



June 1, 2015

The Keystone Exams must be removed as a graduation requirement for the following reasons:

1. They are an unfair assessment of a student's academic progress. A single test should not determine whether a student graduates. Students spend 13 years of their lives in school, and one test given on one or two days isn't representative of their learning.
2. There are concerns about how well the test aligns with curriculum. For example, over the last three years only 54 percent of students statewide are passing the biology test. In West Chester, a high performing district, the pass rate for our current sophomore class is about 78 percent.
3. By 2015, when the current 10th graders have become 11th graders and the test becomes a real concern for graduation, there will be a landslide of complaints from parents. Informal surveys show most parents aren't fully aware of the exams as a graduation requirement. By the time students and parents really realize the impact this is going to have, many students will have lost two entire academic years on missed opportunities to take electives or extra-curriculars because they will have had to spend that time on test remediation. Some of the current sophomores in WCASD who did not pass at least one of the three Keystone Exams are already enrolled in remedial classes in lieu of an elective course.
4. School districts now spend *nearly 60 percent of their time preparing for and taking state tests* and that number will increase with the keystones as a graduation requirement. The time students will have to spend in remediation is a detriment to their education and takes away from time they could be spending learning other things and taking electives.
5. The costs for schools to provide help/remediation is extreme – and is an unfunded mandate. Districts are having to spend money to hire additional teachers to help with remediation and to handle the alternative project-based assessment.
6. Technical schools will be significantly impacted because some students won't have time to attend the tech school portion of their day because they'll be in remediation.
7. The timing of the tests is poor since many classes haven't covered the information that students are being tested on by the time the test is administered.
8. There are no real accommodations in the tests for special education students.
9. This additional and cumbersome testing dramatically impacts scheduling at the high school level.

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10. If students fail a Keystone Exam, they will be required to pass a project based assessment. The PA Department of Education has not provided details on how the project-based assessment will be evaluated.
11. With the new requirement to pass three Keystone Exams, the PA Department of Education no longer requires students to complete a senior graduation project. Many of these projects provided service to the community. WCASD will be changing its graduation policy to eliminate the senior graduation project as a requirement beginning with the class of 2017. We don't believe we can effectively monitor both the Keystone requirement and a senior graduation project.

Many of our local legislators have expressed support for making changes to the Keystone Exam as a graduation requirement. Senate Bill 838 could be voted on this summer. If passed, it would still require the test be given but would put a moratorium on the Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement. Local school districts would be making decisions about graduation requirements and it would not be determined solely by three tests.

House Bill 168 is a bill that could be voted on this summer and if passed would require the Keystone Exams to be taken but would eliminate the requirement for graduation. Local school districts would be making decisions about graduation requirements and it would not be determined solely by three tests.