



State of Arizona
Department of Education
Office of John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

January 26, 2012

Dear Education Stakeholders:

We are seeking your feedback on Arizona's request for an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver. Last September, President Obama announced that states had the opportunity to apply for this waiver. The purpose of the waiver is not to give states and districts a reprieve from accountability but rather to unleash innovation and energy at the state and local levels to improve our schools. Arizona embraces this challenge and has, in fact, already begun this process.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has rightly pointed out that, "Instead of fostering progress and accelerating academic improvement, many NCLB requirements have unintentionally become barriers to State and local implementation of forward-looking reforms designed to raise academic achievement."

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) at my direction will be submitting a waiver application by the February 21 due date, and is eager to demonstrate how the efforts to improve education in Arizona can be enhanced with greater flexibility with some of the federal requirements.

The four principles that the U.S. Department of Education is asking us to address in this application are areas that Arizona has been focusing on for the past two years:

- Implementation of college and career-ready standards and assessments;
- A strong accountability system;
- Guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation systems that support effective instruction; and
- Reduction of paperwork and reporting requirements

Last October marked the release of Arizona's new A-F School Accountability Letter Grades. However, because we still have the No Child Left Behind system defining adequate yearly progress (AYP), our schools and parents are given two different, and often differing, performance evaluations of their schools. This can be confusing. Fortunately, the ESEA waiver gives us the unique opportunity to streamline accountability systems in order to provide more easily understood information to both parents and schools regarding a school's academic progress.

To facilitate the discussion of Arizona's ESEA waiver proposal, we have posted important information at www.azed.gov/eseawaiver. At this web address you will find an overview of the ESEA waiver process and other relevant documents. In the days to come we will also be posting sections of our waiver application on the website as they become available to share; sending emails to our stakeholders asking for comments; and holding outreach sessions with multiple stakeholder groups to gather additional feedback.

Thank you in advance for your questions, comments and feedback. It will be invaluable in helping us take advantage of this important opportunity to improve education in Arizona for all of our students.

Sincerely,

John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

