

Subject: Pa Common Core & Keystone exams

Dear Representative Saylor:

I am writing to express my grave concerns about the implications of high-stakes Keystone exam testing in our schools.

I am a stay at home mother in the Hollidaysburg School district. I am a candidate on the ballot in November (Republican and Democrat) for school board director. My two children have benefited from private schooling, home schooling, and public schools. One of my daughters is a biochemistry major at Penn State, the other is a senior at the Hollidaysburg Area Senior High.

In order to get some insight into the folly of high-stakes testing, let's compare our public schools to a service in the private market and see how testing would affect the market.

In the private market, business becomes successful when it satisfies the consumer. If consumers are not happy with the service, they discontinue patronizing that business. Many, many businesses do not survive because of consumer demands and the risky nature of venturing into the marketplace.

What if, instead of allowing these markets to work and allowing businesses to fail, we would test every business as a condition of its survival. If it passed the tests, it would be subsidized and allowed to stay in business. Nothing else would matter, and the subsidies would continue strictly as a function of passing a written exam created by the state. You don't have to think too long to imagine what a dismal failure this would be.

Businesses would now have only one concern: passing the exam. The exam would be EVERYTHING to their survival. It would not matter one lick whether consumers valued the product or not. It would not matter how many complaints they received about their services. Businesses would invest resources into passing these exams, and less time and resources would be spent on adding value to their customers.

That is what we have in public education. If schools satisfy testing requirements, they keep their subsidies. Students are allowed to graduate. There is no market mechanism to ascertain if the consumer (parents) are satisfied with the service they receive for 13 years of expensive public education.

The only thing that will provide accountability is if we allow parents to vote with their feet and allow the funding to follow the child. We also need to permit more flexibility to local school districts to run their operations without restrictive rules and regulations.

I am not against testing. I am against a one-size-fits-all approach to testing and standards. I am also opposed to the pandering we have to labor unions that keeps us from implementing true reform measures in our schools.

Whatever you do with testing: keep the test, change the test, delay the test, get rid of the test: It won't matter because there is no functioning marketplace in K-12 education. Testing is NOT accountability. Only consumers can provide accountability. Until you establish elements of free-market reforms, you will continue the dismal failure of our public education system and destroy opportunity for thousands of students.

I request that my comments be entered into the official record of your Education Committee hearing on July 29th.

Sincerely,

Lois Kaneshiki
Duncansville, Pa 16635