

RE: Feedback on the standards portion of the ESSA draft

The first major seems to be an historical overview and does not lend itself to content feedback. That being said, I would like to share the following feedback for you to implement as you see appropriate.

1. Regarding the extensive statewide stakeholder creation of the CAS that was then to be replaced with the CCSS as a result of the “gap analysis”: I have spoken to some of the teacher contributors to the original CAS and they have told me that there work has been substantially replaced by CCSS. I understand this replacement was largely motivated by the “Race to the Top” federal financial incentive which has since expired. Since the CAS are so substantially similar to CCSS and CAS was produced as a result of close collaboration of Colorado educators, and since there has been a large constituent/parent rejection of the common core standards as an attempt to federalize education, I, and many of my constituents, would like to see the state of Colorado return to the CAS as originally drafted at a minimum, as part of this periodic review of the state standards.

2. Regarding the ELL and WIDA: let me demonstrate the “gaps” in this program process by way of the particular FACTS regarding my own child. My husband’s first language was Spanish, and I can speak, in part, several languages. When my children entered the public school system in Colorado (around grade 5) the form asking if anyone in the home speaks a foreign language required the honest answer of “yes”. This triggered the school to test my children for ELL. I have an IEP child with a learning disability. Due to his learning disability, my IEP child’s WIDA test results indicated a below sufficient test score. All of his standardized tests are quite low due to his learning disability, so this score was no surprise. What WAS a surprise is that this earned him the label of being an English Language Learner. This was a surprise, because English is the only language we speak in the home and is the only language he knows. For years the paras and aids would ask me why he was ELL since he only speaks English. My answer: I didn’t know – the tests indicated him as such and the “IEP team” thought it best. Finally, I met an individual outside our district who alerted me to the fact the ELL labels and aid funding were for children who truly were English language learners and that my child was obviously mislabeled as a result of his learning disability. When I brought this to the attention of program leaders in our district they insisted that the program had a specific process for both getting in, and getting out of the ELL program. The data (test results) showed he belonged in the program, so the fact that he only spoke English was not significant. My child was tested periodically as the “system” required and did not sufficiently pass the tests to show the requisite proficiency so they would not release him from the program. I explained that he would never pass those tests due to his learning disability and that, I as his parent, did not want his high school record to incorrectly indicate that he was not a native English speaker. The program and processes as they currently are implemented discriminate against/disadvantage children with a learning disability who happen to have a parent who speaks another language. Again, your “draft” gives no opportunity for

me as a parent to address this “gap” in the system but perhaps someone will care to address this VERY REAL problem in the current ELL and WIDA process.

3. Regarding the IEP process: The concept of a “team” making decisions for a child that trumps a parent’s directive is shocking to the conscience. The current team process has the parent as one voice among several – easily outnumbered. This “team” should be advisory to the parent, but the parent should be the ultimate decision maker for the child unless they have been relieved of custody rights. Just because a child has a learning disability should not divest parents of their authority to make decisions on behalf of their child. This is discriminatory.

4. Measuring college and career readiness by standardized test results is not an adequate and accurate measurement tool. Colleges that accept students based not on test results but rather the whole person consideration process are noting a higher college success rate. This demonstrates the fact that test results are not a reliable indicator of college success. Readiness for a career is likewise not captured in standardized test results as a **standardized test tend to measure attention span and testing skills and not marketable career skills.** A person who has worked in the public school system for the past 60 years explained that consistently, employers who seek references from high school records ask about student attendance, punctuality and reliability in turning in assignments, NOT TEST RESULTS. To this end, the average report card can easily be designed to have reliable college and career readiness indicators. As it appears the new administration in Washington is tending to repeal the national requirements for assessments and turn this over to state control, please consider the above factors and consider returning to the time tested indicator of growth, success and readiness: the report card. This is a true measure of growth over time – unlike the moment-in-time snapshot of standardized assessments. Classroom grades are a better measure of performance over time because they capture things like consistency, reliability as well as academic literacy.

We are creating a favored group by looking primarily to standardized test results and there is not necessarily a direct correlation between test results and academic and/or career success. Labeling people according to data output simply creates new boundaries of discrimination and should never be relied on solely as an indicator of anything determinative.

(grammatical error) p. 10- Each SEA... provide information that is:

1. ~~Be~~ in an understandable...
2. ~~Be~~, to the extent...
3. ~~Be~~, upon request...

grammatical error on p. 11 paragraph 2.1.B.i. “a. Conducted outreach...” after 34 C.F.R. section 299.13(b), during ...” need space before “during”. And the clause continues and need to add comma as follows: “SEA has indicated, it...”

p.20 – I am disappointed to see that only 7% of the committee pie chart was parents – considering this is your one and only customer (i.e. their children!!) the representation of parents should have been at least equal to the total of the civil rights groups, the business community members and the elected officials put together. But this demonstrates the fundamental problem with education today and is the reason education is the new civil rights arena – eliminating the parent from the decision making regarding the education, upbringing and decisions impacting their child.

p.29 grammar typo 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence “used ~~to~~ during planning”

p. 39 paragraph 5 regarding ICAP. “may require the schools... to assist the student and his parent to develop and maintain the student’s ICAP...” Indian

p. 47-50 reduction in chronic absenteeism. I am not sure how the CDE can ensure that kids don’t suffer from an injury that requires hospitalization or extended absence... This seems to be beyond the scope of education. I have heard reports of children who have suffered severe injury, illness or chronic illness that cause extended absence from school. What exactly does the state feel they should do on this? Regarding the correlation to drop out and failure to succeed, I would expect the **cause** of absenteeism would be key. I am concerned about lumping illness in with other causes and treating them all equally as grounds for state intervention. This also goes to a deeper concern – data driven decision making. When dealing with human beings the data that contributes to the causation is not always clear. Some data may be coincidental and not the cause. I do not like the state or any government entity collecting data that will drive the decisions that will affect my and my children’s fundamental freedoms.

p. 53 could you clarify what the social emotional learning measures are and who sets those standards?

P 54 paragraph 2 – does this mean that data from subgroups like ELL, free and reduced lunch and IEP kids will no longer be potentially double or triple counted? (as often the same kids falls in multiple subgroups?)

p. 72 “Fifty percent of the final effectiveness rating is based on professional practices and 50 percent is based on measures of student learning/outcomes”:

**If you want to get a measure of effectiveness of a teacher ask their clients – the students/parents.** Without this input you will not receive an accurate and full picture of effectiveness. Basing 50% on the measured student learning outcomes will give you both false positives and false negatives: for example, an excellent teacher working with challenged students who typically don’t test well and vice versa – a poor teacher working with high achievers. Although the premise of data driven decision making would lead one to think that student performance would be a reflection of teacher performance the reality is THIS IS RARELY THE

CASE. Please evaluate our teachers based on ACTUAL RELIABLE indicators, not ones that simply **look like** they should be reliable indicators on paper.

p. 73, 74 et sec addressing the reasons for teacher shortages: I didn't see the elephant in the room addressed: Common Core and the new assessments and accountability measures that the state was bribed into implementing with Race to the Top. These measures were not put in place because they were best for education. They were put in place so we could try to win some money. The Race is over so lets be honest about the facts and the damage those changes have made in education. I have listened to SO MANY teachers say things like "back in the day when we were allowed to teach..." or "I am so glad I got out of education, its not what it used to be." I have heard teachers have quit simply after seeing the rollout of PARCC and the standardized testing. The excessive demands on our teachers for data collection and the lack of trust we place on our teachers who truly do know which kids need to improve where. If we had an accountability system that valued the integrity and skill of the teacher, we might have more people interested in teaching. They certainly won't be doing it for the money... **If standards, assessments and accountability continue to be propped up despite their brokenness, we will continue to loose our best and brightest teachers – and not attract new ones.** We all know: in class performance of students is used by the teachers to guage the accuracy of standardized tests and not the other way around. If a high performing student does poorly on a standardized test we all know the test is suspect – so why do we hold our teachers accountable to such test results? Again, disenfranchising our teachers will result in reduction in people willing to teach. Outcome based education is unsustainable for our teachers because the fruits of the seeds our teachers sow may not be harvested until long after a child graduates. Teaching is not simply about test outcomes. As long as we reduce teaching to testing outcomes we will continue to loose teachers.

Why are there less students interested in teaching as a career field? Currently, there is a focus in the classroom to push kids into STEM and now our younger elementary kids into STEAM. We have nurtured an attitude in our kids that other career fields are somehow lesser – not worth doing. If you want a REAL job get into the STEM career fields. Perhaps we should stop pushing kids into career fields by virtue of our prejudging and values as if these types of careers are "real jobs" and others are not. Our society needs citizens equipped to do all the various tasks including child rearing, welding, plumbing, mining, farming/agriculture and teaching. Our education system should not promote one career field as having more societal value over another, perhaps the shortage in teachers and these other fields are a natural consequence of the latest push/emphasis in education. We have created the problem...

p. 84 I disagree. The problem is not a lack of sufficient data to appropriately support students. I would say it is lack of freedom and creative license for our teachers to appropriately support students. The box we try to put kids in is very specific and they don't always fit. They are not widgets that can be measured

ranked, studied and treated like production outcomes. Give our teachers back their classrooms. Let our children be children and stop making them question their identity on every level. Stop the demands on our teachers to collect data, stop telling them what and how to teach and let them do their job, stop dictating their lessons.

p. 104. The text reads:

- • There is a need for school staff to listen to parent voices and set up systems for meaningful parent involvement.
- • There is a need for school staff to expand their understanding of the meaning of parent involvement and include parents as teachers, learners, leaders, problem solvers, etc.

I would agree wholeheartedly that this is one of the biggest gaps in education today. Unfortunately I could only find acknowledgment of this need under the “Migrant Education Program.” I would not limit this merely to this section, but rather put it front and center as the key to improving education across the board. Children need certain things to grow and be successful. Love, play, and family. The homeschooling movement is proof that academics will come easily if you take care of these first three. The direction education is moving today is taking those three things away from our children and turning our children into a commodity to be analyzed, studied and experimented on. The educational experiments the state is doing on our children so that more data can be collected to tweak the techniques on the next crop of kids that comes in are creating more problems than solutions. The increased time away from family, increased time sitting at a desk and/or in front of a computer, the number of hours a child spends essentially as a ward of the state as a result of the sheer number of hours our children must devote to life around the public school system is taking a toll on our kids, on the family unit and ultimately on society.

In sum: It appears that we have turned our children into scientific experiments to be studied analyzed and cross referenced. We have forgotten their humanity and think we can solve the problems we face by more data... I would argue this is the cause of the problem, not the solution. We need a fundamental change in education, and this isn't it.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my feedback. And thank you for the time you have dedicated to this project. I realize the changes in the Administration and the potential changes they may cause midstream is frustrating to many considering how much time was devoted to the “original” plan. Please do not think this work has been wasted in the event that there is a fundamental change. Perhaps only by studying the problem to this extent could it become clear that indeed the best chance to improve education and the opportunities for our kids is to pull government out of the classroom, stop allowing legislators to dictate how teachers teach, stop placing our kids in front of computers and let them learn through play,

stop filling the hours of their days with more state mandated taskings and allow them to live life, be a family and be a child.

No your time wasn't wasted – especially if we learned that this is going in the wrong direction.

Thank you,

Sarah Sampayo