

**“Achieve, Inc.’s About Face” Policy Brief by Mars Research & Retrieval Services, [www.marsrrservices.com](http://www.marsrrservices.com)**

**Date: December 27, 2008**

Achieve, Inc. the Washington D. C. based education reform organization which promotes the American Diploma Project agenda to standardize states for high school graduation requirements inclusive of state graduation exit exam policies, **has done an about face.** Achieve, Inc. in cooperation with The Education Trust, another Washington DC education reform organization, has issued a new policy report which reverses earlier guidance to states by now supporting the use of multiple measures of performance assessments in lieu of a single sole indicator, standardized exit exam.

Achieve’s new policy agenda, called “Measures that Matter,” includes a comprehensive report that provides research and options intended to “help states consider the various issues in developing a coherent college and career-ready policy framework.”

In “Making College and Career Readiness the Mission for High School: A Guide for State Policymakers,” the report emphasizes that the current “standards-test-accountability model” has failed to prove itself to be very effective in improving high schools and that states need a new approach that includes “greater state leadership and state resources.”

While there is nothing distinct in supporting the reversed decision on either Achieve, Inc.’s website or The Education Trust’s website, if one were to speculate, one would have to look at what the common denominator is of both of these organizations that is shared to some extent? The common denominator would be the funding. Some of the funding comes from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which is also a driving force or influence upon all of these other education reform organizations which rely on their monetary support to some degree to carry out their own respective and collaborative missions. The Gates Foundation has invested over \$4 billion dollars into transforming students nationwide from high school to be prepared for college readiness. Their website indicates their lessons learned over the course of the past eight years has transformed their own thinking and past approaches toward education from shifting to that of the scientific model to that “of the heart” in order to achieve the transformation which is necessary for students to be successful. Their new ambitious goal is to ensure that 80% of students are prepared to be college ready to pursue further education. Therefore, it is my belief that since the change at the top has been made by the Gates Foundation and announced November 11, 2008 in Seattle, when they hosted a national forum on college readiness and college completion, that we are now seeing and will continue to see “the fall into step” approach by many other leading national education reform organizations. The forum was called ““Redefining Opportunity in America”, College Readiness and College Completion.” Naturally, as one would suspect, The Gates Foundation is not going to fund grants to 501 (c) non-profit education organizations which counter their own mission and ambitious goals.

So, how does this apply now to Pennsylvania? We have a Governor who has defied a one year moratorium and has invested millions of taxpayer money into an unproven initiative despite statewide opposition at all levels inclusive of that of the General Assembly. Our Governor sits on the Board of Achieve, Inc. and has previously committed to fulfilling Pennsylvania to be added to the other 23+ states who have adopted the American Diploma Project (mandated statewide graduation competency assessment model). Our Governor's administration and PDE has solicited and authorized RFP's for the development of the ten-series GCA process without authorization of our General Assembly or IRRC. And, he has led us by the nose down a wrong-headed path to no where, during one of our state's most dire economic climates with investing millions into a failed and unproven initiative while attempting to get his way, without knowing or recognizing that the board he sits on has reversed its own position to protect itself and its own interests.

Fast forward to January, we have new legislators coming on board that will not know the history or have knowledge of this issue and will require being educated. We are approaching a February Governor's budget which will entail spending cuts, elimination of programs, hiring freezes, borrowing from the rainy day fund, and federal bail out of Philadelphia soon after the inauguration of the new President-Elect.

It is truly up to our policymakers to put an end to this travesty and to take the leadership necessary in our state to navigate our education ship in the right direction. This entire debacle has been nothing but political from its genesis and has now come full circle. State policymakers should scrap this plan in its entirety. Why invest further into a program no longer endorsed by the very organization who proposed it to begin with? Furthermore, these special interest education reform organizations have made much money from Pennsylvania at our own Commonwealth's expense. Policymaker's should question the credibility of the policies proposed by such education reform organizations when they are not research based and unproven, instead, politically driven.

On behalf of everyone here in Pennsylvania, please put a stop to this initiative by eliminating it from the state budget in its entirety and holding the Governor and his administration accountable. The ugly truth to this matter has hit us all smack in the face, regardless if the Governor wants to recognize it or not. Hopefully we can learn a valued lesson and take a stand once and for all.

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