

**From:** ilyeager@zoominternet.net  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 12:19 PM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Fw: Keystone Graduation Exams

To Whom it May Concern;

The Keystone Graduation Exams details and criteria effectively :

Remove all local school district input into the educational process – where such input should remain

Become another unfunded mandate authorized and demanded by the combining of these exams with Common Core (which in itself changes the entire scope of education)

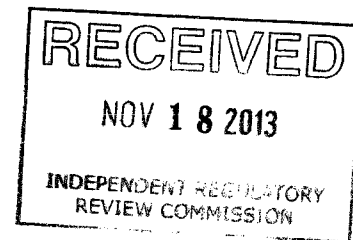
Transfer all authority from “we, the people” to a monolithic government entity.

None of our children is “common” and the state should not support such an effort to lump everyone together, and then determine who should fit into what career.

We respectfully request that you reject the proposed Chapter 4 regulations.

Very Truly Yours,

Ida Laquatra Yeager



**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Aaron Kern <amk233@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 11:56 AM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** keystone exam objection

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you to let you know that myself and family are vehemently opposed to the Keystone Exam proposal that you are scheduled to vote on this week. Making standardized tests do not benefit the schools, and it especially does not benefit the students. Standardize tests just force schools to teach to a test, instead of actually teaching curriculum that could be beneficial to the students in college and the real world.

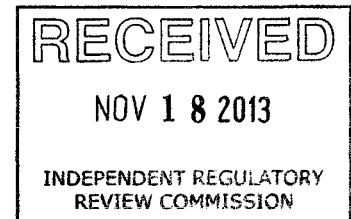
Furthermore, the costs associated with the tests (tests that provide no real benefit) will fall on people like myself, the taxpayer. While you may claim the costs will be minimal, the training, materials, preparations, etc. will cost a large amount of money. Who will end up paying that bill, the schools? The schools will then need to raise taxes, which thus impacts the taxpayer.

Has the state of Pennsylvania not learned anything from the federal "leave no child behind" experiment. That did not work either and forced schools to teach for a standardized tests, instead of teaching real educational lessons. What you are proposing is effectively the same thing except at the state level. The idea that a student could get straight A's but have his/her ability to graduate hinder on a state standardized test is ridiculous.

Do not pass this bill, it is absurd to think it will truly help students.

Sincerely,

Aaron Kern

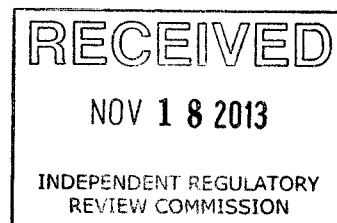


**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** donoghus@verizon.net  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 12:29 PM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Keystone Exams

These exams are just a bad idea! I hope the members realize this and vote NO. Noreen Donoghue



**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Vicki Warner <vgw@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 12:32 PM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Keystone exams for Foreign exchange students

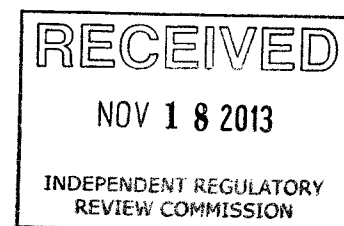
Please be advised that Conestoga hosts approximately 5 foreign exchange students each year, and they are being forced to take the Keystone exams in spite of the fact they will not graduate from Conestoga in the usual manner, and that English is their second language.

Clearly, they will not perform to the level of other Conestoga students, as their knowledge is specific to their native country. For example, asking a Belgian to take a English Language Keystone disrupts the results for Conestoga, and is upsetting to the exchange student. More specifically, our Austrian exchange student is in the grade that will be taking the Biology exam retroactively, so she studied Biology 2 years ago, in German, and is being forced to take the exam. Lastly, our math course protocol does not line up with the teaching protocol in Europe and elsewhere, so it is comparing apples & oranges. This isn't good foreign policy !

Please advocate for exempting foreign exchange students from taking the Keystone exams.

Respectfully,

Victoria Warner  
Conestoga parent, Devon, PA



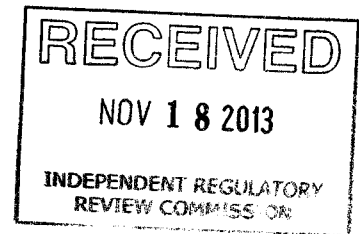
**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Andrew Kern <andrewkern@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 12:43 PM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Keystone graduation exam opposition

I wanted to share with you my opinion and opposition to the keystone education exam in hopes that my voice would be heard. I strongly oppose this bill. I see zero value in a standardized test that would prevent good students from receiving their diploma. The idea that a straight A student wouldn't receive a diploma because of this is mind boggling. We pay our schools and faculty to provide an education to our children. Not a standardized test. Not to mention the cost to fund this program is excessive. If you're going to raise \$300 million in taxes (which I also oppose), how about taking that money and investing it in our teachers and schools to improve the quality of the education. This is much more impactful than a standardized test.

Andrew Kern



**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Joann Graziano <joann.graziano.bups@statefarm.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 12:12 PM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** keystone exams

I would like to voice my thoughts on the Keystone exams as a high school graduation requirement. I do not believe in this requirement, even though it doesn't affect my children.

I believe that it is the school system's responsibility to teach my children and assess their performance to determine if they should graduate, rather than a state mandated test.

It is absolutely ridiculous to put all the onus on 1 test. There are so many factors that go into how well a child will perform on 1 test on 1 given day (even if retakes are available).

It is my understanding that the curriculum today is so much based on standardized instruction anyhow, so if the child meets the class requirements and receives a favorable grade,

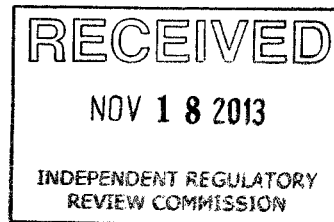
Then they should graduate without additional testing required.

The testing and testing and testing in our society today is just getting out of control. Can we go back to "teaching". And with all the "testing", what do we end up with?? A generation of helpless

Folks that don't even understand the basics of sensible financial living (ie: balancing checking accounts, savings and investing for retirement, living within their means...)

Requiring Keystone exams as a graduation requirement is NOT the answer.

JOANN GRAZIANO  
905 Greystone Dr.  
West Chester, Pa  
[Grazfamily@comcast.net](mailto:Grazfamily@comcast.net)



**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Kenneth G Fry <ken@hirschhornfry.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 11:03 AM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Keystone Exams as a requirement under Chapter 4 High School graduation requirements

Dear IRRC member:

I am very concerned about the proposal to include the successful passing of the Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement under the proposed Chapter 4 High School Graduation requirements. This high stake testing, where implemented in other states, did nothing to increase basic skill proficiency and has only served as a political touch point in the on-going battle on perspectives toward insuring the best way to educate our youth for the rapidly changing future. No Child Left Behind and other non-funded mandates have only served to teach our children how best to succeed at test taking – and not with the basic skills required. Therefore, any child that cannot master test taking – but can understand materials and demonstrate proficiency using other methods such as presentations or oral discussions is at risk for not graduating. We all know that graduation from high school is a basic step toward economic stability for our children and for our community and those that do not graduate carry a life-long stigma of failure.

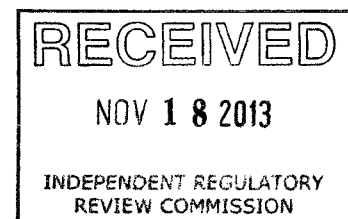
In February, 2013, as a result of the Graduation Nation report, it was reported that Pennsylvania is one of 23 states not on track to reach the milestone of 90% high school graduation rate by 2020, largely due to lagging progress in graduating Black and Latino students. The report further says that “Pennsylvania is one of 20 states in which the African American graduation rate is below 66 percent, and one of 16 states in which the Latino graduation rate is below 66 percent (both are 65 percent). The gap between White and Black graduation rates and White and Latino graduation rates is, in both cases, 23 percentage points. The White graduation rate in Pennsylvania now stands at 88 percent. Although Pennsylvania has a higher overall graduation rate at 83 percent than the nation as a whole (78.2 percent), it will not attain the goal because much of the overall improvement nationally is due to much better rates for Black and Latino students. Pennsylvania lags too far behind in those groups to catch up in seven years. The average yearly improvement in the graduation rate between 2006 and 2010 is 1.25 percentage points. Pennsylvania's improvement was 0.4 point.” With these grim statistics, it appears that our focus should not be on ANOTHER TEST but on how we can increase graduation rates.

This requirement will just be another test that will serve no purpose in actually EDUCATING our children. But rather just keep the group providing the tests more profitable.

We have too much at stake financially in the many cash-strapped districts as a result of the Commonwealth legislators' poor handling of the Teacher's pension fund and stalled economic recovery.

Please do now allow our politically activated proponents of this proposal to sacrifice our children's future for their short term political gain and someones financial gain.

Kenneth G Fry



**Cooper, Kathy**

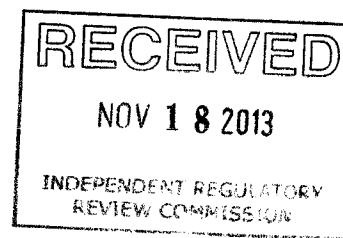
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**From:** Molly Todd <btandtco@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 11:23 AM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Keystone exams

We are residents in the T.E. School district in Chester County with two children attending. We do not wish to have the Keystone Exams implemented in our schools.

Sincerely,

Molly Todd  
647 w valley rd  
Wayne, pa.  
19087





**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Beth Osborn <mrsoz3boys@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 11:57 AM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** KEYSTONE EXAMS

Good Morning,

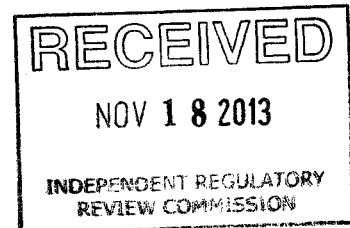
I would like to send in a comment regarding the attaching the ability to graduate to another standardized test. As a parent of 3 children - one who has learning disabilities - I am very much against it. The PSSA's have ruined the school system - teaching to the test has become common place and our children are now used to get funding for the school districts - no one seems to care if this is the right information to be studying - just that they pass the test. It has taken all free time away from both the teachers and the students and has made school a chore for children. There are not many who like to go to school anymore.

The Keystones is now affecting how our High School students are taught which is wrong. They are being taught to the test - offered incentives to pass it the first time around and focusing on 3 subjects when every mark they get in high school is important for their future. High School is about prepping for the future - whether that be college or a trade school - it should not be about what subjects the State feels is important. No college is going to care if the student passed the Keystones - they only care about their GPA and if the focus is pulled away from every course -- which is will be if the PSSA format is any guide - then they will be hurt going into college.

The fact that neither the PSSA's and Keystone's allow for modifications for children with learning disabilities because the State cannot staff an office to handle it is the worst thing I have seen happen in this whole fiasco. Taking out 40% of your staff and then still pushing these tests down everyone's throats especially those that will have trouble passing them without modifications is malpractice on the part of the state and the trust with the parents is gone.

Leave our high school students alone to make the choices for their future without having to worry about passing a test someone in Harrisburg decides is ok -- they have enough to deal with and decide at this time. Leave them alone

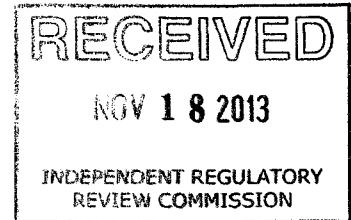
Beth Osborn



**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Ida Yeager Sales <idayeagersales@zoominternet.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 12:19 PM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Fw: Keystone Graduation Exams



To Whom it May Concern;

The Keystone Graduation Exams details and criteria effectively :

Remove all local school district input into the educational process – where such input should remain

Become another unfunded mandate authorized and demanded by the combining of these exams with Common Core (which in itself changes the entire scope of education)

Transfer all authority from “we, the people” to a monolithic government entity.

We respectfully request that you reject the proposed Chapter 4 regulations.

I am the mother of a seven year old boy. After 50 some days of helping my FIRST grader with his homework, I now understand why the number of graduating students is down. These young students don't get a chance to grasp hold of anything before FIFTH grade curriculum is being forced/shoved into a FIRST graders mind/head. They are being assaulted with a laserium-laser-like show daily with words, grammar, numbers, Algebra, Geometry, etc. Algebra, Geometry, In FIRST grade? Why? They are completely bombarded. How can they possibly learn when nothing that is started is ever finished before the next fact comes along. I learned without schema (really? “schema”?). They are not being taught, they are being suffocated ad nauseum with unnecessary “liberal arts”: “how do I feel about numbers, learning”?

I learned my addition 1+1, 1+2, 1+3...in order, memorized through nines 9+1, 9+2...he gets flash cards with, 4+5, 6+2, 0+3...There is no order to this, no rhyme or reason. Not all children are ADHD, but this might help them to be. I graduated, with Honors and a 4.0 average, in 1988 well prepared for the “real world” using the “old system”. What is being taught now, in my opinion, is only preparing our children for failure, reliance on the government or someone to take care of them, or the ability to play on the computer. I personally DO NOT think that BLOG is an appropriate FIRST grade spelling word. Nor do I believe that writing spelling words (as a weekly assignment no less) in snow, flour, mud, sand, shaving cream, clay, playdoh or in the air with a flashlight will enable mastery of the spelling of that word. MEMORIZATION. Memorization is a wonderful thing. Because of it I am able to add even if the power is out. How many Graduates today can say the same? I can even make change without a cash register to tell me what it is. Why? Because we memorized things. Everything does not have to be fun and creative. Numbers are what they are: numbers. There is no feeling in math, i.e. “How does this make you feel?” really who cares; 1+1 will always equal 2.

Thank you, but no more COMMON CORE. ***Our children are wonderful individuals; NONE of them are COMMON.***

My last complaint is about the Constitution; why ever would we quit teaching our children about The Constitution? It's the reason that we are all who and where we are at now.

If it is not being taught, does that mean our Judicial System is now not based on Constitutional Law? So what is to happen, are there going to not be anymore lawyers, policemen, judges?

When did "WE THE PEOPLE" vote on this?

Our children deserve the best education system in the world: whether it is in public, private, home or charter schools, and the cooperation between Common Core and the Keystone Graduation Exams we feel is not providing that foundation in any way.

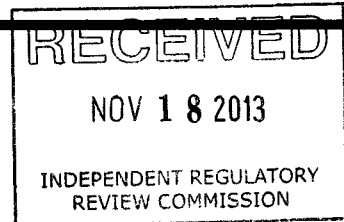
I respectfully thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

*Rachel C Altares*

Rachel C Altares

**Cooper, Kathy**

**From:** Mara Goldberg <mgoldberg@ridleysd.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 11:58 AM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** Opposing The Keystone Test



## **To Whom it May Concern:**

# **Keystone Graduation Exams Don't Make the Grade**

**by State Senator Andy Dinniman, Ed.D.  
Minority Chairman, Senate Education Committee**

In the name of raising academic standards, the Corbett administration is attempting to implement the Keystone Graduation Exams – high-stakes graduation exams that will result in higher property taxes, less classroom instruction, more “teaching to the test,” and the potential for a generation of students to be branded as failures.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania State Board of Education have proposed the Keystone Graduation Exams to the Pennsylvania Independent Regulatory Review Commission, which is set to vote on them on Nov. 21.

It is fundamentally wrong for three standardized tests to determine a student's high school graduation, especially when those tests were developed with no input whatsoever from a course teacher or local district. If the Keystone Graduation Exams are approved, high school students starting with current freshmen (Class of 2017) will face the possibility of passing all their classes but failing a Keystone Exam and not getting a diploma.

It is downright irresponsible to implement a program of graduation exams that will result in the largest unfunded mandate in the past 50 years. The proposed Keystone Exams require school districts to provide remediation and supplementary instruction for students who do not pass. However, the Pennsylvania Department of Education provides no funding whatsoever for remediation costs. In fact, the department has the gall to claim that the exams will have no cost to local school districts, even as test results from the summer indicate failure rates as high as 60 percent in Algebra I and Biology and 45 percent in Literature. It is conservatively estimated that the exams will result in an unfunded mandate of more than \$300 million a year. It's no stretch of the imagination to realize that the buck will be passed onto taxpayers in the form of massive school property tax increases.

Meanwhile, financially distressed school districts throughout the state are teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. In Philadelphia, for example, schools face class sizes of nearly 50 students, have been forced to close their libraries and even struggle to afford textbooks and basic instructional materials. How can we, in good conscience, spend millions to implement a new testing program – a program that will likely bankrupt our poorest schools?

It just doesn't make sense for the Pennsylvania Department of Education to continue to expand standardized testing at a time when increasing evidence challenges the notion that it is the best way to gauge student achievement and learning. Already, anywhere from 10 to 20 days (out of a 180-day school year) of instruction time is lost to testing and test preparation. If the Keystone Graduation Exams are approved, an eighth-grade student taking Algebra I would face taking a class test for a class grade, the PSSA Math Test and the Keystone Exam, which would be banked for graduation purposes. The keystones will only further promote “teaching to the test,” while sacrificing more valuable classroom instruction time to standardization.

It is simply unfair to stamp “failure” on the backs of teachers, schools and communities that lack the fiscal resources to adequately prepare students to pass these exams. Why should we expect students who are set up for failure to stick with the program? And how can we expect to revitalize economically distressed communities when their schools and students are labeled as substandard and second-rate?

There has been no shortage of problems with the proposed Keystone Graduation Exams. The fact that almost all of the superintendents and Intermediate Unit Directors in the Philadelphia suburbs have signed onto a position paper opposing them is a clear indication that something is wrong.

Still, the Corbett administration continues to seek to quickly and quietly push them through. In fact, the Department of Education has repeatedly withheld data that is necessary for weighing the costs to local districts. In response, I have been forced to file seven Right to Know requests in an effort to obtain exam results and breakdowns by individual school district, as well as information regarding the potential costs or estimates of such remediation. Keep in mind, such costs will weigh heavier on lower-performing and financially distressed school districts as they face a higher potential for students requiring remediation.

Please STOP the Keystone exams from happening.

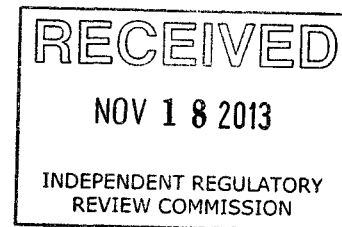
Regards,

Mara Goldberg  
Learning Support Department  
Ridley High School  
[mgoldberg@ridleysd.org](mailto:mgoldberg@ridleysd.org)

**Cooper, Kathy**

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**From:** Laura Perry <lperry@ridleysd.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2013 11:42 AM  
**To:** IRRC  
**Subject:** keystone exams



Please opposed the Keystone exams.

It is fundamentally wrong for three standardized tests to determine a student's high school graduation, especially when those tests were developed with no input whatsoever from a course teacher or local district. If the Keystone Graduation Exams are approved, high school students starting with current freshmen (Class of 2017) will face the possibility of passing all their classes but failing a Keystone Exam and not getting a diploma.

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Laura Perry  
Ridley High School  
901 Morton Ave  
Folsom, PA 19033  
610-237-8034

"Life is not about what you are doing.  
It is about what you are choosing to be"