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From: National Center for Learning Disabilities [<mailto:nclcd@nclcd.org>]

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 4:02 PM

To: Colorado State Board of Education Relations

Subject: Support Kids with Learning and Attention Issues in Colorado's Education Plan!

Aug 18, 2017

M State Board Member

Dear State Board Member,

I am a Colorado voter who cares about a child with learning and attention issues and I strongly urge you to improve Colorado's plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act so that it considers the needs of children with learning and attention issues, such as dyslexia and ADHD.

Specifically, in response to the U.S. Department of Education's feedback, I urge you to recognize the importance of using grade-level proficiency to evaluate student achievement and to incorporate grade-level proficiency into your measures of academic achievement.

For these students, high standards are critical. Too often and for too long, students with disabilities have been held to lower standards than their peers. They can and should be held to high standards and expected to meet grade-level proficiency when provided with the right supports and accommodations. Further, ESSA requires that states' academic measures compare student performance to grade-level proficiency. As the U.S. Department of Education pointed out, Colorado's plan to use scale scores when measuring student academic performance fails to tie student scores to grade-level proficiency and therefore falls short of the legal requirements. I urge you to recognize the importance of using grade-level proficiency to evaluate student achievement and to incorporate grade-level proficiency into your measures of academic achievement.

In addition, the following principles are critical to the success of students with learning and attention issues in our state, and I urge you to consider and incorporate them as you revise our state's plan:

First, parents of students with disabilities must be involved in the process of creating, revising and carrying out the ESSA plan. Because so much of what is included in the ESSA state plan will impact students with disabilities, it is necessary to engage with our parent community.

Parents provide important voices for their children, and must be at the table. The State should also encourage local school districts to engage with parents to students with disabilities in the upcoming local ESSA planning process.

Second, the Colorado plan must focus on identifying schools where students are struggling and providing critical supports. The Colorado plan requires a school to miss the mark for students with disabilities and other groups on every indicator in order to receive supports.

This means that some schools where students with disabilities struggle will not be given needed supports. Our ESSA plan must make sure that schools quickly recognize when groups of students like students with disabilities are struggling and take quick action to help them improve. By providing support and resources to help schools improve, we can use school identification for productive purposes rather than punitive purposes.

Finally, communicating how schools are performing must be transparent.

Parents and communities need to know how schools are serving students through an easy-to-understand summative school rating and information about how student groups fared on each of the accountability indicators. Colorado's state plan includes three levels of school ratings, but the ratings categories do not allow schools to show when they are doing well, and the category titles may be confusing for parents. It would be helpful for the plan to explain how the ESSA ratings interact with existing Colorado performance ratings for schools.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to continuing to work with educators and policymakers to ensure our schools provide every student--including the more than 38,000 students in CO who have learning disabilities--a high quality education. I hope to work with you to ensure the parent voice and perspective is an active part of this process.

Sincerely,

Mr. Richard Frost