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# **Senate Education Committee**

**Senator Mike Folmer**  
**Chairman**

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## **Senate Education Committee Public Hearing to Gather Student Opinions**

**Hearing Questions – Please prepare to answer all questions. You will be asked one at the hearing.**

### **1. Testing**

You have spent a large part of your academic career preparing for PSSAs. Recently, Pennsylvania introduced the Keystone exams, standardized tests proposed to be a component of high school graduation requirements.

While many agree that some type of state-wide assessment is necessary, some continue to question whether these types of tests are a true indicator of what students have learned throughout the year or whether the tests themselves drive what is taught in the classroom. In addition, many are critical of the loss of actual teaching time sacrificed in order to prepare students for such tests.

Has it been your experience that standardized tests accurately reflect the curriculum taught during the school year or do you feel that your teachers are driven to “teach to the tests” in order to prepare you for success?

Could you estimate how much time you spend preparing for such tests?

### **2. Teacher Evaluation**

It’s difficult to evaluate the many aspects of effective teaching. However, last summer, Pennsylvania adopted a new teacher evaluation system in order to better take into account the numerous components of effective teaching.

In thinking back on your academic career, provide some traits of effective teachers you have had in past. Why were they effective and what do you think are good measures to adequately evaluate a teacher’s performance?

### **3. How Teachers Teach/How Students Learn**

Many factors go into both the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge. A teacher-student relationship is reciprocal, and it’s not an easy task for even the best teachers to motivate every student in a classroom.

As a student, do you feel you are exposed to various methods of teaching that benefit all types of learners, such as cooperative/small group learning, hands-on, appropriate use of online resources, etc.?

Do you see factors, perhaps beyond the control of your teachers, that impact your learning experience, such as the physical or cyber environment, the length of the school day/year, time spent on problem-solving activities, etc.?

(Possible follow-up) There is much discussion about whether schools are adequately preparing students for a competitive global workforce. Do you feel that your education is preparing you for your career/college path? Do you receive adequate guidance from school staff concerning college/career choice?

#### **4. School Funding**

There is concern over funding for education. Many districts have instituted activity fees for music and sports programs. Others have changed transportation routes or opted to offer fewer foreign languages or other unified arts programs.

Do you see areas in your district where money might be saved? What additional ideas do you have for raising revenue in order to help schools live within their means?

#### **5. Other issues (CHOOSE ONE)**

A. It has been many years since my colleagues and I have been in high school. Share with us what you believe is the most important thing we should know about being a high school student in 2013.

B. Your generation has unfortunately witnessed many occurrences of school violence and bullying is more prevalent than before. Not only are your school leaders focused on educating you, but also must provide a safe environment in which to learn. Do you feel safe in your school? Do you believe your classmates feel safe?

C. There are numerous requirements you must meet in order to graduate, one of those being a senior/graduation project. Do you believe these required projects are of value? Should some part of community service be required in your education?