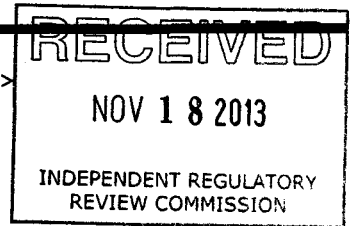


Cooper, Kathy

From: Kim McCollum-Clark <kim.mccollum-clark@millersville.edu>
Sent: Sunday, November 17, 2013 2:28 PM
To: David Sumner
Subject: Testimony re: changes to Keystone Exams



Dear Members of the IRRC:

I write today about my disapproval of the Keystone Exams, the ones currently foisted on the students of Pennsylvania, and the proposed changes to them that are being considered. As a parent, a college professor, and a teacher-educator, I find these exams to be expensive and mistaken “solutions” to problems we don’t have in this Commonwealth and this Nation. In a rush to great “accountability,” we have created a testing mania that strips teachers of the ability to be responsive to student needs in efforts to meet the needs of poorly designed and reductive tests that communicate no valuable information to citizens, teachers, or parents about student achievement.

Meaningful and authentic assessment should communicate information about individual student achievement in a timely fashion to teachers who can use this data to diagnose and intervene in student learning. The PSSAs and the Keystone Exams fail in this significant regard. None of the proposed changes touches on this failure of the current high-stakes testing regime. Simply put, these tests do not collect any data that is professionally meaningful to teachers.

Additionally, we have very good reason to believe that the further incursion of high-stakes testing—like the linking of Keystone test scores to high school graduation rates will cost the Commonwealth millions, will drive down graduation rates and lead to high drop-out rates as students absorb the personal cost of unnecessary and pointless testing, and will limit what teachers teach and students learn. Psychometrically speaking, no single set of measures can bear the weight of evaluating a student’s readiness for the demands of life that lay ahead.

In summary, I am completely and unequivocally against the changes to the PA School Code that will lead the educational system of this Commonwealth in such a wrong-headed direction. Please consider the testimony and evidence fully as you make your decisions. My own fear—well-founded, it seems—is that the decisions will be made without regard for testimony and evidence. Instead they will be based on political ideology and influence. If that is true, as I fear it is, proponents of these changes and the Common Core State Standards (sic—neither “common,” nor “core,” nor “state”) should bear in mind the broad coalition of disapproval for these initiatives that cross obvious political and ideological lines.

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