

HOME SCHOOL[®] LEGAL DEFENSE ASSOCIATION

Advocates for Family & Freedom

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September 3, 2003

Governor Frank O'Bannon
Office of the Governor
State House
Room 206
Indianapolis, IN 46204-279

Re: Deep Concerns re P-16 Plan

Dear Governor O'Bannon:

By way of introduction, the Private School Advocacy Center (PSAC) is a division of Home School Legal Defense Association, a national organization whose primary purpose is the protection of the right of parents to choose home-based education for their children. The PSAC was established to represent families living in the twelve states where home schoolers operate as private schools. We currently represent over 2,300 families in the state of Indiana.

On behalf of our members, we are deeply concerned about the August 26, 2003, draft of the "P-16 Plan for Improving Student Achievement" that the Education Roundtable has written. We would greatly appreciate it if you would answer the following six questions:

1. On page 22, paragraph 5, the draft says:

"To date, completion of the Core 40 curriculum has been recommended by the state, but not required. Indiana colleges continue to accept students who have not completed this important college preparatory curriculum."

Do you personally believe that Indiana colleges should be restricted from accepting students who have not completed Indiana's public school curriculum, the Core 40?

Currently Indiana 4-year colleges can independently decide which students to accept. Each institution can determine how much weight to place on the applicant's high school curriculum.

2. On page 24, paragraph 5, the draft says:

“Align state college financial aid policies to maximize the potential for college degree completion. Endorse Core 40 and Academic Honors as the best preparation for success by providing incentives for persistence and completion and disincentives for dropping out.”

Do you personally believe that private school students, out of state students, and international students should receive less scholarship and financial help by virtue of not having been taught the Core 40?

3. On page 24, paragraph 6, the draft says:

“Align college and university admissions standards ... to support Core 40 as Indiana’s high school graduation requirement.”

And page 31, paragraph 2 says:

“Align college and university admissions standards ... to support Core 40 and Academic Honors as outlined in the *Ensuring College and Workforce Success* section of this plan.”

Do you personally believe that students who have attended private high schools, out of state schools, or foreign schools, which did not teach Indiana’s Core 40 curriculum should receive less favorable admissions consideration?

4. On page 24, paragraph 4, the draft says:

“High school and college faculty should work together to develop assessments that replace existing college placement exams.”

And on page 31, paragraph 3, the draft says:

“Align End-of-Course Assessments (ECA) with college placement exams for seamless transition from high school to college with the goal being to replace college placement exams with ECAs.”

Do you personally support restricting Indiana colleges from using college admission tests such as the ACT or SAT as one factor in determining whom to admit?

Standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT give colleges an important tool for comparing the aptitude for college work of students from all backgrounds-- public school, private school, out of state, and international. They function as a common denominator. Even though these groups are taught using very different curricula and perhaps different grading systems, their ability to handle college work can be fairly and objectively compared by their scores on the tests.

Without such a common denominator, fairness and objectivity will suffer, and this will inevitably give students from some backgrounds an unfair disadvantage in the competitive admissions process.

5. On page 31, paragraph 2, the draft says:

“Align college and university . . . remediation policies to support Core 40 and Academic Honors as outlined in the *Ensuring College and Workforce Success* section of this plan.”

Do you personally believe that private school students, out of state students, and international students should be required to take remediation courses at college on account of not having been taught the Core 40?

6. Will you support amending the P-16 plan by adding a new Section 11 to the plan as follows, and amending other parts of the plan as necessary to assure consistency?

“Private secondary schools, out of state students, and international students. All recommendations in this report apply only to students in public schools in Indiana. Private school, out of state and international students are taught using a variety of curricula. College polices regarding admissions, remediation, scholarships, and financial aid must not treat these students less favorably simply because they were taught a curriculum other than the Core 40.

Only in-state public school students will take ECAs. Those tests alone, therefore, cannot be used to compare the college aptitude of an in-state public school student with an out-of-state, or private, or foreign student. Because the college admissions process must be fair, however, it is crucial that there be at least one component of each student’s total admissions package that provides a tool for objectively comparing the college aptitude of students of all these groups. The best available tool for this is the SAT and ACT. Therefore, 4-year colleges should continue to require applicants to submit the results of at least one nationally standardized college aptitude test. ECAs are helpful, but cannot replace standardized tests in the admissions process.”

The next meeting of the roundtable is scheduled for 1:30 P.M., September 16. Our members would greatly appreciate answers to these questions as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,



Scott A. Woodruff, Esq.

SAW/vnm

cc: All Indiana HSLDA Members
All Education Roundtable Members