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East Pennsboro Area School District

Our Vision: *World Class Performers and Productive Citizens*

Web Site: www.epasd.org

Bruce M. Deveney
Superintendent of Schools

September 16, 2009

Ms. Fiona Wilmarth
Director, Regulatory Review
IRRC
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

RE: Keystone Exams

Dear Ms. Wilmarth:

Enclosed please find a resolution adopted by the East Pennsboro Area School District concerning the proposed Keystone Exams. Your review and consideration of this resolution is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Christine V. Bright
School Board Secretary

/cvb

Enc.

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RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED
HIGH SCHOOL GCA/KEYSTONE EXAMS
by the Board of School Directors
East Pennsboro Area School District
September 10 2009

WHEREAS, the East Pennsboro Area 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 East Pennsboro Area School District, students who have not scored proficient on the PSSA have shown understanding of state standards through a variety of other local assessments; and

WHEREAS, the PSSAs and local assessments already provide districts with information about students in need of remediation; and

WHEREAS, there is a broad requirement for local assessments to be aligned with the state academic standards and include performance-level expectations to be comparable to the PSSA or Keystone Exams; and

WHEREAS, the Keystone Exams' proposal permits schools to use a local assessment option; these local assessments must be validated in order to be used at a cost yet to be determined. The proposal states that "PDE will establish a Local Assessment Validation Committee to develop criteria for the validation process and criteria for the selection of approved validation entities The committee's criteria for the validation process and criteria for selection of validation entities will be submitted to the State Board of Education for approval or disapproval." The cost of validation is to be evenly divided between the District and the State Board and has not been appropriated by the General Assembly at this time;

WHEREAS, the costs associated with validation yet to be determined will be an additional burden to school districts and taxpayers across this state, and the proposal requires school districts to absorb many new costs related to revising curriculum, professional development, test preparation and administration, remediation and other costs associated with amending standards to the new state model of curriculum being developed despite the legislative moratorium imposed and;

WHEREAS, the cost for the development and implementation of these exams approximates \$210,000,000 over the next seven years, and, in light of the current economic situation in this Commonwealth and the nation, the Governor, the State Board, the Department of Education, and the Pennsylvania School Boards Association should not be adding additional expenses to district and taxpayer budgets, and, with the

limitations of Act 1 on tax increases, school districts have limited ability to fund any potential new costs; and

WHEREAS, the artificial impact on a student's GPA that can result from the GCA/Keystone Exams through its disproportionate weighting of one-third of a student's final grade in the assessed course; 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 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 graduation competency assessments, can make available to all districts such assessments without the burden of adding GCA/Keystone Examinations and related expenses; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors of the East Pennsboro Area School District recognize the need for a graduation/course competency exam, the current GCA/Keystone Exam Proposal does not represent a comprehensive assessment that accurately reports a student's academic progress in neither the assessed discipline nor the district's courses of study;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors of the East Pennsboro Area School District opposes the State Board of Education proposals to enact GCA/Keystone Exams in its current proposed format to determine whether our 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.

Christine V. Bugh
Secretary

9/10/09

Angela V. McMaster
President