

T/E board to state: No to GCAs

By Rachel Perry

The Tredyffrin/Easttown School Board voted in favor of passing a resolution opposing the state-proposed Graduation Competency Assessments, a series of high-stakes standardized exams that high school students, beginning with the class of 2014, may be required to take in order to graduate.

The school board's resolution will be sent to Harrisburg, and board vice-president Pat Wood said that it will be among the nay-saying resolutions of more than 80 other Pennsylvania schools.

The resolution said that board members' stance against instating the GCAs stems from their belief that the tests will not "meet the needs of all diverse learners," "do not permit assessment of students in nontraditional ways," detract from the number of days available for regular instruction, and impose "an unreasonable load of high-stakes testing on students who are already facing a burden of stressful standardized tests."

"This is a primary example of how our hands will begin to be tied if this were to be passed," said board member Debbie Rollins.

The proposal to require GCAs has been approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education, but nothing is set in stone yet, and the state will be accepting comments from members of the public during a 30-day period, the starting date of which has not been announced yet.

"We do not know when that 30-day period will be, but that will be on our Web site as soon as we hear," board member Karen Cruickshank said.

"We'll get the information out as widely as we can," Wood added.

Another item on the agenda at Monday's meeting was a presentation on technology by Dr. Marie Slobojan, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Staff Development and Planning in the T/E School District.

Dr. Slobojan's presentation addressed the grow-

ing use of technology in local schools and discussed the possibility of the future presence of things like digital pens, which store information that is written by hand and translate it to digital text, and "document cameras" that are similar to projectors but don't require transparencies because they're able to project all mediums.

The presentation also included a mention of electronic learning trends such as Second Life, an Internet-based 3-D virtual "world" in which Dr. Slobojan suggested students might be able to interact and have classroom discussions via moving avatars.

"It could become our preferred platform for some learners," she said.

Also given priority at the meeting was a special update on the progress of the Foundation for Learning in Tredyffrin/Easttown (FLITE), presented by the organization's vice-chair, Julie Ferguson.

Ferguson told the board that FLITE now benefits 175 students and has made progress on all of their goals, except for one – a partnership with Conestoga alumni – that was deemed unviable.

"We are on very sound financial footing, I'm happy to report," she said.

Board members commended Ferguson and FLITE on a job well done.

"From one group of volunteers to another, we appreciate it and we applaud you," said president Kevin Mahoney.

Tom Colman, chair of FLITE, also spoke during the public forum, announcing a new program that is just getting started. The program, he said, will tell high school juniors and seniors "it's not too late" to become college applicants, especially those juniors and seniors who may be first-generation college attendees or who do not see themselves as "college material."

The school board will be holding the second budget development workshop on Monday, March 31 at 7:30 p.m. The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, April 28 at 7:30 p.m.

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