



Exit exams the wrong response for Kentucky schools

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“Kentucky graduates nearly 90 percent of its high school seniors every year,” according to Adam Beam of The Associated Press. “But last year, only 65 percent of those graduates met standards preparing them for college or a career.

“That’s why the Kentucky Board of Education voted to adopt something many other states are abandoning: exit exams.”

This is exactly the wrong response. To be sure, there is a real challenge here, but the proposed solution is actually much worse than the actual problem. Once again, standardized testing is being touted as a simple answer to a complex problem.

With all due respect to those who have dedicated their lives to educating students at all levels (and please note that this does not include most legislators), the challenge lies more with teachers, administrators and counselors than it does with our students.

The reality is most professionals who work in our public schools and state colleges have very little (or no) training in career counseling and academic advising. And their knowledge of occupational trends and economic opportunities – beyond their own communities – is even more severely limited.

The future increasingly requires that we make decisions based on evidence rather than hearsay; opinions not based on data should be considered highly suspect. One myth we desperately need to address involves the notion that all high school graduates need to attend traditional college.

While everyone should plan on extending their education beyond the secondary level, there are a lot of very viable options that do not involve obtaining a four-year degree. You can be an enlightened individual yet still find yourself living under an overpass.

To reiterate, testing is not the answer. What we need are better trained career professionals who can provide the individualized attention and information students need to make more informed choices.

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