the regulations which provides the mechanism for the chief administrator to waive the proficiency requirement and award students' diplomas in special circumstances. If this is a criteria for endorsing PA Core Standards, then the question has been answered that indeed everyone gets a trophy. Designing nuclear submarines, putting a man on the moon, medical and scientific advancements were not made possible with trophy collectors. The last point I would like to address is Dr. McNelly's comment about having "invested much time and money in our effort to align our curriculum and instruction to the PA Core Standards. Failing to enact these standards would undermine the time and effort my district already has dedicated to this important work." When the Norwood School District (and other state school districts) started their effort to align the curriculum and instruction to meet, at the time, undefined standards and new teaching methods they did so at their own financial peril. As PA Core Standards or Common Core became further defined and the full implication of the Common Core agenda was uncovered, school boards had to assess whether to throw good money after bad money into a program of reduced "rigor" with unproven results. To use the time and monies already spent as another justification for endorsing PA Core Standards is ludicrous and wasteful. Respectfully, Richard Felice Coatesville, PA