

Good Morning.

My name is Karen Cruickshank. I am a resident of Tredyffrin Township and the parent of a rising Sophomore and Junior at Conestoga High School. I am also a member of the Tredyffrin/Easttown School Board.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony at today's hearing.

The T/E School District is ranked 5th in the state according to US News and World Report. Our school district has a graduation rate of 100% and a college placement rate of 95%. The Conestoga Class of 2013 led Pennsylvania schools with thirty-five National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists and 39 National Merit Commended Students. This past year Conestoga students took 1300 AP exams with 93 - 95% of students scoring a grade of 3 or above.

The Tredyffrin/Easttown School District has taken a firm stance against the development and implementation of the Keystone Exams since they first appeared on the scene as GCAs. Parents in our District have written hundreds of letters and e-mails opposing the implementation of the Keystone Exams. As a parent, I would ask the Senate Education Committee to do the following:

1. Stop the development of the Keystone Exams.
2. Do not make proficiency on Keystone exams a requirement for graduation.
3. Do not develop more exams than have already been put forward.

I believe that the development and implementation of Keystone Exams is detrimental to local communities, the state, and to students for the following reasons:

1. Both the state and local districts like Tredyffrin/Easttown are under considerable financial stress since the downturn in the economy. The development and implementation of the tests has cost the state millions and the development of more tests will cost yet more money. At a local level, the T/E School District has faced multimillion dollar deficits for the past 4 years. Keystone Exams carry with them many costs that must be paid for by local districts which amounts to another unfunded mandate by the state. In particular, local districts must find monies to design and produce materials for remediation classes, must train and pay staff to teach remediation classes, and must re-design course curriculums to align with individual Keystone Tests. For the state to put these additional costs, again an unfunded mandate, on local districts in this fiscal environment is inexcusable.
2. The addition of Keystone Exams will result in a loss of instruction time as teachers move to teach towards the test.
3. Students in our high school are already over tested with PSATs, SATs, ACTs, APs, and SAT Subject tests.
4. Many students do not do well on standardized tests. They may suffer from test anxiety, do better in oral and project based work, or may have an IEP. For all of these students taking tests can prove very difficult. It doesn't mean that they don't know the material, just that they do not do well on paper and pencil tests.
5. Students who do not score proficient or above on Keystone Exams will be required to take remedial coursework and will be re-tested up to two times. Taking remedial courses means that these students will have less room in their schedule to take elective courses that help them become well rounded. There is

the potential for students to be taking up to three remedial courses at a time! Many students find their area of interest or passion through our elective courses. Taking away the ability to take elective courses will only be a detriment to a portion of our student population.

To emphasize my last point, I spoke with a T/E mom, Michelle Lynch. Michelle has a son, Joe who is a student at Conestoga High School. Joe is a good student, a member of the marching band, takes all Conestoga classes, and is on course to graduate with his class. Joe also has an IEP and suffers from test anxiety. Joe's IEP allows him to do his work in chunks and allows him to take breaks when needed. In particular, Joe has difficulty with paper and pencil tests. However, if you sit down and talk with Joe, he can tell you in depth what he has learned in his classes. For Joe, taking tests like the Keystones will be extremely difficult. Joe is one of those students who loves his elective classes, and if he was not proficient on the Keystones would have to take remedial courses and be re-tested. For Joe, this would mean giving up the opportunity to take elective courses. In addition to students like Joe there are many students in our district and across the state who suffer from test anxiety. Many of these students do not have IEPs. They are good, dedicated students but can fall apart during standardized, paper and pencil exams. Again, it's not that these students don't know the information, they just don't test well. If these students don't score proficient on the Keystones they will also be forced to take remedial courses and be retested. They will also be forced to give up the opportunity to take elective courses. Our District values a diverse curriculum with offerings in languages and the arts and the opportunity to take additional courses in english, science, and history. The ability of these students to take elective course offerings which help make them a broad based learner will be

diminished and for what reason? Simply because they do not test well! How is this good for the student, our district or the state? It isn't.

In summary, I ask the Senate Education Committee to re-think its stance on Keystone Exams. Our local schools and our state can not afford the cost of designing and implementing these tests. Most important, I ask you to think of our students as you make your decision. Remember the thousands of students like Joe who don't do well on standardized tests. Many of these are great students who love to learn, but they learn differently. Don't jeopardize their ability to graduate. I also ask you not to authorize the development of any additional Keystone Exams.

Students in our School District are thriving. Our teachers are exceptional and committed to providing a strong education for all of our students. They are committed to working with students no matter what their learning style. If we must have exams such as the Keystones to meet federal requirements, there must be a way to do this that will not unfairly hurt certain types of students. In T/E I believe that our academic record speaks for itself. Our students are succeeding in record numbers. They are thriving in an academic environment that encourages learning and offers a wide variety of course offerings. The implementation of Keystone Exams, tying these exams to graduation, and the potential of even more of these exams will be extremely detrimental to the successful educational program we have developed here in T/E.

Most sincerely,

Karen Cruickshank