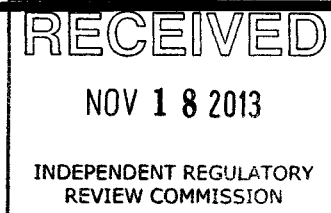


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Cooper, Kathy

From: Julio, Darlene <djulio@penncrest.org>
Sent: Monday, November 18, 2013 12:36 PM
To: David Sumner
Subject: Keystone Graduation Exams



David Sumner,

Hello Mr. Sumner, I am emailing to ask you to reject the Keystone Graduation Exams. I am a public high school teacher in a rural Pennsylvania town. I teach special education, specifically in the area of Emotional Disturbance. My students struggle with learning and emotional disabilities that impact their success in school. My students are included in many regular classes and find success and acceptance with modifications, adaptations, and individual education plans that are developed according to their unique strengths and needs.

These same students, however, are expected to pass - and be proficient - on the Keystone Graduation Exams. These exams are required to be taken by all students, even those with learning and intellectual disabilities. While some basic and minor accommodations can be made, each student is expected to take, and pass, the required tests.

Imagine trying to pass an Algebra 1 exam when you are unable to multiply without the use of a multiplication table. Imagine taking a Biology exam when you read at a 4th grade level and struggle with vocabulary and comprehension. Imagine the frustration and anxiety you would feel if you were a child suffering from a mental health or emotional disorder, knowing that your graduation was hinged on passing 3 exams. To put this in perspective, imagine taking a test in a subject that you know little about - perhaps in a foreign language in which you have a rudimentary grasp. Do you think you would be proficient? Would a score of basic mean failure?

Special education students are not the only ones negatively impacted by high-stakes testing. Many students are very bright and capable but do not perform well on exams. Students, and teachers, lose wonderful educational opportunities due to curriculum and instruction being geared toward specific assessments. Tax payers and school districts are financially affected by the costs of mandated, yet unfunded, standardized tests and remediation.

I strongly believe that our educational system needs guidelines, standards, and accountability, but I am opposed to the belief that a test, or a group of tests, can indicate proficiency. I, personally, would be interested to see the results that many proponents of these exams would have, if they, themselves, took these tests.

Please consider my comments, put the students of Pennsylvania at the forefront, and reject the Keystone Graduation Exams.

Sincerely,
Darlene Julio
PENNCREST School District