

BETHLEHEM-CENTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

2696



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KAREN S. DOWNIE, D.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

JOSEPH A. NEPA
Business Manager

September 3, 2009

Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street
14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

RE: Resolution opposing Keystone Exams

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter concerning the recent proposal by the State Board of Education to approve the final-form regulations of the Keystone Exams.

It is the consensus of the Bethlehem-Center Board of School Directors to oppose this proposal and I have included the resolution approved by our School Directors at their recent board meeting.

Please share this information with the appropriate individuals necessary in order that we may have a voice concerning this matter.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Karen S. Downie, D.Ed.
Superintendent

KSD/blr

Enclosure

REC'D
SEP 14 2009
COMMUNICATIONS

RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED
HIGH SCHOOL GCA/KEYSTONE EXAMS

By the Board of School Directors
Bethlehem-Center School District
August 24, 2009

WHEREAS, the Bethlehem-Center 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 Bethlehem-Center 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 GCA/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 GCA/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

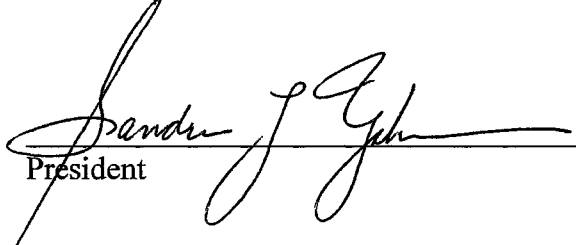
WHEREAS, the introduction of GCA/Keystone Exams amounts to a state controlled curriculum that reduces the District's ability to provide a curriculum based on community needs and desires for education that focuses on developing in students a passion for learning, personal integrity, the pursuit of excellence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

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

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors of the Bethlehem-Center School District opposes the State Board of Education proposals to enact GCA/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.


Secretary


President