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# TITUSVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

221 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET • TITUSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA 16354-1785  
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KAREN E. JEZ  
SUPERINTENDENT

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AUG 17 2009

PA. STATE BOARD  
OF EDUCATION

July 28, 2009

The Honorable Mary Jo White  
Senate Box 203021  
Harrisburg PA 17120-3021

Dear Senator 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 the letter.

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.

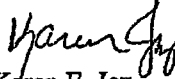
Students scoring below basic on a Keystone exam would get no credit for what they do know. They would be assigned a zero. I think this is unfair, and again, places too much emphasis on the state test. We recommend recognizing the actual score of every student without the artificial cliff.

In addition, if the Keystone exams replace the PSSAs at the 11th grade, then the tests are not actually voluntary, at least not for Titusville. Our district does not have the funds to pay for validation of our final exams even if the state pays half the cost. We cut \$1,094,072 dollars from our budget this year and have eliminated teaching positions, an administrative assistant position, classroom aide positions, and driver's education just to name a few of the big ticket items. Our district has worked very hard to map curriculum and course content to the state standards, and I believe our exams would be validated; however, we can not afford the validation cost.

I urge you, as you review and comment on the regulation, to seek the two simple changes outlined above and to consider the additional cost and burden of local assessment validation.

Sincerely,

TITUSVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

  
Karen E. Jez  
Superintendent

The mission of the Titusville Area School District, a partnership with parents and community members, is to ensure that all students are challenged by quality academic and social experiences to achieve their fullest potential as life-long learners.

An Equal Rights and Opportunities School District

Titusville Senior High School  
302 East Walnut Street  
Titusville, PA 16354

Titusville Middle School  
416 Water Street  
Titusville, PA 16354

Hydatown Elementary  
12294 Gresham Road  
Titusville, PA 16354

Main Street Elementary  
117 West Main Street  
Titusville, PA 16354

Pleasantville Elementary  
374 North Main Street  
Pleasantville, PA 16341

Early Childhood Learning Center  
330 East Spruce Street  
Titusville, PA 16354