

#2494

From: G. Brian Toth [gbt@blwd.k12.pa.us]
Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2009 10:47 AM
To: IRRC
Cc: Ron Ruman; G. Brian Toth
Subject: RE: Graduation tests

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INDEPENDENT EDUCATION
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Good Morning.

My name is Dr. G. Brian Toth, Superintendent of Schools for the Bellwood-Antis School District.

I would like to make the following comments as to reasons for the need to implement the Keystone exams:

1. Less testing time for students. This results in more instructional time.
2. Assessments given at the end of a course, provide a more accurate picture of the student's performance.
3. I view the newly proposed Keystone Exams as a viable data source that if administered at the end of a course and scored quickly can provide information to assist students in their needs, whether that is remediation or acceleration. The key to reforms or any other efforts on studying student achievement is to identify positive influences that increase student achievement. Thus, the keystone exams can help educators identify those positive influences much sooner.
4. More opportunities for students to earn a HS diploma, therefore, reducing the dropout rate.
5. After 2 tries if a student does not pass the exam, they can produce a "real life" project. This experience will be much more meaningful to many students.
6. Special needs students will have different requirements if their IEPs call for alternative high school graduation standards. This makes perfect sense because these students have IEP's because they have a diagnosed disability.

In Pennsylvania changes have already occurred in academic standards, strategic/school improvement planning and curriculum. An emphasis on state standards has continued, including curricular support through the development of assessment anchors and eligible content in areas of reading, math, and science, as well as, the development of the Standards Aligned Systems model.

These and other improvements, such as the Keystone Exams, must continue in order for us to be internationally, economically competitive.

If you need further information, please call me at 814-742-2271.

Thank you.

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" When you do what you've always done, you get what you've always gotten."

Trish Fisher

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