



GREENVILLE COUNTY SCHOOLS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES RECOMMENDATIONS

SCDE APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF NCLB

For several years, the Greenville County Schools Board of Trustees and Administration have advocated for changes to the Federal No Child Left Behind Legislation (NCLB). While the legislation, signed into law in 2002, promised to create a new era in education where accountability, local control, parental involvement and the funding of proven programs would serve as cornerstones, it failed to deliver. Instead, NCLB set unrealistic goals requiring 100% proficiency for all students in reading and math by 2014, harshly penalizing schools for failing to meet these goals, and dictating the use of federal funds to local school boards.

In September 2011, citing Congress' inability to address specific problems within NCLB, President Obama announced that State Departments of Education, through application to the U.S. Department of Education, could request a waiver from certain requirements of the NCLB law. The President promised that these waivers would increase state and local flexibility.

The Greenville County Schools Board of Trustees welcomed this announcement. In fact, in an October 2011 letter to Dr. Mick Zais, South Carolina's Superintendent of Education, the Board thanked Dr. Zais for his willingness to pursue the federal waiver and offered to assist him in whatever way possible.

The Board and Administration were eager to review South Carolina's waiver application and discussed its contents during the January 10 Committee of the Whole meeting. While the Board supports some of the waiver content, such as the provisions included in Principle 3 regarding effective instruction and leadership, multiple concerns have been raised and it appears that flexibility may actually be reduced under the proposal. Unless the following issues are addressed in the application, the State Department of Education will miss a unique and important opportunity to improve academic performance for students and schools in South Carolina.

THEREFORE, WE ASK THAT THE CURRENT APPLICATION WAIVER FOR NCLB BE AMENDED TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

PRINCIPLE 1:

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

The inclusion of a specific assessment model that provides both formative and summative student data and compares a student's score not only to a standard, but also to the scores of peers in other states, such as Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.

The inclusion of outcomes of assessments, such as WorkKeys, that are transferable from school to work.

A commitment from the State Department of Education to employ, at state expense, a national clearinghouse to collect and report on college attendance and college credit accumulation rates for all students from each high school as required by the waiver application.

PRINCIPLE 2:

STATE-DEVELOPED DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT

Flexibility from the "all or nothing" goal of meeting 100% proficiency to one that is based on benchmarking current subgroup performance levels and setting reasonable and achievable goals to reflect progress.

The deletion of the increased number of Annual Measurable Objectives as defined in the application which include science, social studies, gender and graduation rate for each subgroup and would result in an increase from 37 to as many as 77 required objectives for some districts.

The deletion of any accountability sub-group which measures non-English speaking students using assessments that are administered in English.

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PRINCIPLE 2 CONTINUED

A revision to the methodology for developing graduation rates adopted by SDE which would recognize additional paths to graduation, such as GED and Occupational Diplomas. This is especially critical since the graduation rate is weighted more heavily than any other accountability measure in the draft application.

The inclusion of members of local Boards of Trustees, District Administrators, principals, teachers, parents and taxpayers in determining what actions must be taken to improve performance at Priority Level 3 Schools and Districts.

The establishment of a rewards program which recognizes the same percentage of schools for “Achievement” and “High Progress” as those identified for penalties.

The inclusion of incentives which reward schools that push students beyond proficient standards, ensuring that student progress is not paused once students meet accountability goals.

The inclusion of a detailed and transparent accounting report disclosing any new or increased costs to the state or local taxpayers created by the implementation of the waiver application.

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

No recommendations. We support the adoption of a research based, high quality personnel evaluation system, such as the one currently used by Greenville County Schools.

PRINCIPLE 4: REDUCING DUPLICATION AND UNNECESSARY BURDEN

The assurance that only one accountability system will be recognized by the state which will remove duplicative and burdensome reporting requirements for districts and schools that have little/no impact on student outcomes.

A specific plan that details what system will be used by the SDE to evaluate and revise administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burdens on Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools.

