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CC: Brenan, Michael [MBrenan@BBandT.com]MBrenan@BBandT.com
Date: 6/21/2013 3:09:38 PM
Subject: RE: If You Need Anything

The following is probably more than you'd ever want to know. But I felt that you needed to know the latest information that impacts proviso 1A.62.

On Tuesday, June 18 the US Department of Education issued a letter to give states assessment flexibility per the federal ESEA waiver. A link to that letter follows.

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/130618.html>

I have been told by other state officials that the US Department of Education has been asked by other states like Alabama to consider allowing ACT to be an alternative assessment to the Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessments for the upcoming year. No decision has been made yet by the US Department of Education on alternative assessments like ACT.

If SCDE seeks the federal testing flexibility, I'm not sure how the decision will impact the state accountability system since SC has a state law that does not allow such flexibility. Under existing state law, all students in grades 3 through 8 are required to take PASS in ELA and mathematics. Proviso, 1A.62., only allows such flexibility for up to 5 of our highest achieving districts.

The bottom line is this: Proviso 1A.62. allows the state to be innovative in its state assessment system. And, it would allow the EOC to have the results of other assessments in addition to Smarter Balanced to evaluate and consider in making the decision down the road of where SC will go in this issue. I fully believe that the issue will ultimately be decided by the General Assembly and the Governor. However, the EOC would like to give the General Assembly and Governor the results and experiences of different assessments to be able to give you the data you will need to make this decision. The federal government may (the key word is may) give similar flexibility but we do not have any assurances yet.

My greatest fear in all of this is that the confusion between state and federal education policy continues to muddy the water when it comes to accountability.

I am leaving tomorrow to attend the SREB board meeting. Governor Haley graciously appointed me to SREB last June. I will discuss this issue with other states like Alabama which has passed a law to assess students using the full range of ACT tests in grades 3 through 12. I'll let you know what I find out. You can always reach me by phone at (803) 413-7426.

Melanie

From: Barton, Melanie
Sent: Thursday, June 13, 2013 5:07 PM
To: Peters, Hal; Baker, Josh; Soura, Christian; Card, Rachel
Subject: If You Need Anything

I assume that you will be getting the budget sometime next week. If you have any questions on provisos or line items related to the Education Oversight Committee or other programs in the education budget, please feel free to contact me. My cell phone is (803) 413-7426 if you need me after regular hours. I completely understand the time constraints you will be facing and do not envy you!

Sincerely,

Melanie Barton
Education Oversight Committee
(803) 734-6148

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