

EMBARGOED MATERIAL

Cooper, Kathy

From: Schmeck, Barbara <Barbara.Schmeck@ParenteBeard.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 21, 2013 10:01 AM
To: IRRC
Subject: Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Attachments: RDG-WPSCANSTATION_LDAPMAIL_11212013-093043_1.pdf

Attached is a PDF copy of the letter and I will also send the hard copy in the mail.

Thank you,

Barbara Schmeck
Office Administrator
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2013 NOV 21 10:01 AM
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2013 JUN 01 11:10:18

The Honorable Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Email: irrc@irrc.state.pa.us

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

As the Vice President of Accounting & Audit and Central Region Managing Partner at ParenteBeard LLC, I support final-form regulation #6-326 (Academic Standards and Assessments) that adopts the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math and aligned assessments, including the Keystone Exams. The regulation also includes important safeguards and supports to ensure struggling students have the extra help they need to succeed.

As a Pennsylvania business owner, I care whether high school students graduate prepared for the workforce or higher education.

It's quite simple: Business leaders need to have confidence in the quality of Pennsylvania's high school diploma.

Looking to the future, we need a vibrant educational system with rigorous, internationally benchmarked standards (PA Core Standards) and aligned assessments, including the Keystone Exams, which will help produce students with the necessary skills to succeed in life and to help businesses grow.

I support the adoption of strong standards such as the Pennsylvania Core Standards and aligned assessments, including the Keystone Exams. I encourage the Commission to adopt the final-form regulation, which I believe would add significant value to Pennsylvania's high school diploma and workforce.

Sincerely,

David C. Capitano, CPA
Vice President of Accounting & Audit
And Central Region Managing Partner

Dear Mr. Sumner,

2015 NOV 21 11 2: 39

I would just like to start off by saying that what I am writing to you is about this new math curriculum. This year the school is now focusing on a new math program and how the teachers are teaching us this year. Our school has taken a huge priority on teamwork this year. Now the main reason for this letter I am writing is mainly to tell you how students my age are reacting to this curriculum. Some good and better things and some bad and more disappointing things. So let me start off by saying last year, and all of the other years including elementary school, we have had textbooks. Now, it seems like there is no such thing. This year I have seen not one text book in relation to math in the school I attend. No matter how much of an annoyance it was to take text books home or to go onto the online text books at home, in my opinion, (and many others I have asked), was a lot better than these packets we are starting to receive this year. Also, the packets that are handed to us gives us our notes, whereas last year we would copy onto loose leaf paper, notebooks, etc. And again, no matter how much of an annoyance it was to copy down our notes, it helped us in the long run. For a fact, studies have shown that by reading, writing, and listening to information helps us students remember information we will need to know in the future.

Believe me or not, I am not a student that gets straight A's in every class in school. But how they have changed how the teachers are teaching us is really bothersome to me. Math was always, since elementary school, my best basic subject by far. There are quite a few people who have told me how they feel about this curriculum. The students I have talked to said I quote "It makes me feel like I am in first grade." I feel the exact same way and many others do too. My "group members", classmates, and friends all agree with me. Honestly us eighth grade students should feel at least a little bit of stress of much teachers teach us students or how much work we have to do a night. Some other friends of mine told me I quote, "It is like I am in first grade getting high school problems." Not just one student said this to me. Multiple students say almost the exact statement!

To be fair on both sides and not make this a letter on all bad things about this curriculum, one girl told me she did like the way they have changed things. I have only heard this once asking around. But a side note in there with all do respect, she is in a small group math class. I had asked her why she liked the change and she responded, "It's easier." That brings up another topic. What us eighth grade students really should be saying is that it is hard, not easy! We are in eighth grade math and this time next year we will be in high school! In my opinion if anyone thinks that their math class is always easy and they exceed in their class, teachers should be considering moving up to the next math level and see how they do.

Now you are probably wondering why other students and I feel like we are in first grade Well let me start off by saying there is no independency. Teamwork is all you hear about in class. Now I have an idea why you are pushing the idea of teamwork and how to get along with your classmates, but then again I am not totally sure why this is a huge priority in class now. My teacher showed me a video why we are building up the idea of teamwork, but I did not understand the reasoning behind it. One of the students in the

video told us that one of the reasons why we have teams is because you can ask your team before “embarrassing yourself in front of the class” asking a question about your lesson. How much sense does that make? What if that student had an honestly good question that maybe if they had asked in front of the class, made other students make connections to understand the topic better? Now, if you take a moment and think about it, what is teamwork going to help us with in our future? You can’t rely on your employees to be your buddy to help you with your work. They have their own things to do and worry about! The schools are not teaching us to be independent, and the rate our economy is, we will need to exceed in life. Our parent can’t always be there to help you right when you need them. Sure they will do their best to help you, but they cannot help you when you’re at a job interview for example. Along with parents helping their children, it is hard for them to help us now. When they were in middle school they did not have this curriculum so they do not know how to help us because they might be teaching the wrong way.

There are some other reasons why my grade feels like we are in first grade. Every time we get a right OR WRONG answer the students receives a get kiddy gestures such as “The Clam Clap”, “The Rollercoaster”, “The Halloween Cheer”, and it goes on... Towards the beginning of the year, if a classmate of mine were to raise his/her hand and answer the question right or wrong we would get applauded. It has been a few months into school and she does not do it as much, but if one of the students gets the answer wrong, she does not come right out and say no, that is the wrong answer. She says “Well, I see where you can see that”, even if it has nothing to do with the topic! Then she goes ahead and tells the class to applaud the student. I am going to say my brother has told me his math teacher does not do that. So in other words my math teacher is obviously a supporter of this curriculum. Other things that make us feel as if were in a younger grade than what we are in is my teacher calls on us by popsicle sticks. I know you cannot do anything about that. We also have team folders and random reporter. Team folders are for your homework which you put in at the end of class. Random reporter is the score we get for when we answer the “Get the Goof” question right. We also do not get a score lower than 80 which also makes us feel like we’re little kids. Again, we are in eighth grade and we won’t be angry or sad we didn’t get the right answer about a lesson we are still in the process of learning.

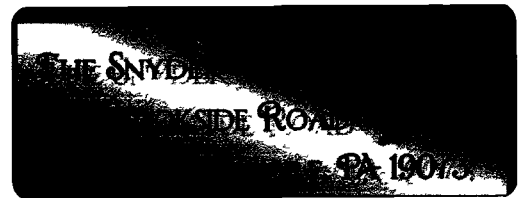
One of the last topics I would like to talk about is homework and testing. The teacher does not check to see if your homework was done. It is the “recorders” job to check if you did it or not. I get that teachers may not like to check almost 200 sheets of homework 180 times a year. So I had no problem with this. Now I do... My teacher told me if it doesn’t look like you totally understood how to do your homework or if you didn’t show a lot of work, the group members could decide whether you get credit for it or not, which ends up being part of your overall math grade. This can turn into a bullying issue. There is four people in your group. If three people in the group do not like the fourth person and out of those three people one of them is the recorder, every day the recorder can mark that that fourth student didn’t do their homework. The teacher would not even know about it either because she does not look at your homework. The teacher assumes that whatever the recorder marked down, is accurate.

In my brother’s math class, he told my family that there is cheating going on. He

stated that during homework check, the students copy down answers from the board and the recorder marks it as if they did their homework. There is an example of the recorder lying and why the teacher should be checking homework instead of putting the responsibility on students in the class. I'll be closing this letter up by saying one last thing. The teacher does offer retests and to come into help class in the morning which is something we can definitely take advantage of (not in a bad way). I told my parents what my teachers had told me and my brother which was "If everyone in your group does well on their test except for you, the blame is on the group." Now this make no sense what so ever! It is not the groups fault if you do not understand what you are being taught. You could of token advantage of the opportunity to go into help class if you really did not understand. Not one bit of what she said about it being the groups fault makes any sense to me.

If you could just take into consideration of those you have affected and maybe let students/schools to have a choice instead of telling us we have to learn a certain way. I know that many kids won't be doing the same thing as I'm doing, so please take this into deep thought. My voice should be heard and I want to succeed in life and I want to be challenged, but none of this can happen when I am not working independently. I want to thank you for taking your time to read this letter expressing how my schoolmates and myself feel about this curriculum and many others.

Sincerely, Sierra Snyder



Collaborating to Engineer Thinking & Cultivating Lifelong Learning

Sullivan County High School

PO Box 98

749 South Street

Laporte, PA 18626

Phone: (570) 946-7001 Fax: (570) 946-4202

Edward J. Pietroski

Principal

November 18, 2013

EMBARGOED MATERIAL

The Honorable Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III
Chairman, Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC)
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Re: Final-Form Regulations #6-326 – Academic Standards and Assessments

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

On behalf of Sullivan County High School, I am writing to express the District's strong support for the final-form regulation 6-326 related to academic standards and assessments. I urge the Independent Regulatory Review Commission to approve the legislation as written.

The regulation adopts the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math, along with aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams.

These important educational reforms will create rigorous, internationally benchmarked academic standards, and it is our firm belief that it will give our teachers another important resource to use in preparing our students for both college and career. The aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams, will help to ensure accountability for students and for our schools. They will provide us with an accurate measurement of student achievement and will help to ensure they have met the standards by the time they graduate from high school.

This legislation makes some important changes to the commonwealth's current education standards and assessments. If approved, this final-form regulation will replace the national Common Core State Standards with the Pennsylvania-specific PA Core Standards. It will also reduce the number of Keystone Exams from ten to five, thus reducing testing time for students and cutting the number of subjects in which school districts are required to provide remediation and administer project-based assessments. In this regard it is critical that we find the balance between testing and accountability and keeping our precious instructional time as intact as possible as we prepare our students. The final-form regulation also eliminates the requirement that every high school senior complete a culminating project. This is another crucial piece of the equation. We believe we can more accurately marshal our resources and reassign teaching staff, as needed, to assist with administering the project-based assessments or to provide supplemental instruction prior to reassessment.

As Pennsylvania's students continue to compete with students from across the country and around the world for college admissions and jobs, we believe we have found a direction which will truly give them an advantage. Our goal is for every student to graduate with the academic foundation necessary to be successful in their next chosen step after high school. In this way we hope to place even more students in an even better position to be successful. These final-form regulations offer students and school districts a variety of pathways to success and include specific supports for students and schools.

Again, Sullivan County High School strongly supports the regulations and urges IRRC's approval.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Pietroski
SCHS Principal

"An Equal Rights and Opportunity School District in Compliance with Title IX and Section 504"
Educate-----Engage-----Empower

EMBARGOED MATERIAL

November 18, 2013

The Honorable Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III

Chairman

Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC)

333 Market Street, 14th Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17101

Email: irrc@irrc.state.pa.us

RECEIVED
IRRC
NOV 21 11 2:39

Re: Final-Form Regulations #6-326 – Academic Standards and Assessments

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

On behalf of the Montgomery Area School District, I am writing to express the District's strong support for the final-form regulation 6-326 related to academic standards and assessments. I urge the Independent Regulatory Review Commission's approval.

The regulation adopts the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math, along with aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams.

These important educational reforms will create rigorous, internationally benchmarked academic standards to prepare our students to be successful in postsecondary education and 21st century careers while providing a strong system of supports for students. The aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams, provide a practical accountability system for measuring student

achievement and ensuring students have met the standards by the time they graduate from high school.

This regulation makes some important changes to the commonwealth's current education standards and assessments. If approved, this final-form regulation will replace the national Common Core State Standards with the Pennsylvania-specific PA Core Standards. It will also reduce the number of Keystone Exams from ten to five, thus reducing testing time for students and cutting the number of subjects in which school districts are required to provide remediation and administer project-based assessments. The final-form regulation also eliminates the requirement that every high school senior complete a culminating project, which will free up resources that can be used to administer the project-based assessments or provide supplemental instruction.

Pennsylvania's students are competing with students from across the country and around the world for college admissions and for jobs. However, too many of our young people are graduating without the academic foundation and skills they need to succeed. These final-form regulations offer students and school districts a variety of pathways to success and include specific supports for students and schools.

Again, the Montgomery Area School District strongly supports the regulations and urges IRRC's approval.

Sincerely,



Gary L. Yocum, Treasurer

EMBARGOED MATERIAL

Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Mr. David Sumner
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Email: dsumner@itrcc.state.pa.us

2013 NOV 21 PM 2:29

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Dear Mr. Sumner,

I am writing as a concerned school board director from the West Chester Area School District. I wish to express my strong opposition to the Keystone Exam graduation requirement in Chapter 4.

Here are two of the recent experiences in our district with the Keystone exams and how they are going to impact our students and our budget. At the beginning of November our high school teachers were scheduled to take the 45 minute online test required for teachers to become certified to administer the Keystone exams. They had already completed the online course given by the Department of Education on how to give the tests. At 2:45 the teachers went online. The feed from the state failed and could not be re-connected. The Keystone tests are being given December 2 and 3, 2013. The teachers are "working to contract" at this time, and the next time they have to attend a faculty meeting is December 4th. That experience is an annoyance and a waste of time. What follows is much more expensive.

At our last board meeting we were given a proposal from our district administration to hire three fulltime Biology Specialists . Like a reading or math specialist, this would be a support person (not a classroom teacher) who would specifically be assigned to help teachers do a better job of preparing students for the Keystone biology tests, for tutoring students who failed the tests, who would work with students on projects after they failed the tests, and who would give the tests. The cost of these three positions was \$252,000. Why that amount? I quote from the proposal:

"The district -wide cost minimum estimate for providing the supplemental instruction before or after school is \$77,782.00. Without the availability of this full-time position in each high school (West Chester has three), we would incur this estimated \$77,782.00 expense in fulfilling this mandate."

The proposal continues: "The proposed Chapter 4 regulations also mandate that students are eligible to take a project-based assessment in lieu of additional Keystone Exams after at least two non-proficient attempts (one non-proficient attempt for students with an IEP).

This process requires both a tutor and a test administrator, both for extensive hours and thus significant dollars (this cost is difficult to estimate due to number of students involved and length of time for each student to complete the Project-based assessment; estimated cost is \$103,710.00) The Biology Specialist would be able to fulfill both roles, thus eliminating the need to pay this additional \$103,710. "

All the time it took to try to understand how much the costs involved with this mandate and how to best spend taxpayer dollars is a response to the refusal of the Department of Education to supply us with realistic numbers of the hours these things will take and the costs that might be involved. Not one administrator in our district has this extra time to spend on figuring how best to work with the requirements of preparing our students to take and tutor and retest them if they fail.

I spent my career as a teacher, an administrator and a supervisor. My deep concern with the Keystone is for the students who will not be able to pass these tests. And for students all across Pennsylvania who will never pass these tests and will not graduate. The Keystone is a certain and deplorable pathway to failure for students with IEPs, students with fewer resources and students in schools whose teachers will be labeled as failures. It is altogether a negative, a punitive and a hopeless attempt on your part to have our students be "college and career ready." You have married two entities that were never meant to be married: The Common Core Standards and graduation requirement called Keystone. You have threatened school districts that if the three Keystone do not pass on the 21st, we will revert to the regulations that dictate we give 10 exams which will each count one-third of the student's grade. NEITHER OPTION IS ACCEPTABLE. The entire process needs to be re-thought, redesigned and overhauled.

Listen to the educators who have written to you. Dr. Elliott Seif's paper on why these exams should not be used for graduation is right on target. I likewise support his proposal that the tests be used as formative assessments so that the results can be used to inform instruction. I also support his proposal that the Keystone be used to award a Keystone Honors Academic Diploma. I too would like to see the graduation project reinstated in Chapter 4. We need to be encouraging our students, not punishing them.

Sincerely,



Susan Tiernan
West Chester Area School Board Member

C: Senator Andrew Dinniman
Representative Dan Truitt
Senator Dominick Pileggi
Representative Chris Ross