OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items September 13-14, 2012

OFFICE OF ACCREDITATION

- O4. Approval of approval of final action to hold districts and schools harmless for the Graduation/Dropout Component of the Statewide Accountability System for the 2012 Accountability Results based on a finding that the rule only confers a benefit to the public or some segment thereof (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with public comments)
 - 1) The Graduation/Dropout Component of Statewide Accountability System will be calculated and reported; however, Districts and Schools will be held harmless for this component only in the 2012 Accountability Results.

On April 18, 2012, the Commission on School Accreditation recommended that the State Board of Education establish an Accountability Task Force to review the Graduation/Dropout Component of the Statewide Accountability System based on the analysis of three (3) years of data collection.

On May 18, 2012, the State Board of Education approved the establishment of an Accountability Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding the Graduation/Dropout Component of the Statewide Accountability System.

The nine member Accountability Task Force consisted of one member of State Board of Education, one member of the Commission on School Accreditation and seven practitioners from across the state. The Accountability Task Force met on July 17, 2012, and made recommendations for consideration by the State Board of Education on July 19-20, 2012.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

From: Dina Holland [mailto:dholland@jaco.k12.ms.us]

Sent: Thursday, July 26, 2012 8:47 AM

To: Shirley Williamson **Subject:** US History test

My name is Dina Holland, and I am the principal of St. Martin High School in the Jackson County School District. St. Martin is an academic institution with high expectations for students and staff alike. Although we have had the QDI for the past 3 years to be a Star School, we have not had the grad rate. However, for the past 3 years we have put things in place to increase that. We are beginning to see the fruits of our efforts increasing our grad rate by approximately 8 points this year. I am concerned with that not being a component of the accountability model this year, it will send the wrong message and tend to make schools not work so hard to hold on to these students. I do understand why it is being done this year. From that same perspective, I ask that MDE consider waiving passing the new US History as a grad requirement for this years seniors. Please understand that we do not shy away from hard work nor do we shy away from raising the standards. Because this was a new, very rigorous test, the failing percentage is alarming. I know how difficult it is for schools to remediate those who failed the English 2 multiple choice even with the additional time before graduation. These seniors will be behind the 8 ball right out of the shoot. They will not be in the class, and many had this course during the 1st semester as we are on block schedule. Of course, we have things in place to help these students, but I fear it will not be enough for some. Although we consider ourselves to be on the forefront when it comes to implementing best practices to meet new standards, I would be honest in saving that these students have not had enough prep time to be exposed to these types of questions. True, the English 2 is very similar but not as rigorous. Please know that I am truly concerned what this is going to do to MS grad rate. I hope you can pass on my concerns to the appropriate personnel. Thank you for enduring this email.



August 7, 2012

Paula Vanderford
Office of Accreditation
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Paula,

Please accept these as formal comments submitted on behalf of The Parents' Campaign regarding the State Board of Education's proposal to hold schools and school districts harmless for the graduation/dropout component of the state accountability model for the 2012 Accountability Results. Though we understand that the issue is complex, we at The Parents' Campaign believe that this move would be unwise.

Holding schools accountable for their graduation and dropout rates is critical, as graduating students is one of the schools' primary functions. Schools must be discouraged from "pushing out" students who have the potential to pull down scores on state assessments. Additionally, the proposal is poorly timed, given that Mississippi will soon have to revamp its accountability model due to the implementation of the Common Core initiative. Finally, lowering the standards by which we measure schools would invite criticism at a time when public education can least afford it.

For these reasons, The Parents' Campaign urges the State Board of Education to reconsider its position on this issue and to maintain the high standards it set forth when the current accountability model was adopted.

Sincerely,

Nancy Loome
Executive Director

Paula Vanderford
Education Bureau Manager
Office of Accreditation
MS Department of Education
Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Ms. Vanderford,

As a former member of the Board of Trustees of Jackson Public Schools and an active member of the Jackson community who supports public education, I ask that the Department of Education seriously reconsider its decision to drop graduation rates as a component of the state accountability standards. I agree with the assessments provided indicating the measurements are typically inaccurate because of the methodology currently in place to collect the data. However insisting all school districts remain accountable for all of their students, not just the top performing students, should remain a component of accountability.

The graduation rate sometimes is a misnomer, in my opinion, as it measures only those children who were able to complete high school exactly four years from the date they entered 9th grade. It does not account properly for students who may spend an extra semester or more on the work, and diminishes the inducement for districts to focus on those students if the accountability requirement is lifted. A modification of the definition may be more appropriate, allowing the measurement to be those who complete high school and receive a degree, not just a certificate, even if that process takes them six or even seven years. The end result is the benchmark that should be measurable.

Our efforts in this state are focused on reducing dropouts, increasing education levels and improving the quality of the workforce for potential industrial and commercial growth. Eliminating the bar of completing high school does little to enhance the efforts and move us forward. I hope the Department of Education will look long and hard at making this change, and decide on an adjustment instead of an elimination in this benchmark.

Thank you.

Jonathan N. Larkin Former Board Member Jackson Public Schools 318 Meadowoods Drive Jackson, MS 39211

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Earlene Holloway

342 So. Broadway St. Apt. I

Greenville, MS 38701

Phone: 662-743-4997

August 16, 2012

Dear Mrs. Paula A. Vanderford,

I personally thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns pertaining to the APA Process for Graduation/Dropout Component. As a parent on patrol for success, I feel that this component should not only remain in place but it should be strictly enforced. There is a history in our public schools concerning mandated policies that are put into play but not following through, such as, TST, mandated 2002. These policies are still not fully implemented in our schools today. Meeting the needs of students is also a major concern, TST and resource classes are suppose to be where struggling students can get the help they need to be successful academically, with IEP's and IIP's in place, why do so many students fall farther and farther behind grade level each year?

Signed,

Earlene Holloway

Board of Directors

KIMBERLYN GALV Sunflower Cour Parent & Stude Sunflower Cour

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August 30, 2012

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Ms. Paula A. Vanderford Education Bureau Manager Office of Accreditation P.O. Box 771 Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Re: COMMENT from Southern Echo, Inc. and the MS Delta Catalyst Roundtable on Graduation/Dropout Component of the Statewide Accountability System,

Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2012

On July 20, 2012 the State Board of Education determined that it wants to hold districts and schools harmless from the Graduation Rate and High School Completion Index components of the Statewide Accountability System for the 2012-2013 school year on the premise that the rule only confers a benefit to the higher ranking school districts rather than all the school districts. At the same time, the data will continue to be collected and evaluated. On page 7 of the Accountability Standards attached to the Public Notice of the Administrative Procedure Act process, it states:

Note: The Graduation/Dropout Component of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System will be calculated and reported; however, Districts and Schools will be held harmless for the Graduation/Dropout Component for the 2012 Accountability Results only.

Southern Echo, Inc. and the MS Delta Catalyst Roundtable, comprised of 10 grassroots community organizations based in the Mississippi Delta region, make the following COMMENTS regarding the proposed policy change by the State Board of Education:

- 1. When the new accountability ranking system was instituted a few years ago we disagreed with the application of the Graduation/Dropout Component only to the higher ranking districts and schools rather than to all of the districts and schools. We thought then, and continue to contend, that all districts and schools should be held accountable to the necessity to keep all students in school where they can learn. We contend that the emphasis upon all students becoming college ready or employment ready is directly related to the issues of student pushout and the schoolhouse to jailhouse pipeline. To address these issues effectively requires a clear mandate, effective policies, and willful implementation subject to measurement, assessment and consequences. As has been said by many, "What is not measured does not get done!"
- 2. Nevertheless, we also now contend that it will be better to retain the policy for the higher ranking districts and schools than to remove it altogether, even for one year while the policy is being re-evaluated. Therefore, we do not think the one year

moratorium on the use of the component to rank school districts and schools is appropriate and the policy decision should be reversed.

Our reasoning is as follows:

- 3. We believe that the moratorium on the use of the Graduation/Dropout Component sends the wrong message, even for one year. If the use of the component in prior years had not done harm, it cannot do harm to continue to utilize it in the ranking process while the State Board of Education determines how best to revise the policy for future years.
- 4. The **interpretation of the Board's action** by many in grassroots communities across the Delta region regarding the moratorium is that the Board is, or may be, retreating from holding districts and schools accountable for maximizing graduation rates and minimizing dropout rates. While this may not be the case, parents and students are concerned because they do not want to lose the Graduation Rate and High School Completion Index as measures that impact the accountability ranking of school districts and schools.
- 5. Parents and students do not want a one-year pause to become a permanent termination of the use of data on graduation and dropout rates to evaluate districts and schools because every student is entitled to a quality educational opportunity. The data on graduation and dropout rates is critical to enable parents and students to form an accurate picture of what is going on in their school districts and schools. There are strong correlations among graduation rates, dropout rates, critical teacher shortage rates, student performance on standardized tests and the demographic markers of race, low-wealth and disability. We need to make sure that all districts and schools, including the higher performing districts and schools, do not neglect the obligation to educate lower performing students, nor push them out of the education system altogether.
- 6. In the presentation of the **Florida A+ Plan** to the House and Senate Education Committees on Thursday, August 23, 2012 a core element of their strategic model is to place strong emphasis in the ranking system on one year of growth for one year of school for all of the students in the lowest 25% of every district and school, whether the district is ranked an "A" or an "F" school district, and an emphasis on whether the students are graduating college ready or employment ready. These goals are integrally entwined with and impact the graduation and dropout rates. When Mississippi retains its emphasis on graduation and dropout rates we necessarily drive home **the necessity of educating all students**, and not just the higher performing students. The State Board of Education should not let up on this emphasis, even for a year, as the Board considers how best to improve the policy standards.
- 7. Parents and students do not want the accountability process weakened, but the proposed moratorium has **shaken confidence** in the process.

In summary:

- A. Southern Echo and the MS Delta Catalyst Roundtable urge the State Board of Education to reverse its policy in order to continue to utilize the Graduation/Dropout Component in the accountability ranking process as it considers how best to revise it.
- B. We also urge the State Board of Education to extend the accountability for the Graduation/Dropout Component to all school districts and schools in its revision of the policy.

If there is any additional information that we can provide, please let us know.

Leray Golony

Leroy Johnson, Executive Director, Southern Echo, Inc. on behalf of Southern Echo and the MS Delta Catalyst Roundtable Additional MS Delta Catalyst Roundtable organizational signatories on this COMMENT:

Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Lexington, MS (Holmes County)

Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County, Tunica, MS

Sunflower County Parents & Students Organization, Indianola, MS

Concerned Citizens for a Better Greenville, Greenville, MS (Washington County)

Activists With A Purpose, Grenada, MS (Grenada County)

Action Communication & Education Reform, Duck Hill, MS (Montgomery County)

Citizens for Educational Awareness, Kilmichael, MS (Montgomery County)

Fannie Lou Hamer Institute for Change, Eupora, MS (Webster County)

Ms. Paula A. Vanderford Education Bureau Manager Office of Accreditation P.O. Box 771 Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Re: COMMENT from Citizens for Education Awareness
Graduation/Dropout Component of the Statewide Accountability System,
Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2012

CEA is asking MDE to allow the Graduation/Dropout component of the Mississippi statewide accountability system to remain as is in order to hold all school districts accountable for student graduation rate. Even a year without this component can negatively affect all schools graduation rate.

If student requirements remain the same, why will schools and school districts be held harmless for the 2012 statewide accountability Graduation/Dropout result?

Thanking you for allowing us to comment on such an important matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Young