Philadelphia Education Research Consortium

Research Roundup
October 26, 2022

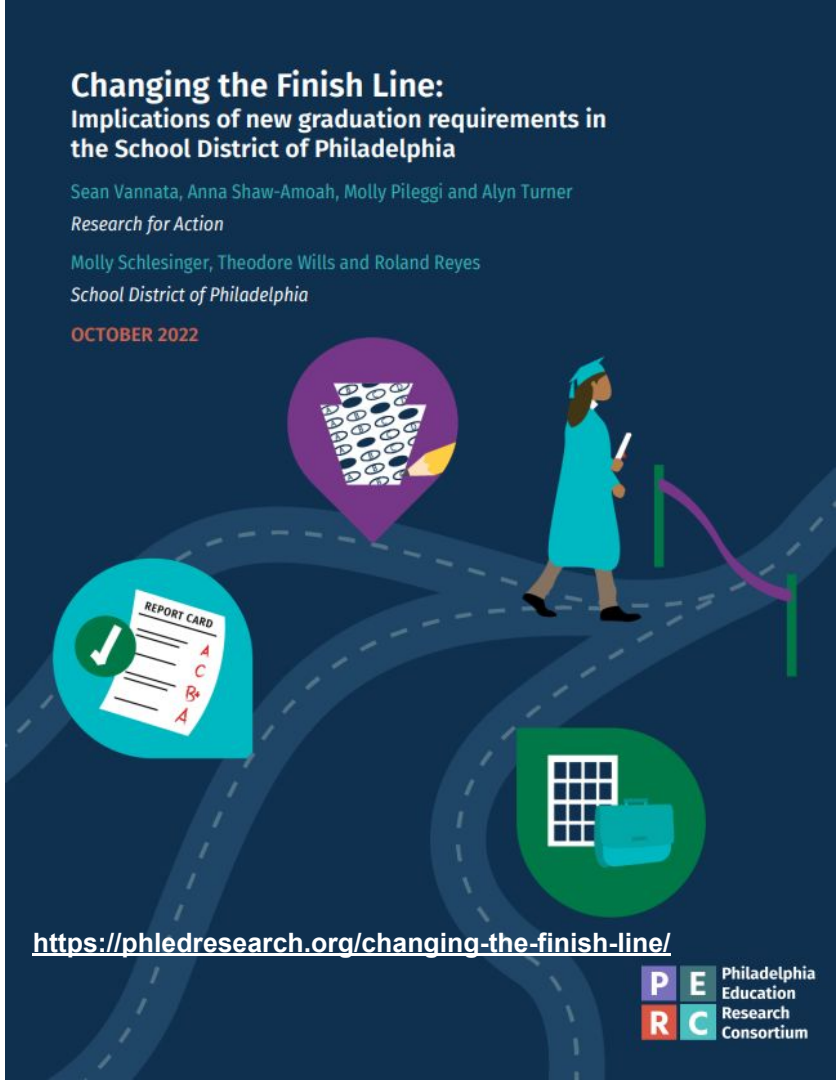
Changing the Finish Line: Implications of new graduation requirements in the School District of Philadelphia

Agenda

- **About the Research Roundup Webinars**
- **About PERC**
- **Part 1:** Updated pathways/ requirements to graduation in PA
- **Part 2:** Using past Keystone data and applying it to the new requirements
- **Part 3:** Implications of study findings and related resources
- **Q & A**

This webinar is being recorded.

The recording and a PDF of the slide deck will be available at: philasd.org/research/roundup



What is a Research Roundup?

- Monthly webinar series with a topical focus
- Videos and slide decks available from previous sessions
- Sign up to be notified when webinars are scheduled and when recordings are available

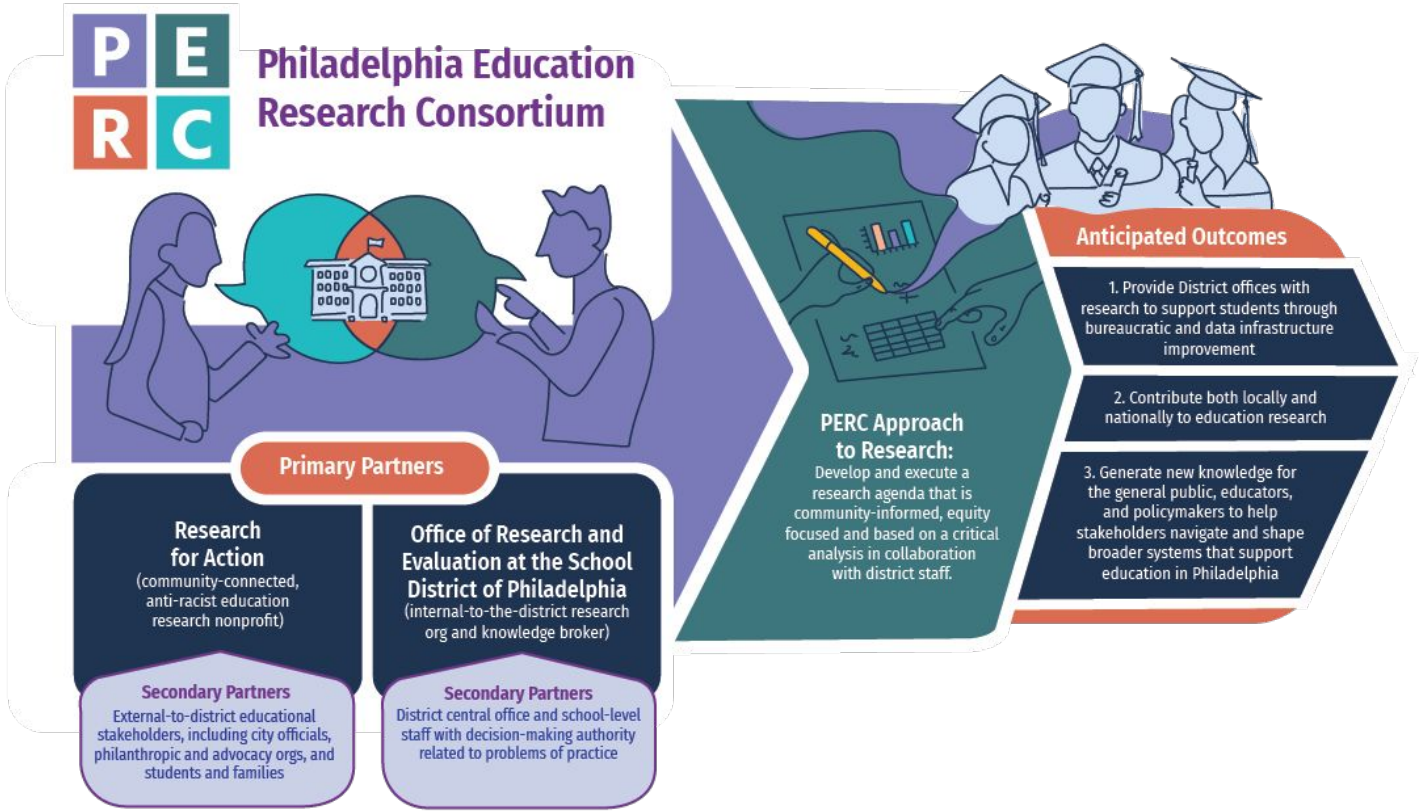
www.philasd.org/research/roundup

Roundup Topics so far

March	**Literacy Performance in Grades K-3**
April	**Math Performance in Grades 3-8**
May	**9th Grade "On Track" Rates and High School Graduation**
June	**Food Insecurity in the School District of Philadelphia**
July	**English Learners and Students in Special Education**

About PERC

@phledresearch
@research4action
@SDP_Research



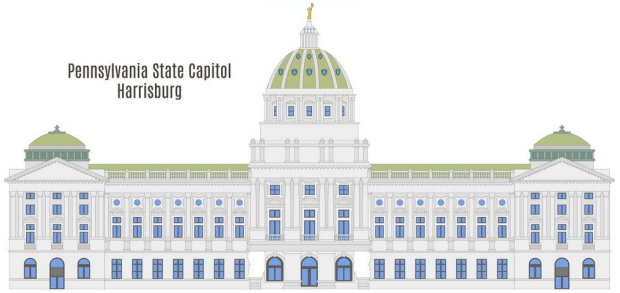
Goals for This Presentation

Attendees will better understand:

1. New pathways to graduation in Pennsylvania (Act 158)
2. How historical cohorts of high school students would have performed on the Keystone-specific pathways to graduation
3. Implications of the study findings and additional related resources

Part 1: Updated pathways/requirements for graduation in PA

Act 158 of 2018



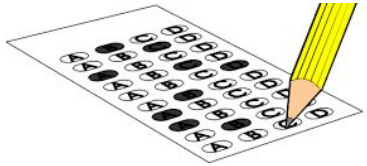
- Additional requirements to pre-existing statewide and District-wide graduation requirements.
- Requires passing three Keystone subject courses AND attaining proficiency on the three end-of-course Keystone Exams OR proficiency on alternatives in order for a student to achieve statewide graduation requirements.
- Requirements go into effect for the graduating class of 2023.

Snapshot of PA Graduation Pathways

Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Pathway 3	Pathway 4	Pathway 5
Keystone Proficiency	Keystone Composite	Career and Technical Education Concentrator	Alternative Assessment	Evidence-Based

For more information visit http://philasd.org/gradreq

Graduation Pathways 1 & 2



1. **Keystone Proficiency**: Receive at least a Proficient or Advanced score (1500 or better) in all three Keystone exams.
2. **Keystone Composite**: Take all three Keystone exams
   - At least one Proficient or Advanced score
   - Composite score of at least 4452
   - No Below Basic scores
   - *This is the equivalent of earning Proficient or Advanced on two exams and Basic on one exam, or earning Basic on two exams and Advanced on one exam.*

Subject	*Below Basic*	*Basic*	*Proficient*	*Advanced*
Biology	1200-1459	1460-1499	1500-1548	1549-1800
Algebra	1200-1438	1439-1499	1500-1545	1546-1800
Literature	1200-1443	1444-1499	1500-1583	1584-1800

Graduation Pathway 2: Examples

Subject	*Below Basic*	*Basic*	*Proficient*	*Advanced*
Biology	1200-1459	1460-1499	1500-1548	1549-1800
Algebra	1200-1438	1439-1499	1500-1545	1546-1800
Literature	1200-1443	1444-1499	1500-1583	1584-1800

2. **Keystone Composite**: Take all three Keystone exams with at least one Proficient or Advanced score, a composite score of at least 4452, and no Below Basic scores.This is the equivalent of earning Proficient or Advanced on two exams and Basic on one exam, or earning Basic on two exams and one Advanced exam.

Examples

Example	Biology	Algebra	Literature	Composite	*Pathway 2*
Student A	1500 (Prof)	1500 (Prof)	1452 (Basic)	4452	Met requirement
Student B	1460 (Basic)	1546 (Adv)	1446 (Basic)	4452	Met requirement
Student C	1460 (Basic)	1392 (BB)	1600 (Adv)	4452	Did not meet
Student D	1451 (Basic)	1500 (Prof)	1500 (Prof)	4451	Did not meet

Part 2: Introducing the New PERC Report

Changing the Finish Line: Implications of new graduation requirements in the School District of Philadelphia

Research Questions

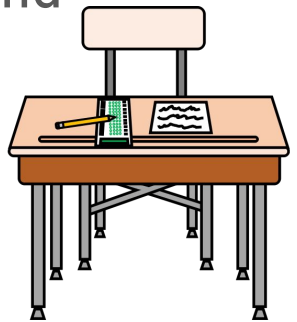
1. How can we use historical district data to inform conversations about how Pennsylvania's Act 158 might impact graduation rates in Philadelphia?
2. How might the new policy shape inequities in pathways to graduation?

What data did the study use?

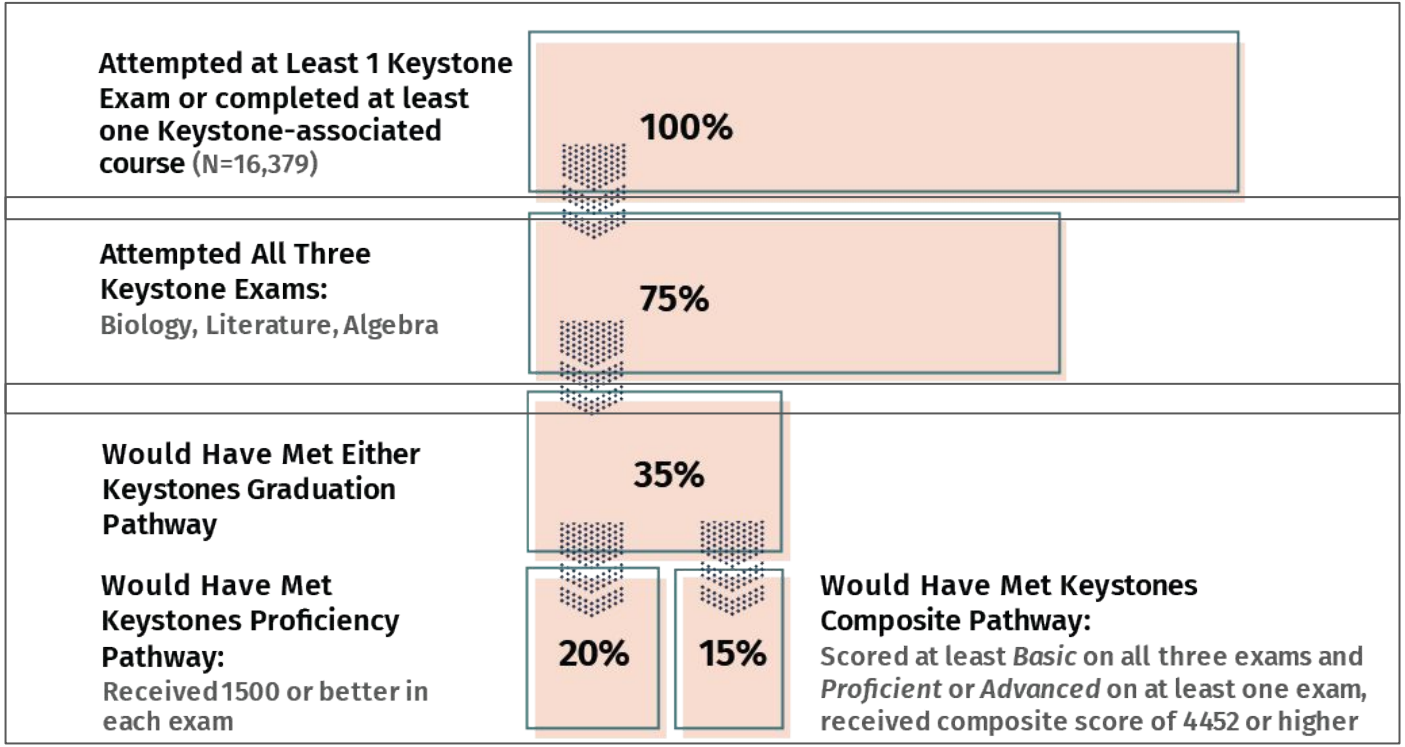
- Students in their third year of high school enrolled in the SDP in the expected graduating classes of 2018 and 2019
- Students who took at least one Keystone associated course or attempted at least one Keystone exam (Algebra, Biology, Literature)
- Of the 18,275 students in these cohorts, 16,379 were included in the sample

What the Study Examined:

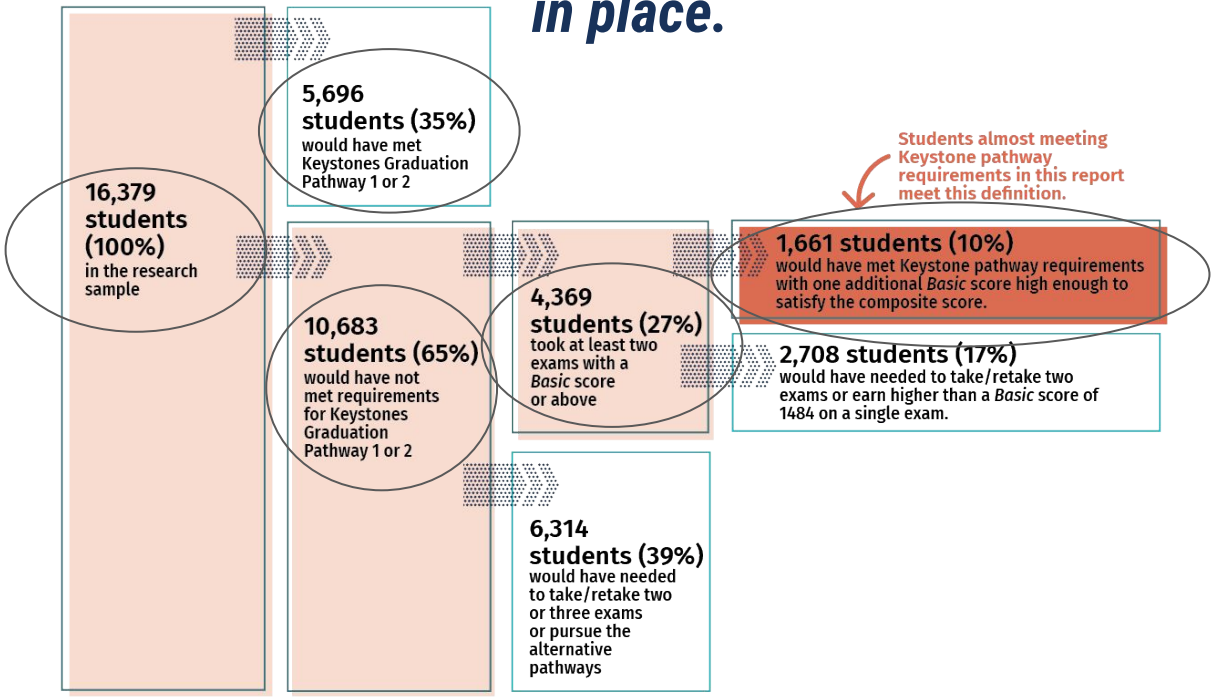
- Keystone exam performance in the classes of 2018 and 2019
    - *How many and which students would have met the Keystone pathways?*
- Students who we classify as “almost” meeting a Keystone graduation pathway
- Keystone graduation pathways by student groups and individual SDP schools
- *Historical data from a low-stakes, pre-pandemic testing environment*



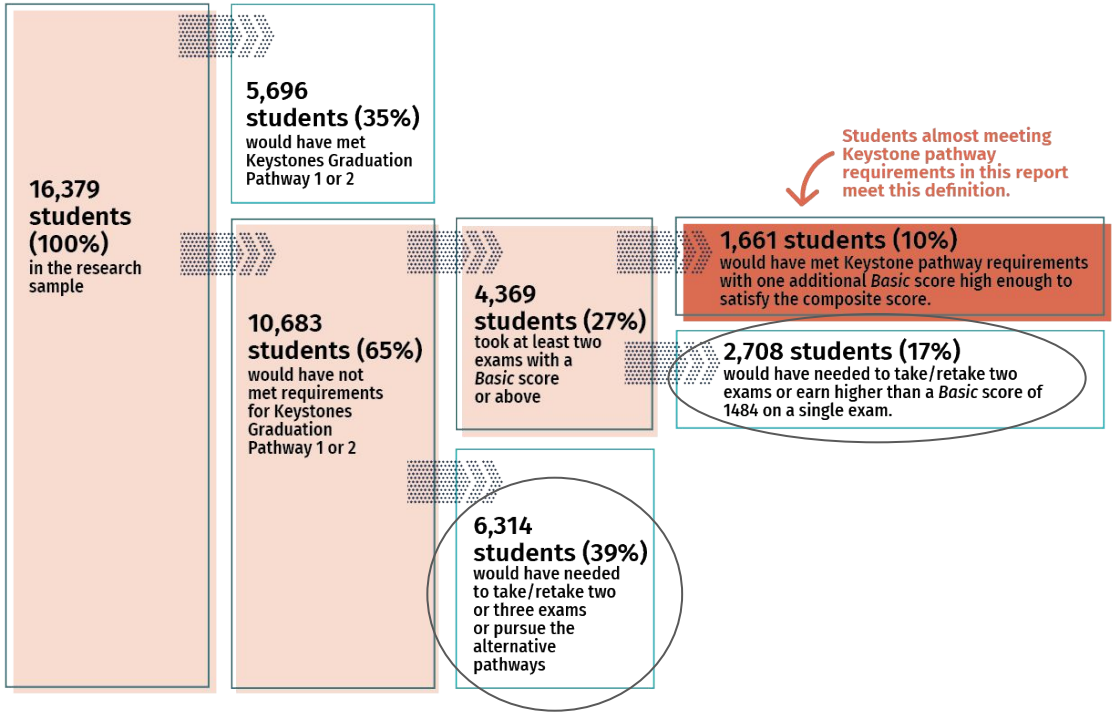
Finding 1: Just over one-third of students in the historical sample would have achieved Keystone scores sufficient to pass the Keystone graduation pathways under the new policy.



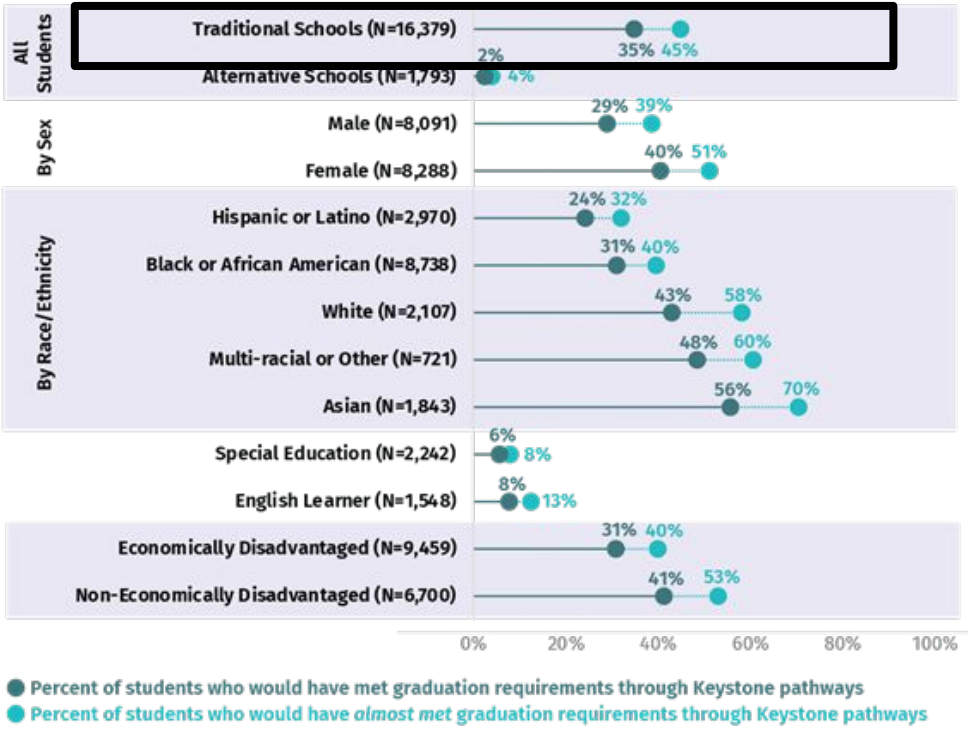
Finding 2: An additional 10% of students would have almost met graduation requirements through Keystone pathways, needing to earn a Basic on only one additional exam to meet the Keystone requirements to graduate, had they been in place.



Finding 3: For future cohorts of District students, we estimate that over half will need targeted support to dramatically improve their Keystones performance or may need to pursue alternative pathways to graduate.

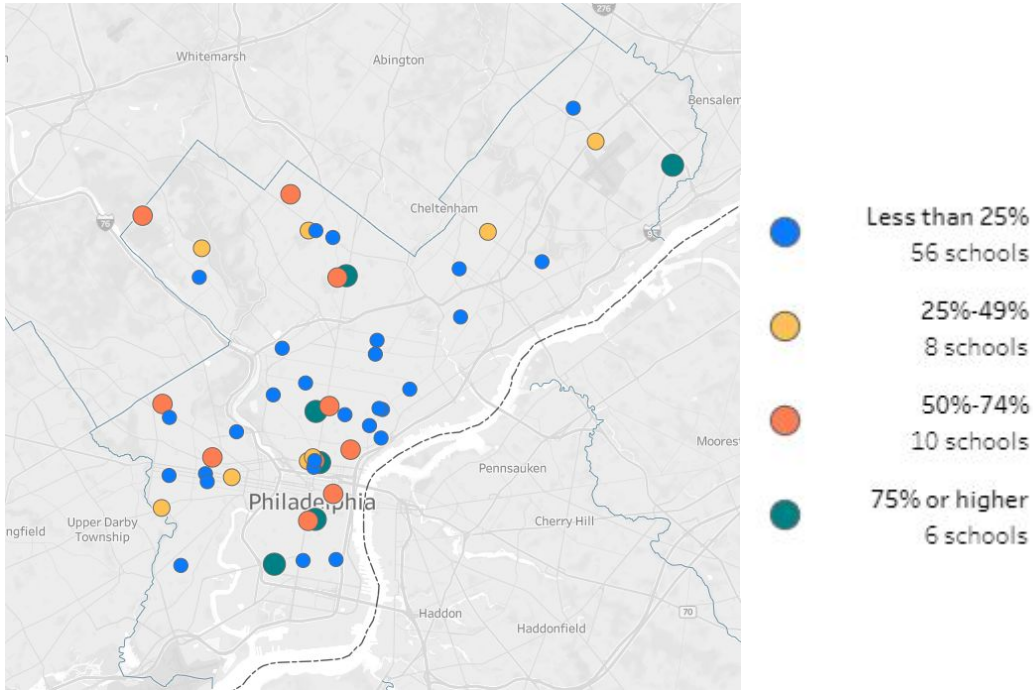


Finding 4: This significant policy shift likely has equity implications for all schools in the District, but especially those serving many structurally disadvantaged students.



Finding 5: For most of the schools in the School District of Philadelphia, a substantial share of students would not graduate through Keystone pathways if the historical trends represented in the report continue.

Percentage of students who would have met graduation requirements



https://phledresearch.org/keystones-map/

Part 3: Implications of the Study Findings & Additional Resources

Implications

- To support all students toward graduation, execute a dual strategy aimed at both the Keystone and alternative graduation pathways
- Identify seniors in the graduating class of 2023 who are not on track to meet the Keystone graduation pathway, and connect them to supports to pursue alternate pathways
- Identify realistic interventions for 11th grade students who are close to meeting the Keystone-associated graduation pathways
- Moving forward, provide guidance on timing for when to pursue alternative pathways

ORE & PERC Briefs & Reports on HS and Graduation

- Changing the Finish Line: Implications of new graduation requirements in the School District of Philadelphia
- Changing Requirements in Pennsylvania for High School Graduation: A Research Brief on Pennsylvania Act 158
- High School Graduation in Philadelphia: 12 Key Questions
- Recovering Credits in the School District of Philadelphia: High School Student Credit Recovery Utilization in 2018-19
- Getting Back on Track: How Off-Track Ninth Graders Progressed in Later Years of High School, Class of 2017 and 2018
- Summary of 2020-21 High School Graduation Rates in Philadelphia
- Summary of 2019-20 High School Graduation Rates in Philadelphia
- From Ninth Grade On-Track to College Matriculation: The Path of the 2015-16 SDP Ninth-Grade Cohort

Resources

- PDE Graduation Toolkit
- SDP State Graduation Requirements Toolkit (Act 158) (schools have access)
- Partner Toolkit
- Family/student-facing website & information sessions/office hours

Q&A

Join our mailing list to be notified when recordings are available and when webinars are scheduled. We also welcome your suggestions for future topics. Link in the chat!