

Keystone Exams and Statewide Testing:
Thoughts from the Phoenixville Area School District

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity.

In particular, I would like to thank Senator Eichelberger, Chair of the Education Committee for hosting this meeting and Senator Dinniman, Minority Chair for inviting me to speak.

I am Alan Fegley, Superintendent of Schools of the Phoenixville Area School District.

My message this afternoon is direct and simple, Keystone Exams should be ended and replaced immediately by the PSATs or SAT tests and all statewide testing should take no more than two days at every grade level.

The Keystone Exams are an inappropriate graduation requirement and do not provide the student, teacher or district with useful information. Additionally, the Keystone Exams are not used by colleges and universities. Since the inception of the Keystone Exams, not once has a college or university asked for a student's Keystone results, nor from what the PAHS counseling department can determine have a student's Keystone results had any impact a student's acceptance into a college or university. Simply put, from the District's perspective, the Keystone Exams result in a loss of 6 instructional days, are only used by the Department of Education to compare high schools and may potentially block qualified students from graduating.

By ending the Keystone Exams and replacing them with the PSAT or SAT tests, not only will the Commonwealth save precious educational dollars, it will also:

Move to a test that is recognized throughout the nation by colleges and universities;

Move to a test that provides timely results;

Move to a test that is thoughtful in its length and time;

Move to a test which provides data that the student and district can use for educational purposes.

To my latter point, the PSAT, which is taken by all 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students in the Phoenixville Area School District, provides thoughtful individual results including a thoughtful Advanced Placement Potential Report. This information is used by the Phoenixville Area High School to:

Show parents and encourage students to take higher level courses. Using the data from the PSAT reports received, along with data from a student's elementary and middle school years, students can visually see that they have the capability to take an Honors level class instead of a College Prep class;

Encourage students to challenge themselves to take AP courses in History, Computer Programming, Mathematics, Science, Literature and Economics;

Identify targeted intervention in areas beyond math, science and reading, the only areas tested by the Keystones;

Place students thoughtfully in appropriate classes for the spring semester and the upcoming school year. The Keystone data is not received well into the summer, after all schedules have already been developed, thus creating a need to reschedule students quickly prior to the start of the new school year.

Lastly, while I do not support the use of test data to rank/compare schools, if the PSAT or SAT test is used in lieu of the Keystone Exams to compare high schools and school districts, the seeming sole purpose of the Keystone Exams, at least the tests used for the comparison are nationally recognized not locally questioned.

In conclusion, the Keystone Exams should be eliminated. Six days of testing should be replaced with one. Further at the younger grade levels the

7 days of statewide testing at 3rd grade

9 days of statewide testing at 4th grade

7 days of statewide testing at 5th grade

7 days of statewide testing at 6th grade

7 days of statewide testing at 7th grade

4 days of statewide testing at 8th grade – 11 days of statewide testing if you complete Algebra One in 8th grade

all grades should be reduced to one, at most two days of statewide testing per grade level.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,



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