

LEBANON SCHOOL DISTRICT

Marianne T. Bartley, Ed. D.

1000 SOUTH EIGHTH STREET • LEBANON, PA 17042

Superintendent of Schools

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November 4, 2013

The Honorable Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market St., 14th floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Email: irrc@irrc.state.pa.us

Re: Final-Form Regulation #6-326 – Academic Standards and Assessments

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

I am writing to express my support for the final-form regulation #6-326 related to academic standards and assessments. I urge the Independent Regulatory Review Commission's approval. The regulation adopts the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math, along with aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams.

As an experienced school district superintendent, I know how important it is to hold all students to high expectations so they can achieve more in life. The more rigorous, internationally benchmarked PA Core Standards set high, uniform expectations for what our students should know and be able to do at each grade level. The Keystone Exams, aligned to the PA Core standards, will assess students' knowledge at or near the end of the course, rather than two or three years later, when it is too late to help struggling students catch up to hold our schools and students accountable for results.

I know that there are many superintendents and principals who do not share my belief. However, after having taken part in the European Comparative Study with the National Superintendent Roundtable in Finland, France and England, I am convinced that we need to have high standards and tough assessments that are internationally benchmarked. Our students have to be able to compete globally.

In our schools, we have adopted the Measures of Annual Progress, (MAP), and we also utilize the SAS website for diagnostic assessments. These measures are aligned with the common PA core, and they are helping our teachers move forward with curriculum and assessment work. In addition, as a Next Generation Learning Challenge Grant recipient, our high school (Lebanon High School) is redesigning instruction to personalize learning. We are making use of technologies and lessons that are aligned with the PA Core standards. We are on our way to increasing expectations with a plan for success for many more of our students.

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If adopted, the final-form regulation would make some important changes to Pennsylvania's current regulation. It would replace the national Common Core Standards with the Pennsylvania Core Standards. It would also reduce the number of Keystone Exams by half (from 10 to five) thus cutting testing time for students and reducing the number of courses in which districts are required to provide supplemental instruction. It also eliminates the provision that Keystone Exams count for at least one-third of students final grade and pushes back the timeline for Keystone Exams to be a graduation requirement from 2015 to 2017.

Again, I support the final-form Chapter 4 regulations as a sensible approach to make certain that the Commonwealth's students achieve to rigorous PA Core Standards and are prepared to transition to postsecondary education, 21st century careers, military service and productive citizenship.

Sincerely,

Marianne T. Bartley, Ed.D.

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Superintendent of Schools

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