

2696

From: Debra Babirad [dbabirad@bentworth.k12.pa.us]
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2009 12:30 PM
To: IRRRC; shaunacpa@comcast.net
Cc: Charles Baker
Subject: RE: Keystone Exams Update - Please share with your boards, teachers, and administrators
Attachments: oppose keystone exams.pdf

Dear Shauna,

Attached is the resolution our board adopted in May. At that time, a copy was forwarded to our local legislators, PSBA, SHASDA and PASBO.

Deb Babirad

From: Charles Baker
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2009 11:20 AM
To: Debra Babirad
Subject: FW: Keystone Exams Update - Please share with your boards, teachers, and administrators

From: Shauna M. D'Alessandro [mailto:shaunacpa@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, August 17, 2009 10:40 PM
To: Charles Baker
Subject: Keystone Exams Update - Please share with your boards, teachers, and administrators

Dear SHASDA Superintendents
Senator Onc's office has requested that the following update (below and attached) be provided to all who are following the Keystone Exams issue so that you are aware of the process. Please continue to contact your legislators as the budget is far from being resolved, and the resolution of this issue is very much a part of the budget. Additionally **if your board has passed a resolution opposing the keystones, please fax a copy of that resolution to the IRRRC at (717)783-2664 (email: irrc@irrc.state.pa.us) as well as to your legislators.** If your board has not yet passed a resolution, please consider doing so in August or early September. A sample resolution is attached. Lastly, please consider sending your personal comments to the IRRRC at irrc@irrc.state.pa.us and encouraging others in your school community (PIA, teachers, administrators, etc.) to do the same. Bullet points summarizing concerns are attached for use in preparing comments. Prompt action is needed because the public comment period ends on September 10.

Many districts have passed resolutions against the Keystone Exams but they are not listed on the IRRRC web site for IRRRC consideration. Please follow the following link to the IRRRC's public comments. If your board's resolution and/or your comments are not listed on the following web site, please fax or email these items to them
<http://www.irrc.state.pa.us/Regulations/RegInfo.cfm?IRRCNo=2696>

Thank you
Shauna D'Alessandro
President, SHASDA

Dear Friend:

On Thursday, August 13th, the State Board of Education voted 14-2 (with one abstention) to approve the final-form regulations for the Governor's Keystone Exams assessment scheme. The regulations will now go to the House and

Senate Education Committees prior to being voted on by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC). The regulations can still be defeated on several fronts:

1. The House and Senate Education Committee could vote down the final-form regulations within the next 20 days. *Please tell your legislator that the final-form regulations for Keystone Exams (#006-312) are currently before the House and Senate Education Committees and ask them to oppose the regulations.*
2. The Senate could vote down Senate Resolution 156 – a “Sense of the Senate Resolution” that would endorse the regulations. *Please tell your Senator to oppose Senate Resolution 156.*
<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?syear=2009&sind=0&body=S&type=R&BN=0156>
3. The House could send to the Governor my legislation (Senate Bill 281), which would require legislative approval of all new graduation requirements. SB 281 passed the Senate 48-1 in June and now awaits consideration in the House Appropriations Committee. *Please ask your House member to request that House Leadership take up SB 281 as soon as possible.*
<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?syear=2009&sind=0&body=S&type=B&BN=0281>
4. The Governor and General Assembly have yet to pass a final budget for FY 2009-2010. The Governor has requested \$18 million in funding for the Keystone Exams. *Please ask your legislators to oppose funding for Keystone Exams.*
5. The Independent Regulatory Review Commission could vote down the regulations. *Please submit your comments on the regulation (#006-312) to IRRC online at <http://www.irrc.state.pa.us/Contact.cfm>*

To locate your legislator, please go to the General Assembly’s home page and type your full Zip Code in the upper right-hand corner -- <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/index.cfm>

Attached is a copy of a letter I recently sent to my Senate Republican colleagues outlining my major concerns about the Keystone Exams. Feel free to incorporate some of these points in your comments.

Thank you for your continued advocacy on this important educational issue.

RESOLUTION NO. 0-5.18

RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL KEYSTONE EXAMS
by the Board of School Directors
BENTWORTH SCHOOL DISTRICT
May 18, 2009

WHEREAS, the Bentworth School District is currently preparing all students for success in college and the workplace; and

WHEREAS, students who have passed the local proficiency evaluations and have historically experienced placement and success in college could be denied the opportunity to attend even after offers of admission have been granted; and

WHEREAS, in the Bentworth School District, students who have not scored proficient on the PSSA have shown understanding of state standards through a variety of other assessments including portfolios, oral presentations, hand-on demonstrations, and other methods; and

WHEREAS, the PSSAs and local assessments already provide districts with information about students in need of remediation, and another layer of testing will only confirm what is already known; and

WHEREAS, the State, without regulatory change, can extend technical and financial assistance to districts already known to be struggling; and

WHEREAS, verification of the validity of these alternative assessments would be required every six years and would be costly to the school district and administration in both time and money, giving districts no choice but to "voluntarily" use the Keystone Exams rather than incur the financial burden associated with the validation process; and

WHEREAS, the monies required by the districts for verification of the validity of alternative assessments would require expenditures that would be better spent in classrooms; and

WHEREAS, the criteria for local assessments are undefined and may discourage assessments that would be beneficial for diverse learners; and

WHEREAS, the addition of the Keystone Exams would reduce the number of instructional days and impose an unreasonable load of high-stakes testing on students who are already facing a burden of stressful standardized tests; and

WHEREAS, the introduction of Keystone Exams amounts to a state controlled curriculum that reduces the District's ability to provide a curriculum based on community needs and desires for education that focuses on developing in students a passion for learning, personal integrity, the pursuit of excellence and social responsibility; and


WHEREAS, the Keystone Exams will not measure 21st century skills employers are seeking and will take away instructional time that should be used for developing skills sets in the areas of leadership, collaboration, creativity and technology; and

WHEREAS, the Keystone Exams will have continuing economic impact on districts operating under Act 1 fiscal constraints and on taxpayers across the Commonwealth, and these required expenditures have no proof of cost effectiveness; and


WHEREAS, the State, having already identified best practices related to local proficiency assessments, can share these methods with all districts without the need to add Keystone Examinations and related expenses;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors of the Bentworth School District opposes the State Board of Education proposals to enact Keystone Exams and any other regulations or legislation that usurp the authority of local school districts to determine whether their students have earned high school diplomas. This resolution will be shared with the State Board of Education, legislators, including local legislators and members of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

Adopted this 18th day of May, 2009.



John Petrisek
President



Debra J. Babirad
Secretary

5/18/09

Date

5/18/09

Date