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From: dmanpierce@aol.com
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2009 10:30 AM
To: IRRC
Subject: Keystone Exams

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my opposition to the current proposed final form Chapter 4 regulations to require Keystone Exams as end of course/graduation requirements for students.

This plan will unfairly distort the "meaning" of the Grade Point Average by factoring the value of one standardized test score to count for 1/3 of a student's grade.

It is unfair that students scoring below basic on a Keystone Exam or on a module get NO credit for what they do know, but instead will be given a 0% for 1/3 of their grade, rather than the score they have earned on the test.

The weight of 1/3 and the 0% floor will unfairly affect students competing for acceptance into colleges and for scholarships.

Replacing our rigorous mid-terms and finals with Keystone Exams will serve to narrow the curriculum in our high school. Furthermore, it is not educationally in the best interest of students to administer the same Keystone Exam to students in General Biology, Accelerated Biology, and Honors Biology, replacing the assessments that have been designed to reflect the rigor of those various courses.

It is unfair that students who score Proficient will have that score count as 1/3 of their grade with no chance to increase that score, while other students who may score slightly less than Proficient will have another opportunity to raise 1/3 of their grade by re-taking the =0 D exam.

Not all students in Pennsylvania have access to the same resources in the classroom, and those resources are reflected in the facilities, the classroom materials, and in the quality of the teachers. It is not fair to withhold their diplomas by measuring them all by the same measuring stick.

Please do not create a new testing program with no basis in research as other worthwhile educational programs are being cut in order to deal with the current economic crisis. Money should be spent teaching rather than in more testing.

It is highly recommended that the Pennsylvania Department of Education focus on bridging the disparity of education received by minority students, and students with a socio-economic disadvantaged. Perhaps more focus should be given to ensuring that "educators" are more qualified and accountable, and they participate in standardized tests that will determine the depth of training they need to continue in the vocation. In addition, mandatory random classroom monitoring should be conducted by a panel from the PA Department of Education. Mandatory training hours per year, does not capture whether or not an educator has the ability to educate.

As always, let's keep our focus where it should be...in the best interest of the children. Thank you and God Bless!

Sincerely,

Darchelle Pierce
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