



May, 2017

Passing of all three Keystone Exams (Biology, English Literature, and Algebra) is required for any student to graduate beginning with the class of 2019. 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 five years only 58 percent of students statewide are passing the biology test. In West Chester, a high performing district, the pass rate for our current senior class is about 82 percent.
3. It is estimated that approximately 60 of the 960 students in the WCASD graduating class of 2019 will not graduate because they did not pass all three of these Keystone Exams, but will have passed our courses.
4. The Pa Department of Education estimates that between 30,000 and 50,000 students in the state will not graduate in 2019 because they did not pass all three Keystone Exams.
5. By fall, 2017, the class of 2019 (current 10th graders) who have not passed all three Keystone Exams, will be placed in courses to be provided test preparation in order to pass these exams. They will be removed from elective courses in order to find the time needed.
6. 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.
7. 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. WCASD has spent more than \$1.5 million the past three years to provide additional instruction for students to pass these exams.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. There are no real accommodations in the tests for special education students.

11. This additional and cumbersome testing dramatically impacts scheduling at the high school level.
12. If students fail a Keystone Exam, they will be required to take remedial classes, or pass a project based assessment (PBA). The PBA takes six weeks to administer and there is a four-month turnaround time on the results.
13. The General Assembly passed a law in June, 2016 that delayed these requirements until the class of 2019. The law also required the Pa. Department of education to draft a plan to address graduation requirements. PDE submitted that plan in August 2016 but it has not been acted upon by the Legislature. The PDE plan provided flexibility to school districts to determine graduation requirements while maintaining high standards.

Sincerely,

James R. Scanlon, Ed.D.