



# CURRICULUM NEWS



MID VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT – A LEARNING COMMUNITY DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

MARCH 2016

## State Testing Announcements

### PSSA Testing Dates:

ELA: April 12 – 15

Mathematics: April 19 – 21

Science: April 26 – 27

### Keystone Testing Dates:

Literature: May 17 – 18

Algebra I: May 19 – 20

Biology: May 24 – 25

### IMPORTANT REMINDERS

All employees involved in proctoring or handling the exams in any way must complete the PSTAT training and send a copy of their certificate to Mr. Antonetti.

Teachers in testing grades and subjects should continue to follow the guidelines listed below from Mr. Antonetti's February 5<sup>th</sup> memo.

- Use benchmark and other student achievement data to develop a clear idea of how well your students have mastered each standard reflected in the examinations.
- Please make it a priority to teach or reteach standards with which students are struggling to master.
- All students should be familiar with the PSSA test structure, number of questions, and types of questions. Please continue to expose students to questions that are similar in content, structure, and wording to those they are likely to

encounter in the PSSA examinations. You can do so once or twice a week over the coming weeks. Please do not stop all "normal" instruction a couple of weeks before the PSSA testing window to conduct intensive test preparation. The goal is to conduct the test preparation activities in ways that complement your regular instruction.

- The way you communicate PSSA/Keystone information will have a powerful impact on your students and their parents. Please express yourself in a positive and encouraging way that will inspire their self-confidence. Encourage them to do their best and celebrate their successes along the way.

# Bye, bye, Keystones?

On February 3, 2016, Governor Tom Wolf signed into law Senate Bill 880, which takes several actions with respect to the Keystone Exams and hints that this exam may be on its way to extinction.

First, the bill postpones the requirement that Keystone Exams be used as a requirement for graduation until the 2018-2019 school year. It also eliminates the Keystone Exam as the benchmark to determine if a student should participate in a project-based assessment to meet the graduation requirements for the same timeframe. Second, the bill requires that PDE develop an alternative to the Keystone Exam and provide information regarding the same to the Legislature in six months. [One possible alternative would be the SAT examinations.]

## Special Education: Focus on IEPs

It is important for all general education teachers to read and understand each of their students' Individualized Education Plans (IEP). However, IEPs are notoriously long documents that are not user friendly. Probably the most important section of an IEP is the Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) section. In order to keep track of each students' unique needs, teachers can use a one-page summary sheet for easy reference and to keep in their substitute teacher folder. The "IEP at a Glance" form on the right was developed by an elementary teacher in our county. Please ask Mr. Antonetti for a copy of the form if you would like one.

<u>IEP at a Glance</u>	
<p><b>Student's Name:</b> Jane Doe</p> <p><b>Homeroom Teacher:</b></p> <p><b>Classroom Teacher:</b></p> <p><b>Learning Support Teacher:</b></p> <p><b>Learning Support Aide:</b></p>	<p><b>Student will receive Learning Support Services in the following areas:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Math</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing</p>
<p><b>Accommodations for Assessments:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extended time</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read aloud (excluding Reading assessments)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consumable test booklet</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Simplifying directions</p>	<p><b>Student will take assessments:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In the regular ed. classroom</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In the learning support classroom</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Where he/she chooses based</p>
<p><b>Accommodations for Writing assignments/assessments:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allow for adaptations or modifications to written assignments and assessments (remove one answer choice from multiple choice, shorten the length of the assessment, remove items that may be tested on more than once, etc.)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of dictionary, word book, or list of no-excuse spelling words while writing. Do not penalize for misspelled words unless they are listed in the text of the assignment.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Give visual reminders of the conventions of writing prior to writing assignments</p>	<p><b>Diagnoses:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dyslexia</p>
<p><b>Accommodations for Math assessments:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use of calculator or multiplication chart on math assessments and written work when tested on a skill that uses multiplication except on assessments where that skill is assessed</p>	
<p><b>Accommodations made daily:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check for understanding during reading assignments through periodic verbal or written questions</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide color overlay for reading</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When copying text proves difficult, provide notes or extra time to copy.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scheduled breaks</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Break up multi-step problems into individual components on math assignments/assessments</p>	
<p><b>Accommodations made at least two times per week:</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for reteaching/practice of skills where modeling, repetition, and demonstration of skills can occur.</p>	
<p><b>Additional Information:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jane is allergic to peanuts and tree nuts as well as seafood.</li> <li>• Jane is also allergic to mold, she has seasonal allergies (Jane is allergic to trees), and she has asthma.</li> <li>• Jane has an Epi-pen &amp; Benadryl at school. Jane also has an inhaler on file in the nurses office for shortness of breath.</li> </ul>	

## Faculty Spotlight: Ms. Rebecca Petrini

### 1. How long have you been teaching? What do you teach?

*I have been teaching Spanish for about 10 years.*

### 2. What is most fulfilling about teaching?

*On a daily basis, I find seeing students enjoy themselves while learning fulfilling. What is most fulfilling is seeing a spark of passion ignited in a student that I know I inspired in some way.*

### 3. What is most challenging about teaching your subject area?

*I think the most challenging aspect about Spanish is that everything builds on everything. In order to continue successfully, students must retain prior grammatical concepts and vocabulary. Students who do not put a significant effort in fall behind, and it can become overwhelming for them. This is challenging for me as well as it requires constant review and assessment in order to help students retain knowledge.*



### 4. What are the most important lessons (skills/content) you tend to focus on most heavily during the year? Why do you focus on those above others?

*Emphasizing speaking activities is essential. If you want to speak Spanish, you must practice speaking. Guiding speaking activities, class surveys/interviews, dialogues, and class conversations with a focused topic are all a part of these efforts.*

*(As a side note: Before I studied in Spain, I had no idea how little practice I had actually speaking the language despite studying it for years. I could write a 5 page essay in Spanish, but I couldn't have a simple conversation with a native speaker. It is through speaking that we learn to speak.)*

### 5. What types of strategies and supports seem to help struggling learners?

*Time is key. If a student is struggling, it is important to find the time to scaffold the concept for them and find a different way to get through to them. Most students that struggle in my classes are those that do not put in the necessary time and effort. Sometimes reminding them of effective study skills helps. We have several websites available for additional practice as well.*

### 6. What is your educational background?

*I have an undergraduate degree in International Business and Spanish from the University of Scranton, a Masters in Spanish and Latin American Studies from American University. I then completed my teaching certification through a graduate program at East Stroudsburg University.*

## Jung: On Nurturing Students

*One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.*

Carl Jung

## Reminder: NO CELL PHONE USE IN CLASS

Students cannot learn if they are constantly distracted by their cell phones. Effective instruction and classroom management requires that students are actively learning.

Establish a classroom culture that values instructional time and does not tolerate preventable distractions. Teachers should prohibit the use of cell phones in class and strictly enforce the rule in classrooms.

Administrators will be actively monitoring the enforcement of this rule.

Please speak with your students and consistently enforce this rule.



## TEACHERS' MEME CORNER

