



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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June 20, 2011

Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
LBJ Education Building, Room 7W311
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

As Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, I am writing to officially request a waiver for our state from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability components as reflected in the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In your recent op-ed piece titled "Revamp No Child Left Behind – Now," you discussed the urgent need to reform the current education law but go on to say that if Congress does not complete reauthorization soon the United States Department of Education will "...be prepared with a process that will enable schools to move ahead with reform this fall." Therefore, Kentucky, a state that was first to adopt the Common Core Standards and first to design and implement its next-generation accountability system, continues to lead the way by being the first state to officially request a waiver from the current federal accountability requirements.

While NCLB has served a vital purpose in requiring key accountability components for schools and districts such as increased attention to student achievement data for determining school and district accountability, a focus on the disaggregation of data by subgroups, transparency with the public through reporting of data and more, it is time to move on to next-generation accountability systems that will keep these important components as a foundation but will drive performance toward college- and career-readiness. Kentucky's next-generation accountability system will require continuous growth for all students to ensure that they graduate from high school equipped with the rigorous knowledge and skills to be successful in whatever path they choose to pursue.

As the process is developed to help states move ahead with reform, Kentucky advocates that this process be one that allows for state leadership in the design of next-generation accountability systems. Thirty-six (36) states, including Kentucky, have pledged to develop and implement accountability systems rooted in the Council of Chief State School Officers' Statement of Principles and Processes for State Leadership on Next-Generation Accountability Systems if flexibility is given to the states to design the details of the systems that will ensure continuous growth of students over time.

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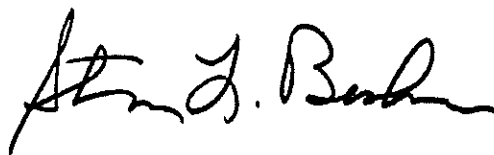
The principles used to develop Kentucky's next-generation accountability system are the same as those ascribed to by the 35 other states that support the Council of Chief State School Officers' framework. These include:

- Align performance goals for all schools and districts to college- and career-ready standards;
- Make meaningful annual accountability determinations for all schools and districts;
- Focus initial determinations on student outcomes, including status and growth;
- Continue to disaggregate data by subgroup, for reporting and accountability;
- Report timely, actionable, accessible data to all stakeholders, including outcome and richer data to drive continuous improvement;
- Promote deeper diagnostic reviews, as appropriate, to better link accountability determinations to meaningful supports and interventions;
- Build district and school capacity for sustained improvement;
- Targeting specifically the lowest performing schools for significant interventions; and
- Promote innovation, evaluation, and continuous improvement in accountability systems over time.

The Kentucky Board of Education will be finalizing the last components of the state's next-generation accountability system at its August 3-4 meeting. Therefore, it is critical that you give immediate consideration to Kentucky's waiver request. Kentucky Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday can provide you with any details of the new system that you and your staff require during the consideration of the waiver. He can be reached at 502-564-3141 or via e-mail at terry.holliday@education.ky.gov.

Thank you for serious consideration of this urgent request. Knowing your commitment to innovation and reform, I look forward to receiving a positive response to the implementation of Kentucky's next-generation accountability system for federal accountability purposes.

Sincerely,



Steven L. Beshear

cc: Commissioner Terry Holliday
Members of the Kentucky Board of Education