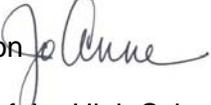


September 27, 2010

TO: Members, Education Oversight Committee

FROM: Jo Anne Anderson 

RE: Implementation of the High School Working Group Recommendations

At the August 9 meeting, the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) approved a number of recommendations from the High School Working Group. I am writing to inform you of the implementation status of five of the recommendations after meeting with our SC Department of Education (SCDE) colleagues.

The SCDE has requested approval from the United States Department of Education (USDE) to modify the Accountability Workbook (i.e., the agreement between the USDE and the SCDE regarding federal accountability) to incorporate the following in the 2011 Adequate Yearly Progress designations:

- Ninth Grade Students
- 1.1 The Working Group recommends that the Education Oversight Committee, the State Board of Education and the SC Department of Education pursue changes in federal policies and regulations to address the Working Group's concern;
The EOC adopted the recommendation.
 - 1.2 Within the authority of the SC Department of Education to interpret federal guidelines, the Working Group recommends that only those students enrolled on the 45th day of their first enrollment as a ninth grader (applying the current rules for transfers) be included in the calculation of graduation rates; and
The EOC adopted the recommendation.
 - 1.3 The district should be held accountable for students who may have left the middle school, yet not enrolled in the high school. The Working Group believes that the new student information system (i.e., Power School) gives districts and the state the capacity to track students across schools and that the districts have resources to find the students not enrolled as ninth graders.
The EOC adopted the recommendation.

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Students Experiencing Extended Illness

- 2.1 The Working Group requests that policies and procedures be established so that a district superintendent may provide documentation and request that the State Superintendent of Education reassign a student to a different graduation year cohort because of a catastrophic and/or extended illness which precludes the student from pursuing the high school diploma over the four-year period.

The EOC deferred action on the recommendation.

While Recommendations 1.1 and 1.3 do not appear to be problematic, there is less optimism about Recommendations 1.2 and 2.1. Over the years the EOC has adhered to federal definitions and procedures for calculating graduation rate. Should the USDE reject Recommendation 1.2, then the EOC may wish to reconsider its August 9 action because rejection by USED would require the publication of a state on-time graduation rate that differs from the federal on-time graduation rate.

Recommendation 9.2 called for use of a common absolute index among elementary, middle and high schools and districts for the 2010 report cards. I am pleased to report that the SCDE is able to accommodate the common index this fall. However, the transition from the index values used in 2009 to the revised values for 2010 further complicates the calculation of the growth ratings for high schools and districts because in order to calculate growth, this year's indices will have to be converted to the previous year's scale. Therefore, SCDE indicates that the revised calculation can apply to 2010 growth ratings for high schools and districts although growth ratings would not be published until after the winter holidays. All report cards would be published online in November 2010 as originally planned with a notation about the delayed growth ratings for high schools and districts. Notification of Palmetto Gold and Silver winners at the high school and district levels will follow release of the growth ratings.

Should you have questions, please contact me at your convenience. Thank you.