



State of Vermont
Vermont Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

August 12, 2011

Dear Vermont Educators,

Many of you are preparing to open school doors once again and may have heard by now that Governor Shumlin and the State Board of Education have committed to revising Vermont's state accountability system in ways that help us to better identify areas of strength and need in our public school system. On August 9th, the Department of Education was charged by the Board with working hand in hand with the Governor's office to develop a waiver request for submission to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan within the next 21 days. This came on the heels of Secretary Duncan reaching out to Governor Shumlin to request a model from Vermont that specifically identifies ways in which a state accountability system can better serve Vermont educators in meeting student needs, particularly those students who are most disadvantaged in the current system.

As Deputy Commissioner of Education, I write to let you know that we anticipated the Secretary's position on this issue in light of the lack of reauthorization of ESEA and had begun this work in recent months. We are currently working in conjunction with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to outline the Vermont version of Next Generation Accountability Systems. Over the next three weeks, we will partner with leadership from the Governor's office, the Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont Principals Association, the Vermont School Boards Association and the Vermont National Educators Association to craft a plan we believe will be approvable by the Secretary.

This plan is one which would replace and enhance the current system of state accountability, likely moving away from one measure as the means of determination to a more meaningful reflection of student and school achievement and educator effectiveness. If granted a waiver from the United States Education Department, we would be given time to implement this new system and some relief from the impending 100% proficient (at grade level) target that looms for 2014. Waivers would not be granted to individual schools but to the state itself. The effect of the new system would likely change how schools are identified and create a system that more effectively focuses the sanctions and supports imposed as a result of determination of need.

Please look to the Department's Weekly Field Memo and Web site (<http://education.vermont.gov/>) for updates on this topic. Thank you for all you do each day to ensure that Vermont children have the best opportunities in education. Without you, this would not be possible.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rae Ann Knopf".

Rae Ann Knopf
Deputy Commissioner
Education Transformation and Innovation