



**The School District of Haverford Township**  
**Dr. William S. Keilbaugh, Ed.D.**  
**Superintendent of Schools**  
*The Oakmont School Central Administration & Early*  
*Childhood Education Center*  
50 East Eagle Road, Havertown, PA 19083

August 26, 2013

Senator Folmer, Senator Dinniman and other members, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Senate Education committee today on behalf of the Superintendents and Curriculum Directors of Delaware County and their respective school districts.

The comments I'm offering today are drawn from two letters, the first dated August 29, 2012, sent to Secretary Tomalis and second dated May 20, 2013 sent to Deputy Secretary Carolyn Dumaesq, that outlined our predictions of significant problems with the Keystone Testing schedule and resulting disruption to educational programs and then this past spring where we were confronted with unanticipated changes in the PSSA's causing many children to simply melt down in anxiety.

We made the following observations:

1. The implications of this first full year of training and testing with the Keystones posed at the local level significant disruption to instruction and programs. The disruption caused by training, testing, logistics and repeated administration of course ending exams to daily instruction and supervision of teaching and programs have a negative impact on the students, teaching and administrative staff(s). The administrative and clerical activity alone associated with the increased testing, such as labeling, reviewing databases, unpacking, counting, repackaging, shipping, supervision of staff for security issues and the training of teachers and others, results in significant loss of planning, supervision and instructional time. This disrupts the focus of every good school district attempting to improve student performance.
2. Of significant concern is the dialogue and communication between PDE and school leaders. It continues to be problematic. When concerns are raised they are brushed aside or not even responded to. The local discussions and concerns regarding high stakes testing, PIMMs, staffing, continuing PSSA's at the High School level for an additional year or pursuing the state waiver from adequate yearly progress measurement in any reasonable timeframe considering the local educational agency seems to be the last thought of PDE.

3. To develop a perspective on the training and testing schedule as proposed, we have attached four documents utilizing the Haverford Township School District calendar: first is the 2011-12 testing and training calendar; second is the timeline and staff effected for that year; third is the 2012-13 testing and training calendar; and fourth is the timeline and staff affected for the 2012-13 school year. Each is color-coded with an appropriate legend identifying the testing and training. Arguably, high-stakes testing combined with the on-site efforts to provide the appropriate motivation and the testing environment required creates anxiety for students, parents and staff, as well as siphons off the precious instructional and planning time available to us during those days of testing and related activity. These charts illustrate graphically the increased loss of instructional, planning and supervisory time.

During the 2011-12 school year the training, testing and retesting windows affected 45 instructional/work days. When imposed on the full instructional calendar/student days in session results in a disruption factor (or percent) of 24.4% of the instructional year. The proposed 2012-13 school year training, testing and resting window will affect 106 instructional/work days. This would have a disruption factor (or percent) of 57.6% of the instructional year, an increase of over 100 percent. The limited staffing available to operate schools successfully after an era of unprecedented cuts and reductions leave local districts with limited instructional support, threatened program breadth and instructional continuity. (See Appendix I)

4. This begins an era where more testing, more than one could ever have imagined, will be taking place. As we constantly test, retest and yes, practice test because of its importance to graduation, there will be no time for other subjects. If only the bright students are able to pass content area exams in a timely fashion (one might question their developmental soundness) we shrink the elective base limiting student engagement, creativity and encourage, unintentionally I'm sure, memorization. The old drill and kill model. States such as Delaware have established a simplified model, obviously satisfying significant federal requirements as one of the states who have received "Race to the Top" funds. There must be a way to do a better job of not only designing these assessments but also administering them and at a more reasonable cost to the state and the local taxpayer.

5. Pennsylvania's pursuit of the common core standards/curriculum is becoming an inefficient expenditure of limited resources. There will be no end to this debate. If we really wanted content area exams we would not have to look any further than the AP Exams that exist in every subject area. They do not need to be recreated, not the standards, not the curriculums, nor the assessments, just modified. As mentioned by many other professionals over the past decade, these exams in

combination with the SATs or the ACTs already are in existence, normed and proven. They would serve as an appropriate performance protocol and provide assessment data. This would cost a minute percentage of the dollars being thrust into the pockets of test makers and test publishers. We believe PDE needs to open a real and constructive dialogue about the course ending exams. As currently outlined, the questions raised point to a systematic effort to cast all schools as failing.

6. While the benefits of standardized testing can be debated forever, this year's experience with the 3-5 PSSAs was so uniquely frustrating and defeating that we feel our experiences had to be specifically voiced.

Within two hours of beginning the 2012-13 PSSAs, we each began receiving calls from our elementary principals about how confusing, aggravating and upsetting this year's testing was. Throughout the PSSA Reading and Math, we continued to hear complaints from angry principals and teachers about the very large number of students needing extended time well beyond reasonable expectations for this age group; the great frustration of proctors with the directions and their inability to clarify for students the vocabulary on the piloted Common Core items, and the anxiety of students who were trying to give their best efforts despite all the changes to the test. These issues were especially magnified for many IEP students, for whom the Modified PSSA no longer exists, who simply melted down in anxiety. We all heard stories of children shedding tears of frustration. Unlike other years, when we may have heard a few issues related to the testing from our principals, we all quickly realized that this year we were facing adversity far surpassing all of our experiences with the PSSA.

7. If the purpose is truly to assess student progress from year to year, there must be a more humane way to do it. Up to three weeks of high-stakes test pressure on young children, along with the added anxiety that this year's testing caused so many students, is simply inexcusable. Can it possibly take 120 pages of text to assess 3<sup>rd</sup> graders' (8 years old) knowledge of Reading and Math? One hundred and four pages, plus a thirty two-page answer book to assess a 4<sup>th</sup> grader (9 years old)? One hundred and four pages, plus a thirty two-page answer book to assess a 5<sup>th</sup> grader (10 years old)?

To be more detailed about this year's testing issues, significant anxiety and pressure came from the Common Core field test items. While the placement of these items within the test serves DRC's end, it demoralized and traumatized students, leaving many of them frustrated and anxious about finishing the rest of the test - thus calling into question whether the results of this year's tests are valid and reliable for districts. Students spent a significant amount of time on sections with pilot questions that will not count towards a school's results, so by the end of these

lengthy tests they were not working to their ability. Why were alternatives not provided if important to complete? It would be better to prepare a short stand-alone field test at a different time of the year, or place these questions at the end of the tests.

8. With the amount of money that PA is spending on these tests, and the pressure placed on educators and students to be successful, each item and every direction must be vetted to assure clarity. Throughout the testing, we continually heard from teachers that the directions that they were required to read were awkwardly worded and very confusing. This was true throughout 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Reading and Math.

Similarly, with such high stakes for schools pending these results, how can items that affect scoring slip by like the changing of the rulers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Math test and the change of model of protractor at a different grade (4<sup>th</sup>) without advanced notice?

A cynical person could certainly look at this year's testing and believe that this was all intentionally done to have more schools labeled "Failing," thus dragging more public schools and teachers through the mud, and further building the case for charter schools and vouchers.

9. Appendix II attached provides more detail on the items that especially concerned us. We believe that someone owes districts and communities answers as to why this year's testing was so confusing and distressing.

10. PDE wants schools and teachers to be accountable for the performance of Pennsylvania's children. Someone must be accountable for the mess of the Keystone Examines and the PSSAs for 2012-13. As we continue to test, test, test and even add testing we ask the question who is going to pay for the largest unfunded mandate of the decade.

William S. Keilbaugh, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## 2011-2012 PSSA Testing Schedule for The School District of Haverford Township

August 2011						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

September 2011						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	
30						

October 2011						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

November 2011						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

December 2011						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

FEBRUARY 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

March 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

April 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

JUNE 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

JULY 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

AUGUST 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

	<b>PSSA Testing</b>
	<b>Training Session</b>

DATE	ASSESSMENT	GRADE S	STAFF
October 24 - November 4, 2011	PSSA Grade 12 Re-test in Math, Reading, Science, and Writing	12	RDSP, HS Prin, 12 <sup>th</sup> grade principal, Building Subs
March 5 - 9, 2012	PSSA Training Week		All Teachers in District, RDSP, CS LA/SS, CSM, All Principals and Asst Principals
March 12 - 23, 2012	PSSA Math and Reading, PSSA-M Math and Reading	3-8, 11 4-8, 11	All Principals, All Asst Principals, CS LA/SS, CSM, RDSP, Asst. Supt, All HS teachers, All MS Teachers, All 3- 5 Teachers
March 26 - 30, 2012	Math and Reading Make-ups	As Needed	All Principals, all Asst Principals, RDSP
April 16-20, 2012	PSSA Writing	5, 8, 11	All Elementary Principals, MS and HS Principal, 5 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade teachers, selected HS teachers, CS LA/SS
April 23 - 27, 2012	PSSA Science PSSA-M Science	4, 8, 11 8, 11	All Elem Prin, MS and HS Principal, 4 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers, selected HS teachers, MS Asst Prin (CSS)
April 30 - May 4, 2012	Writing and Science Make-ups	As Needed	All Elementary Principals, MS & HS Prin, RDSP, Asst MS Principals

**RDSP – Reading Specialist**

**CS LA/SS – Curriculum Supervisor Language Arts/Social Studies**

**CSM – Curriculum Supervisor Math**

**Asst Supt – Assistant Superintendent**

**CSS – Curriculum Supervisor Science**



## 2012 – 2013 Assessments and Keystone Schedule for The School District of Haverford Township

AUGUST 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

SEPTEMBER 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

OCTOBER 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

NOVEMBER 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

DECEMBER 2012						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

JANUARY 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

FEBRUARY 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

MARCH 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

APRIL 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

MAY 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

JUNE 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

JULY 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

AUGUST 2013						
S	M	T	W	R	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

	CURRENT TESTING
	KEYSTONE TESTING
	TRAINING SESSIONS

FIRST STUDENT DAY September 4, 2012

Total Student Days 184

Total Teacher Days 191

## 2012-2013 Assessments and Keystone Schedule for The School District of Haverford Township

<b><u>Date:</u></b>	<b><u>Type:</u></b>	<b><u>Activity:</u></b>	<b><u>Staff:</u></b>
August 15-16, 2012	Keystone	Technology Coordinator Training	Director of Technology
September 6-7, 2012	Keystone	Enrollment/Materials Training	Asst. Supt., C.S. LA/SS, C.S.M., MS Asst. Prin, HS Prin, PS Admin, RDSP, HS Asst Prin
September 10-14, 2012	Keystone	Enrollment Window	Asst. Supt., C.S. LA/SS, C.S.M., MS Asst. Prin, HS Prin, HS Student Data, RDSP, HS Asst Prin
October 2-4, 2012	Keystone	Test Set-up Training	Asst. Supt., C.S. LA/SS, C.S.M., MS Asst. Prin, HS Prin, RDSP
October 8-19, 2012	Keystone	Test Set-up Window	Asst. Supt., C.S. LA/SS, C.S.M., MS Asst. Principal, HS Principal, RDSP
October 10-11, 2012	Keystone	Enrollment/Materials Training	Asst. Supt., C.S. LA/SS, C.S.M., MS Asst. Prin, HS Prin, RDSP, MS Prin
October 15-26, 2012	Keystone	Enrollment Window	Asst. Supt., C.S. LA/SS, C.S.M., MS Asst. Prin, HS Prin, RDSP, MS Prin
October 22 – November 2, 2012	Assessment	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade PSSA Retest	HS Prin, RDSP, 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Prin, BLDG Subs
November 5-8, 2012	Keystone	Keystone Administration Training	Asst Supt, CS LA/SS, CSM, MS Asst Prin, RDSP, HS Prin, MS Prin
December 3-14, 2012	Assessment	Winter Wave 1 Keystone Window	HS Teachers, Asst Supt, CS LA/SS, CSM, Asst Prin, RDSP, All HS Asst Princ
January 9-23, 2013	Assessment	Winter Wave 2 Keystone Window	HS Teachers, Asst Supt, CS LA/SS, CSM, Asst Prin, RDSP, All HS Asst Princ
March 4-8, 2013	Assessment	PSSA Training	All MS Teacher, all Elementary teachers grades 3-5, Elem Prin, MS Prin & MS Asst Prin
March 11-15, 2013	Assessment	Grades 5&8 Writing PSSA	All MS and Elem Teachers and Administration
March 18-22, 2013	Assessment	Grades 5&8 Writing PSSA Make-ups	Elem Prin, MS Prin and Asst Prin
April 8-19, 2013	Assessment	Grades 3-8 Math and Reading PSSA	All MS and Elem Teachers and Administration
April 22-26, 2013	Assessment	Grades 4&8 Science PSSA	All MS and Elem Teachers and Administration
April 29-May 3, 2013	Assessment	Math, Reading & Science Make-ups	Elementary Prin, MS Prin and Asst Prin
May 13-24, 2013	Assessment	Spring Keystone Window	Asst. Supt., C.S. LA/SS, C.S.M., MS Asst. Prin, HS Prin, RDSP HS Teachers, All HS Asst Principals
July 29-August 2, 2013	Assessment	Summer Keystone Window	HS Prin, HS Asst Prin, Summer School teachers

**Asst. Supt** – Assistant Superintendent

**CS LA/SS** – Curriculum Supervisor Language Arts/Social Studies

**CS M** – Curriculum Supervisor Math

**MS Asst. Prin** – Middle School Assistant Principal

**HS Prin** – High School Principal

**RDSP** – Reading School Specialist

**PS Admin** – Power School (student data) Admin



## APPENDIX

### **2012-13 PSSA General Issues:**

- Students were upset and confused by the field tested Common Core items because they were worded so differently and contained new vocabulary that most students have not yet been exposed to. Students genuinely worried that these questions would lower their scores.
- Much more time was needed this year by many, many students to complete the tests. Far more students requested extended time, in many cases continuing testing for over 5 hours. One Reading section required so much time that a local district received an exception from the state to allow two students to complete the section that was started at 9:30 and ended at 4:00 on another day. Many districts reported students testing to the end of the school day. No child can perform at his/her best for this amount of time! Results will not be indicative of students' actual abilities.
- Teachers stated that the directions that were required to read were awkwardly worded and very confusing in both Reading and Math. Too many directions were required to be read to students at one time for both tests. Students struggled to remember directions that were read to them long before they were to be followed. Directions for some questions indicated that there would be only one correct answer, yet the questions under those directions asked for students to choose the best two answers.

### **Issues Specific to the Math Test:**

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade rulers were different in years past with no advanced notice from PDE, which caused a great deal of confusion. In past years the rulers were scaled to ¼ inch; this year it was changed to 1/8 inch and included the metric system. No advanced notice given
- The 4<sup>th</sup> graders were required to use protractors that were very different than those used in many math programs (such as EDM). Learning to use a new model of protractor during the testing certainly created confusion for many children; no advanced notice was given.
- Students complained about more problem-solving required than they were prepared for with confusing vocabulary in the items.

### **Issues Specific to the Reading Test:**

- Two scoring guidelines and two sets of directions for four types of questions (short answer, essay, multiple choice, and selected response) were outlined in one section for a total of four sets of directions for that one section; the multiple guidelines and multiple directions overwhelmed students and created confusion:

1. scoring guideline for short answers

2. scoring guideline for passage-based essays
  3. directions for multiple choice question
  4. directions for a selected-response questions (*these directions were in opposition to the multiple choice questions in that students might need to select two answers instead of one*)
  5. directions for the short answer question
  6. directions for the essay question
- A new rubric for extended responses in the Reading section was included that students complained they had never seen before. This rubric was not shared with the districts ahead of time.
  - DRC removed the boxes from the reading open-ended response portion which threw students off because they were constantly told to remain within the boxes all year. The boxes were left in the math portion.
  - Grade 3 – Section 2 Reading -The directions in the PSSA teacher manual took students through Sample A and then right into the start of the testing session. However, test administrators and students were confused because in the student test booklets, there was a Sample B problem right under Sample A. Test administrators were unsure what to do because they had no directions for Sample B. Many went ahead and did Sample B with their students, only to find out later that this was an example to be used for Section 4 on another day. It would have been helpful if this was noted in the manual or moved to the Section 4 portion of the student test booklet.
  - Grade 4 – Section 2 Reading – Student test booklets displayed two passages and then a set of multiple choice questions. After reading the two passages, some students raised their hands for clarification from the test administrator. The directions read “Read the following passage and answer questions 27-\_\_”. However, they had just read two passages. Should it have read “passages”? Without being able to actually read the test items, test administrators were unsure what to tell students and were nervous they may have mislead students.
  - Grades 4 & 5 – Reading - The signal to STOP in the test booklets misled many students and caused many to skip the OE questions. They thought they were finished, yet they still had the Open Ended questions to complete. It would have been helpful if the directions instructed students to look for the STOP sign in the answer booklet; NOT the test booklet.