

Cooper, Kathy

2976

RECEIVED
IRRG

From: Chris and David Shackelford [shackelford@verizon.net]
Sent: Sunday, November 04, 2012 5:40 PM
To: ED, State Board of Ed
Subject: Pennsylvania Keystone Exams

2012 NOV -6 AM 10:08

To Whom It May Concern:

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.

Students within the T/E school district currently face enough state exams; requiring additional testing, that must be passed in order to graduate high school, is unnecessary and a waste of taxpayer resources. As someone certified in K-6 Elementary Education, I've seen firsthand how educators "prepare" students to take the tests that they do today. Valuable classroom time is used at the detriment of learning; students typically forget much of what is covered in the exams shortly after taking the tests; and some students simply do not test well. These tests are not a true indicator of a students' knowledge, and the students of T/E should not be subjected to the Keystone Exams.

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

Sincerely,
Christina Shackelford
3 Kates Glen
Paoli, PA 19301