

August 1, 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child may be required to participate in the Keystone Exams, Project Based Assessments (PBA), and/or Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDT) this school year. While this letter gives you a summarized description and overview of each assessment, please refer to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Standards Aligned System website for more detailed information. Go to: <http://www.pdesas.org/> and click on the "Assessment" tab to find resources for all three assessments outlined in this letter. Additionally, parent handouts and more detailed Charter Arts assessment policies can be found on our school website: <http://www.charterarts.org/parents>.

Keystone Exams

The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts will be administering Keystone Exams during two testing windows this year: **January 6-20, 2016** and **May 16-27, 2016**. To date, students enrolled in the graduating class of 2017 must achieve proficiency on Keystone Exams in order to graduate.

Please note that state lawmakers have been in discussions about changing Keystone Exam requirements, and we are staying abreast of these discussions. However, since no changes have been made to date, Charter Arts must comply with current state regulations and graduation requirements. Therefore, attendance and participation in the Keystone Exams is state required and mandatory. No absences will be excused during these windows.

According to PDE, "the Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in academic content. The exams are designed to measure the state's Common Core Standards, which align toward college and workplace success" (PDE website).

The Keystone Exams determine and rate each student's mastery of content knowledge as Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic, with scores ranging from 1200 to 1800. To earn a score of proficient, a student must earn a minimum score of 1500.

Students currently enrolled in Biology, Algebra 1, and 10th grade Literature will be required to take the related Keystone Exams during the May testing wave. Students that have already taken the exam(s) and not yet earned a score of proficient will also be required to retest during one or both windows until they achieve proficiency.

PDE requires that schools provide supplemental instruction (remediation) prior to retesting, and Charter Arts will provide tiered support to students this year during the school day (see chart below). Further, PDE requires students that are unsuccessful in achieving a score of Proficient on the Keystone Exam(s) after at least two attempts to participate in Project Based Assessments (PBAs).

If your child took the Keystones during the Spring 2015 wave, your individual score report is in the mail, as we just received these from PDE last week. Further, based on Chapter 4 state regulations, your child's high school transcript will reflect the highest performance level demonstrated on the associated Keystone Exam or PBA.

NOT YET PROFICIENT	TIERED SUPPORT OFFERED
First-time testers scoring Basic	Charts Block supplemental instruction
First-time testers scoring Below Basic	Enrolled in subject-specific workshop course <i>AND</i> Charts Block supplemental instruction
Retesters <i>(taken exam(s) at least twice already without earning Proficient)</i>	Enrolled in subject-specific Project Based Assessment course <i>AND</i> Charts Block supplemental instruction

Project Based Assessment (PBA)

PDE developed a project-based assessment system, in alignment with the Keystone Exam, to serve as an alternative pathway to meet graduation requirements for students who are unable to demonstrate proficiency on a Keystone Exam. PBAs are required by state law for these students.

Please note that while PDE Chapter 4 regulations allow a parent or guardian to opt a child out of a state assessment for religious reasons, 22 Pa. Code 4.3, identifies that the PBA is NOT a state assessment. Thus, Chapter 4 does not permit opting out of the PBA. The PBA is an alternative pathway to graduation, and if the student does not successfully complete the PBA, s/he may not graduate. Satisfactory performance on a PBA will be reported on a student's transcript as proficient.

Charter Arts students required to participate in a PBA will also be required to enroll in a credit-bearing semester course during the school year. Our highly qualified teachers will provide small group supplemental instruction to ensure that when it is time for students to complete the online PBA independently, students have the knowledge and skills to do so.

Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDTs)

This is a computer adaptive test given to students that are preparing to take the Keystone Exams. It provides baseline data for teachers and can measure individual student learning growth over time. This is different than other assessments because, as a student responds to each test question, the online system determines which follow-up question would give the most information about the student's knowledge and skills on the PA core standards. Each student is administered a unique set of questions adapted to his/her own performance and ability. Charter Arts teachers review this data to see where students need individual challenge or support. Teachers also use this data to make determinations about the needs of a particular class of students and make instructional adjustments accordingly.

This year, we will be sending CDT score reports home with students so that parents/guardians can stay up-to-date on student learning and growth. If you have a question about your child's specific CDT score report, please contact his/her teacher.

If you have any other questions about your child specifically, these exams, or our school assessment policies, please email me so that I can answer your question(s) or address your concern(s). We look forward to achieving success for all of our students, and we know that with your support, it is possible!

Sincerely,

Carise Comstock

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