



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

Helping children succeed in school

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.
151 West 30th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10001
Phone: (212) 947-9779
Fax: (212) 947-9790
www.advocatesforchildren.org

Regent Roger Tilles
Chair, Regents VESID Committee
Room 110 EB
Albany, New York 12234

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October 9, 2008

Dear Regent Tilles:

We write to you on behalf of a number of advocacy organizations and other stakeholders about the Individualized Education Program (IEP) diploma. We strongly feel that the name of the IEP diploma should be changed. We are pleased that your committee is considering this important issue and urge you to recommend a name change as quickly as possible.

As you know, the issue came before this committee on July 28, 2008, and VESID representatives stated that they would conduct further investigation, including convening focus groups, in order to determine what changes are necessary and appropriate. Some of the steps proposed for consideration alongside the issue of the name change will require more extensive discussions. However, we believe there is currently enough evidence to demonstrate that an immediate name change is warranted. Families continue to be misled by the term “diploma” and mistakenly believe that an IEP diploma is a regular high school diploma instead of a certificate of completion. As illustrated by the examples provided in our June 27, 2007 letter to Deputy Commissioner Cort (letter enclosed), parents and students are not aware that an IEP diploma will not provide them with access to most colleges or the military. Many members of your committee also expressed concern with the problems associated with the IEP diploma and seemed supportive of a name change.

We would like to meet with you to discuss our concerns with the IEP diploma and the need for a name change as soon as possible. We will follow up with you to schedule a meeting in the next few months. If you should need any further information or like to discuss the matter prior to the meeting, please feel free to contact Christie Love at Advocates for Children of New York at 212.822.9536 or clove@advocatesforchildren.org. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue, and we look forward to working with you to clarify credentialing options for students with disabilities in New York.

Sincerely,

cc:

Deputy Commissioner Rebecca Cort

Patricia Geary, Coordinator, Special Education Policy and Professional Development