



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WSSDA remains committed to reauthorization efforts after USED denies waiver request

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) was disappointed to learn that the U.S. Department of Education (USED) denied a waiver request that would prevent Washington schools from having to issue so-called “failure letters” to parents of students in schools that aren’t meeting adequate yearly progress standards.

The initial request for flexibility under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was issued by State Superintendent Randy Dorn at the request of WSSDA. The current NCLB Act, which was slated to be reauthorized in 2007, is widely seen as outdated, inadequate, and improperly labels schools as failing. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has publicly acknowledged that labeling schools as failures is a mistake and we should be focused on creating a new law that is fair and flexible, and focused on the schools and students most at risk.

“Schools in Washington are not failing. In fact, most are performing wonderfully in spite of enduring significant funding cuts over the past several years. Academic achievement gains, numerous awards for excellence, and improving graduation rates are testaments to the success of Washington’s educators. While improvements can and must be made, we are heading in the right direction,” said Mari Taylor, WSSDA President and Lake Stevens School Board Member.

Notably, USED was well aware of these gains prior to its decision to deny Washington’s waiver request. In November 2013, Duncan called State Superintendent Dorn to personally congratulate him upon receiving results from Washington’s 2013 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP). Duncan acknowledged that the state had improved in every category.

Also in 2013, Washington’s students scored higher than the national average on the SAT and ACT and made gains in math and reading under the three-year federal School Improvement Grants. Washington also rose to eighth in the nation in participation in Advanced Placement (AP) exams and passage rates saw gains as well.

In spite of this recent rejection from the USED, WSSDA is now even more committed to working for the long-overdue reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the original version of NCLB.

“We are thankful for the many members of Washington’s Congress that signed a letter to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan urging him to approve the waiver,” Taylor expressed. “We plan to continue conversations with them and others in Washington, D.C. to encourage a serious and immediate effort at reauthorization.”

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