

July 15, 2011

“Educating Our Children to Succeed in the Global Economy”

Testimony submitted to the United States Senate  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Gilbert Heights School  
David Douglas School District

Senate Education Committee:

NCLB has been responsible for public education recognizing and acknowledging the achievement gap that exists for children of poverty, color, children having learning disabilities, and identified as English Language Learners. It has caused educational facilities to identify and recognize equity, cultural, and other differences and challenges that are responsible for impacting and widening the achievement gap.

NCLB has failed through the measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress to recognize the individual challenges of various learning environments, institutions, and students. A school and a student are deemed to succeed or fail based on a specific measurement. There is minimal consideration for individual student or institution growth. In addition, the legislation does not adequately address the challenges or differences that exist among our students with disabilities or English Language Learners. All students simply have to jump over the same bar at the same height even though it may not be physically or mentally possible. Having attainable and rigorous standards and accountability measures that address each child is imperative.

Every child has an unlimited capacity to learn. The key variable is determining their starting point and then measuring and providing growth milestones for each child. While we are setting the bar too high for some students, I would also maintain we have not set the bar high enough for other students, and they are not being challenged to reach their potential. In addition, we must have goals that can be realistically achieved and maintained. In 2014, every child and every institution will not achieve AYP under the current accountability and measurement standards. We must have rigorous goals that can be achieved.

Finally, accountability needs to be imbedded within each institution. Best practices, proficient teaching, and outstanding educational leadership should become the expectation, not the exception. When institutions and educators are provided adequate resources, but continue to fail students, consequences and interventions need to be implemented. Time is of the essence for every child being educated. On a final note, I truly maintain that we must address our birth to kindergarten population before any significant and sustained improvement will be realized in our K-12 system. We continue to react to the widening achievement gap rather than addressing the source of the problem. Having every student kindergarten-ready, as well as having full day

kindergarten for every child, will truly decrease the possibility of a child being left behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration and for your efforts in making a positive difference in the lives of our children.

Sincerely,

Don Grotting  
Superintendent  
David Douglas School District