



Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches  
The Education Committee

September 3, 2013

TO: The Pennsylvania State Board of Education  
Cc: The House Education Committee of the Pennsylvania Assembly  
The Senate Education Committee of the Pennsylvania Assembly  
The Citizens of Pennsylvania

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People recognizes that for most people, education is the gateway to the economic mainstream; and that as such, education is a civil right.

For this reason, the Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches strongly opposes regulatory action that links the Keystone Examination to high school graduation. We call for the removal from Chapter 4 of Keystone Examinations as a high school graduation requirement. We are certain that such a regulation will create a shameful condition that defames the dream of a free society.

We base our position on the following recognitions.

1 It is clear that the regulation linking Keystone Examination scores to high school graduation is a present day form of Eugenics. Hidden under the cloak of “the business community has asked for an improved workforce”, and “colleges are concerned about the number of students needing remediation”, attaching Keystone Examinations to graduation is clearly based on the idea that it is possible to distinguish between superior and inferior elements of society through selective scores on a paper and pencil test. This is a clandestine social movement that strips children of their dignity and self worth while it fails to address or to access any of the characteristics that lead to successful employment, as delineated on the Pennsylvania Labor and Industry web site

2. It is clear that the regulation linking Keystone Examination scores to high school graduation is a human rights violation. It is an unspeakable horror for students who have completed the work assigned by their local school district to a satisfactory level to be told that they fail to graduate based on Keystone Examination scores. Such an action will create an atrocity that will rain down a holocaust on our youth and our society as a whole. To deprive young people of their diploma based on single criteria also deprives them of the freedom to prosper in life. Ultimately, withholding the diploma based on single criteria will deprive them over their lives of decent income, decent food, decent homes, and hopeful prospects as well as the security of justice.

3. The potential to destroy the social order is clear. Pushing masses of students out of high school without a diploma will create a subculture of poverty comprised potentially of up to 60% of our young citizens. It will result in a sea of frustrated parents whose aspirations for their children have been dashed by the actions of the state; and leave them to deal with the life-long trauma imposed on their families.



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4. The disparate impact on women of linking Keystone examinations to graduation is clear. As a result of a regulation that creates a distinction of high school failure, women will be further excluded and restricted in their economic and social access in an economy where existing pay discrimination has been demonstrated.

5. The cruel and unusual nature of failing to graduate from high school is a life-long punishment that condemns a person to having the doors to life slammed shut and to being consigned to a life of low income, limited housing choice, limited career choice, limited further education choice, and a limited vision for their progeny.

6. The disparate impact of the use of an arbitrary Keystone Examination score as a graduation requirement on students in underfunded schools is clear. Law makers have created a system of entrapment for the youth of Pennsylvania. They have brought students unawares into the danger and difficulty of a life of adversity. They have failed to provide the resources necessary to succeed on the exam while an obstacle - success on Keystone Examinations - must be overcome in order to move into a stable future.

7. The depraved indifference of regulating Keystone Examination scores as the requirement for high school graduation is clear and easily substantiated. Much has been presented to the public in the way of data and fact as to the harm of the use of such a tool. Evidence has been presented that questions the construction and content of the test. It is clear that the test does not assess the qualities needed to predict a good employee. The field of education has long since dismissed a test as a valid predictor of a student's success in higher education. Given this information, clearly to impose such a regulation is deficient in a moral sense of concern, lacks regard for the lives of the children who will be harmed, and puts their lives and futures at risk.

The Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches cannot overstate the profoundly awful impact of regulating Keystone Examination scores as a requirement for high school graduation. It is a human rights violation to block and deter forever human beings from the opportunity to develop their potential and to pursue their dreams. It is abuse of power for the state to set such policy. This is an action so brutal that it is tantamount to lynching our own young.

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Chair, Education Committee

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