

My name is Diane Payne, I am a retired teacher, a Philadelphia resident, a parent of public school graduates and an education activist with Working Educator's Caucus, PFT and the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools. I wish to address the commission today on the topic of high-stakes testing.

I was shocked that there was so little representation from the administration and none from the commission on this important topic at yesterday's city council hearings. Mr. Chris Shaffer did come to supply information but he was limited in what he could offer and/or answer. And even more importantly, the lack of presence meant that the long list of wonderful and informed speakers went unheard by the policy makers in administration and this commission.

High stakes testing has a growing list of opponents both in our own city and state and across this whole country. The reasons for the growing opposition are reliable, documented and based in evidence. Each of the speakers last night eloquently and effectively gave the many reasons why high stakes testing is harmful and abusive. In many parts of our country, brave and proactive parents, teachers, principals, administrators, government officials and school boards are calling for a moratorium on this practice.

In the year 2017, right around the corner, our children will need to pass 3 keystone exams to graduate. The information provided on the PA Department of Education website is scare and hard to find. But if you just look at the data from one available source, you will see that of the statewide test takers in all three categories only about ½ of the children will pass the first time and then when tortured to take it the second time (if they don't just give up and leave school) even less will pass and then they can go

on to be tortured by the project and who in heaven's name will be overseeing and grading all of that?

Add to the madness in Philadelphia - the benchmark tests. The rhetoric of giving teachers feedback within 24 hours so they can tailor their instruction is insulting to every professional educator in our city. Our educator's know how to use multiple sources of evidence including their own tests to determine if their students are learning or need more instruction. And again, the money, time and schedule adjustments that have to support the benchmarks only reduces resources and time spent on real teaching and real assessment.

The collective insanity of punishing our children, wasting untold millions of dollars and the labeling and failing of teachers and schools all based on high stakes testing must stop. It is more than crazy...it is criminal. It only benefits the testing & publishing giants.

Today, I am calling on this administration and this SRC body to take a stand for children. I am asking that you join the voices of those fighting against high stakes standardized testing of our children and say NO to the department of education's keystone examines. Further, send the benchmarks to the testing graveyard. Will you open this topic for consideration?

(Added to audience "please note that Chairman Green said no.")