



MY TWO CENTS:

Multiple Measures Not For All Stakeholders

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Since the passage of NCLB, individual educators and educational organizations alike have provided testimony and opinions about using a single test taken in the spring of a year to judge overall performance. We all know and understand that no single test should be used to judge a student, a school or a school district.

Then, as states were being granted waivers from the federal government, we waited our turn in Pennsylvania, with great anticipation, that we would be released from the high stakes test accountability system to the use of a growth model that utilizes multiple measures to judge performance. And, as the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) rolled out the new educator effectiveness and principal effectiveness frameworks as part of Act 82, we clearly saw a move towards using multiple measures and we took comfort in knowing that our voices were finally heard.

Both the teacher and principal effectiveness models use multiple measures to arrive at an individual's overall performance for the year. Factors such as classroom observations, building level data, student growth and elective data, are all or will be used as multiple measures to judge an educator's performance.

However, as we focused on using multiple measures for teachers and principals, we left behind the most important stakeholder group in the equation -- *our students*. With the recent passage by the IRRC on the revisions to Chapter 4, the Keystone Exams or the related project, play a prominent role in whether a student graduates from high school. Thus, we just rearranged the deck chairs on the Titanic and replaced one high stakes test, the PSSA, with another high stakes test, the keystones.

A student must now either pass the Keystone Exams or after several failed attempts and remediation, successfully complete a related project to graduate. While the majority of folks I have spoken to are not against high standards and accountability, we are uncomfortable with the keystones being used as a gateway to graduation. I get it. We must have exams as part of the waiver for the federal government, but a student can take a related Keystone course and complete all the projects, participate in class, take and pass all quizzes and exams, receive a stellar grade in the course, but not pass the related Keystone test which will count against him/her for graduation. Furthermore, that same student will be required to participate in remediation efforts before taking the test again which may alter the student's schedule which

could prevent him/her from taking some electives. There is also the issue about who will provide the remediation, how much it will cost the district and other related issues which are still being debated.

While the recent passage of the revisions to Chapter 4 might not sit too well with some, the alternative was even worse. If the IRRC did not approve the revisions, the regulations adopted in 2010, which took effect in 2013 would apply and we would be faced with: the implementation of the Common Core Standards instead of the PA Core Standards; Keystone Exams in 10 subject areas; the requirement of students to pass six out of 10 Keystone Exams for graduation; and also the requirement for a student to complete a culminating project to name just a few.

There is a silver lining, though. I honestly believe we have talented and skilled educators in key leadership positions at PDE who are willing to listen and work on behalf of educators and students in Pennsylvania. My hope is that after the dust has settled, these key individuals will review all of the testimony about the Keystones and work with educators to revise some of the mandates associated with the implementation of the exams. One positive future move would be to eliminate the Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement, using them only as accountability for the growth model for the federal government and as only one measure for student growth. So, let us provide the same rationale for using multiple measures for judging teachers and principals and afford our students that same right.

And that's my two cents worth.