

August 18, 2014

The South Dakota Department of Education is one of many states that have received flexibility from the US Education Department to waive Sect. 1116 of No Child Left Behind and engage in what our office has embraced as the ESEA Waiver. Thus, part of our shift from Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) to School Performance Index (SPI) is to also transition from compliance driven to outcomes based. The focus of outcomes based is to look at the US ED's seven turnaround principles. While this may leave some with an uncertainty of what that means, the SD Division of Education Services and Supports Title Team is committed to assisting the LEAs that are identified as Priority Schools, Focus Schools, and any others that are on the cusp of failing, develop interventions and strategies that will help them focus on a more sustained turnaround effort.

It is the belief of the DESS Title Team that all parents and educators want all students to be successful, but there are many challenges that inhibit this from happening. Many of our LEAs that have schools designated as Focus and Priority are located in areas of high poverty. We also have schools with high concentration of English Language Learners (ELLs). Both of these contribute to the lack of resources, qualified staff, and opportunities for students to be exposed to a rich environment which is filled with the academic English language.

None of this work can be accomplished without a collaborative effort of the SD DOE. In 2013, a workgroup called Statewide System of Recognition, Accountability, and Supports was developed. This workgroup is comprised of various directors and administrators from across the department. The focus of this group is to help deliver a more cohesive message and vision across the department and ensure that the SD DOE Aspirations are the driving force of everyone's work.

In an article written in 2013 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and [Federal Education Group](#), the message is clear; not all LEAs can fit into a one size fits all scenario and the education agencies need to develop a more effective way to "monitor" without creating more burdensome policies. This is also evident by US ED with the more than 40 states allowed to create their own plan for engaging LEAs and schools in a more sustainable turnaround effort.

So, one may be wondering how you begin that process. The DESS Title Team has created a new four-year technical assistance/monitoring cycle that will begin in the 2014-15 school year. During the 2013-14 school year, the DESS Title Team contracted School Support Team (SST) members to work with focus and priority schools to gather data through SD LEAP and held three 2-day data analysis workshops to review the work being done in the schools. The DESS Title Team has also created a more intense data retreat process that all identified Focus and Priority schools are required to participate in once every two years. This data retreat allows schools to take a deeper look at the reason for receiving a designation of Focus or Priority School. Once there has been an intense data analysis, the DESS Title Team is able to help schools focus on the appropriate turnaround efforts and ways to utilize Title I Funds to enhance each LEAs desired outcomes.

While we muddle our way through determining what outcome based is, LEAs in the next review cycle can anticipate teams of DOE representatives embarking upon their schools to meet with various individuals and groups stemming from teachers and administrators, parents and community members, and those we hope to impact the most, the students themselves. The conversations with the various groups will be concentrated around the seven turn around principles and how each group of individuals can work cooperatively to impact student growth. All of these visits will be tailored to meet the needs of each LEA and school, because each entity has unique needs and unique circumstances that need to be considered in order for meaningful two-way communication to take place.

The SD DESS Title Team is excited for the opportunity to get into the LEAs and Schools this next year and our hope and goal is hopefully the same as yours...find ways to help all students become career and life ready!

Let's make 2014-15 a great year!

Shannon Malone

Title Administrator