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Public Schools

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The Pathway to the Promise.

An Overview of Keystone Exams

Board Education Committee Meeting
February 2, 2010

Why are we doing this?

Requested by the Education Committee of the Board

What are we seeking to gain from this presentation?

An understanding of:

- the purpose of Keystone Exams
- how Keystone Exams will be implemented
- implications of Keystone Exams

What are Keystone Exams?

Keystone Exams are 10 high school end of course exams developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. They allow students to demonstrate their proficiency in Mathematics, Reading, Science and Social Studies.

Mathematics	Communications	Science	Social Studies
Algebra I	English Literature	Biology	U.S History
Geometry	Composition	Chemistry	World History
Algebra 2			Civics and Government

Why is Pennsylvania creating Keystone Exams?

Pennsylvania added the Keystone Exams to its accountability system as a way to improve high school performance across the state.

- One-fourth of PA students don't graduate on time or at all.
- 40% of PA graduates who receive diplomas haven't passed the Grade 11 PSSA exams.
- Less than half of the graduates enroll in college, and only 37% of these make it past their freshman year.
- One-third of graduates who enroll in a state-owned university or community college require remedial English or Math.

How do Keystone Exams affect Grade II PSSA and AYP?

- The state has proposed the use of 3 Keystone Exams as the high school accountability system under NCLB which requires a high school assessment. If the U.S. Department of Education approves the proposal:
 - As of 1/31/10, PDE states that Grade II PSSA may be eliminated by the 2012-13 school year. The current 9th grade class may be the last to take the Grade II PSSA exam in 2011-12.
 - Keystone Exams in Algebra I, Literature and Biology would serve as the high school assessments required under NCLB.
 - Algebra I and Literature Keystone Exams would serve as the high school assessments for AYP reporting.

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Are Keystone Exams Optional for Districts?

- Pennsylvania State Code Title 22 (Education) Chapter 4 was amended by the State Board of Education on January 9, 2010 to include end of course Keystone Exams at the high school level that affect high school graduation requirements effective with 2014-15 school year.
- As an alternative to Keystone Exams, the local assessment option is expanded to allow districts to use an assessment that must be independently validated.
- As another alternative, successful completion of an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) program and tests may be used for one or more of the courses required for graduation.

What are challenges associated with the local assessment option?

- Development of local end of course exams would require a major effort and be both time-consuming and costly.
- Each local assessment would have to be independently validated, which would be complicated and costly. As of 1/31/2010, the state's validation process has not been specified.
- Students must take the Algebra I, Literature and Biology Keystone Exams to meet AYP/NCLB requirements regardless of any local assessments in those subjects.
- Because local assessments would not provide data comparable to other PA districts:
 - colleges may have more confidence in Keystone Exam results as a measure of college readiness than in local measures.
 - the district would not be able to compare performance with that of the state or other school districts.

What are the reasons for adopting Keystone Exams?

- Students may take them more seriously than the PSSA because they are tied to grades.
- They are linked to specific course content, rather than an assessment like the Grade 11 PSSA that encompasses multiple years and courses.
- They enable earlier intervention for students who need help with a specific course instead of a cumulative assessment in grade 11.
- Students have multiple opportunities to take the exams.
- They bring greater consistency to what is taught across the state.
- They have the potential to reduce the need for remedial courses in college.
- They are more easily linked to specific course content than the PSSA.
- They can be used more directly to increase rigor in coursework.
- They improve accountability at the course level.
- They have the potential to improve college and employment readiness.

How do the Keystone Exams affect a student's grade?

- At least one-third of a student's final course grade must be based on the Keystone Exam results, as required by the state.
- Districts have the option of choosing a higher percentage.

What happens when a student doesn't pass an exam?

- Students who score below proficient must be provided opportunities to re-take the test or modules of the test.
- Students who score Below Basic would not receive any points toward their final grade.
- Students who score below proficient would be able to supplement their Keystone Exam by successfully completing one or more project-based assessments. Points earned through projects would be added to their Keystone Exam score.
- Under the regulation, no student will be denied a high school diploma based on test scores alone as teacher-assigned grades will constitute a majority (67%) of the course grade.

When will Keystone Exams directly affect students?

Graduating Class	PSSAs are Required, Keystone Exams are available for optional use:
2010-11 (current 11 th graders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Spring 2010 Grade 11 PSSAs are required. •3 Keystone Exams become available in Spring 2011: Algebra I, Literature and Biology
2011-12 (current 10 th graders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Spring 2011 Grade 11 PSSAs are required. •As 11th graders, Keystone Exams are available in Algebra I, Literature, and Biology •As 12th graders, additional Keystone Exams become available in SY 2011-12: Algebra 2, Geometry, English Composition, and U.S. History
2012-13 (current 9 th graders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Spring 2012 Grade 11 PSSAs are required. This would be the last year for Grade 11 PSSAs. •As 10th graders, Keystone Exams are available in Algebra I, Literature and Biology •As 11th graders, additional Keystone Exams become available in SY 2011-12: Algebra 2, Geometry, English Composition, and U.S. History
Graduating Class	If Keystone Exams approved for NCLB /AYP, Gr. 11 PSSAs may no longer be available.
2013-14 (current 8 th graders)	As part of the transition to new graduation requirements, PDE is still working on the test requirements for this group of students.
Graduating Class	Graduation Requirements include Keystone Exams:
2014-15 (current 7 th graders)	Students must demonstrate proficiency in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 of 2 reading tests (English Composition, Literature) via Keystone • 1 math test (Algebra I) via Keystone • 1 science test (Biology) via Keystone
2015-16 (current 6 th graders)	
2016-17 (current 5 th graders)	Students must demonstrate proficiency in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 of 2 reading tests (Composition, Literature) via Keystone • 2 of 3 math tests (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra 2) via Keystone • 1 of 2 science tests (Biology, Chemistry) via Keystone • 1 of 3 social studies tests (US History, World History, Civics & Gov't.) via Keystone

When are Keystone Exams administered?

- Exams will be offered at least 3 times each year, once each in the Fall, Spring, and Summer.
- A school district may request that PDE approve alternate test administration and scoring timeframes.
- Each exam will be designed to take 2 hours.

When will Keystone Exams become operational?

Students enrolled in the following courses would take the Keystone Exams.*	Field –Test Administration	First Operational Administration
Algebra I Literature Biology	Fall 2010 (Students who completed the course in 2010)	Spring 2011
Algebra 2 Geometry English Composition U.S. History	Spring 2011	2011-12 School Year
Chemistry World History Civics and Government	Spring 2015	2015-16 School Year

*Students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency are included, as required by Federal law, with appropriate accommodations when necessary.

What is the format of the Keystone Exam?

- Each exam contains 4-5 modules. Modules reflect distinct related academic content that is common to the traditional progression of coursework.
- Each exam contains multiple choice and constructed response questions.
- Each exam is scored on a 100-point scale. Performance levels will be designated as Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced.

How do the exams affect the Pittsburgh Promise?

Keystone Exams play an important role in the transition from a \$5,000 to \$10,000 maximum Promise scholarship

- A Grant Agreement between PPS and UPMC was established in December 2007. It defined the governance, scholarship structure, accountability, and UPMC matching-fund guidelines for The Pittsburgh Promise.
- The Grant Agreement specified that the scholarship would launch in the amount of up to \$5,000 per year, but expand to up to \$10,000 per year for the Class of 2012 contingent upon the District implementing a Mastery Exam.
- The Grant Agreement specified that students passing the Mastery Exam and meeting all other criteria would be eligible for up to \$10,000 per year. Students not passing the Mastery Exam but meeting all other criteria would be eligible for up to \$5,000 per year.
- Over the next several months, The Pittsburgh Promise, working with input from Pittsburgh Public Schools, will design the criteria and implementation schedule for how the Keystone Exams will tie to Promise dollars. There may be a “phase-in” period during which 11th grade PSSA scores or other criteria are tied to Promise dollars, recognizing that the Keystone Exams may not launch in a timeframe practical to apply to the Class of 2012.