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Letter to the Editor March 25, 2004

Recent letters to the editor asserting that the state provides accommodations for students with disabilities taking the exit exam misses the point. The academic accomplishments of a student with disabilities should not be measured solely based on a standardized test, with or without accommodations or modifications (the use of a calculator and/or other educational tools) if that student is unable to pass the test based solely on his or her disability. That is the system that we have now, which will deny deserving students a diploma this spring unless the legislature or the courts intervene.

Whether the State Board followed the legislative intent of the Exist Exam bill is open to interpretation. However, I am sure that my intent in protecting the needs of the learning disabled was not reflected in adopting the current regulations. We can do better. I have introduced legislation to address this need while still holding schools accountable.

SB 372 is based on my belief, based on personal experience and conversations with families and educators, that the regulations should contain plans for individualized assessment mechanisms, not just the use of tools to assist the student on the standardized exit exam, to address the needs of learning disabled students.

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