

Cooper, Kathy

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IRRC

From: Leslie Lewis [brantpoint1@msn.com]
Sent: Sunday, October 21, 2012 8:57 AM
To: IRRC
Subject: Keystone Exams

2012 OCT 22 AM 9:10

Dear Independent Regulatory Review Commission:

I am a resident of the Tredyffrin/Easttown School District, and I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed changes to Chapter 4 regulations regarding high school graduation requirements. Students in Tredyffrin/Easttown School District have historically experienced high degrees of success in college and the workplace, and I am concerned that the addition of high-stakes exit exams may have the unintended consequence of hindering students who are proficient but do not always demonstrate the fullest extent of their skills in a traditional testing environment. Beyond my opposition to the concept of graduation exams, I am further concerned by the following components of the proposed regulations:

- In addition to the Algebra 1, Literature and Biology Keystone Exam requirements, the State plans to add an exam in English Composition for the class of 2019 and beyond and a Civics and Government exam for the class of 2020 and beyond. Two separate tests in English Composition are unnecessary and a poor use of taxpayer resources. A Civics and Government exam will require expensive restructuring of high school curricula across the State because many local districts will need to move the related course out of the junior or senior year to an earlier year. The costs to local taxpayers for textbooks alone may exceed \$100,000 to facilitate such a change.
- The requirement of three years of instruction prior to an alternative assessment places an undue burden on students, limits their ability to choose other courses, and could harm the college admissions process. The alternative assessment path should be made available at an earlier point.
- Will this unfunded mandate permit flexibility for high-performing schools with a record of success and also provide additional support for struggling schools? Is this another State remedy that assumes "one size fits all?"
- Our school district is struggling with financial "sustainability" as the State continues to reduce its contributions to local districts, places limitations on district's ability to raise revenue, and then adds another layer of financial cost with no state assistance.

I feel that I have a unique perspective regarding standardized assessments. I am a parent of two children in the district who will be directly affected by the proposed changes and I currently work in three of our elementary schools as the Occupational Therapist. I have witnessed, first hand, the amount of time that goes into preparing students for taking standardized assessments. So much time is spent teaching the children how to take the exam and prepare answers that are more acceptable for the requirements of the exams and direct instructional time for the students is forfeited. I feel that the Keystone Exams will introduce just another level of teaching to the test with additional "lost" direct instruction time. Instead of teaching our children how to take tests, why not allow our highly qualified teachers do their jobs and teach our children. Our children are already required to take so many standardized assessments. Instead of creating a population of children who can take tests, why not better

focus our instructional time in the promotion of helping to create the type of students needed for todays world?
We need students who can think and problem solve and come up with a variety of creative solutions for a variety of situations.

As a result, I urge you to amend the proposed Chapter 4 regulations to reflect these concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Leslie E. Lewis

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