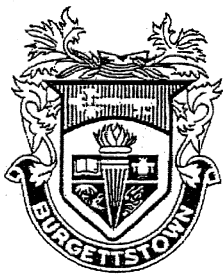


#2696 1021



BURGETTSTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

100 Bavington Road Burgettstown, PA 15021
724-947-8136 Fax: 724-947-8143

July 27, 2009

The Honorable Jesse White
102B East Wing
PO Box 202046
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2046

RECEIVED

JUL 30 2009

**PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION**

RECEIVED
2009 AUG -3 AM 9:10
INDEPENDENT RELATIONS
EDUCATION

Dear Representative White:

I understand that representatives of the Department of Education have been circulating a "joint letter from Pennsylvania Superintendents on stronger high school graduation requirements." Many of my colleagues have signed it.

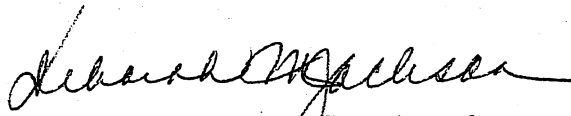
Appropriately, the joint letter acknowledges the improvements to the end of course testing proposal during the last year—particularly the last few weeks. It correctly recognizes that under the new proposal, as opposed to the proposal that was before you last year, students will have more options to earn a diploma, and students will be subject to less testing. As important as these advances are, I believe that the regulation can be improved with two simple amendments.

Under the proposal, student performance on the Keystone exams must account for at least one-third of the student's final grade in the course for which the exam is required. This is too much weight to put on the test. It means that everything else the student does during the course of the academic year can count at most for two-thirds of their grade. Most districts count final exams as less than 20% of a student's course grade.

Students scoring below basic on a Keystone exam would get no credit for what they do know. They would be assigned a zero. I think this is unfair, and again, places too much emphasis on the state test. We recommend recognizing the actual score of every student without the artificial cliff.

I urge you, as you review and comment on the regulation, to seek these two simple changes.

Sincerely,


Deborah M. Jackson, Superintendent

c: PA State Board of Education
PASA / via email