



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Tom W. Kimbrell  
*Commissioner*

March 14, 2011

**State Board  
of Education**

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dr. Naccaman Williams  
*Springdale  
Chair*

Dear Secretary Duncan:

Dr. Ben Mays  
*Clinton  
Vice Chair*

The Arkansas State Board of Education extends sincere appreciation for your extraordinary leadership on behalf of American students and their families.

Sherry Burrow  
*Jonesboro*

Arkansas is among the 43 states that have signed onto the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics. We believe these new standards will set rigorous expectations for student learning that will guide educational improvement throughout our state.

Jim Cooper  
*Melbourne*

Brenda Gullett  
*Fayetteville*

This fall, Arkansas will begin implementing the Common Core Standards in grades K-2. The phase-in of the other grades will not be complete until 2013. In addition, Arkansas is a governing state in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). As such, we have committed to implementing the new internationally benchmarked assessments by the 2014-15 school year.

Sam Ledbetter  
*Little Rock*

Alice Mahony  
*El Dorado*

Toyce Newton  
*Crossett*

Vicki Saviers  
*Little Rock*

These initiatives clearly demonstrate Arkansas's continued commitment to education reform, and I am asking that our state be given flexibility in our accountability plan. Specifically, I ask that our AYP targets be held at their 2011-2012 levels as we fully transition to the Common Core State Standards and implement the new PARCC assessment system.

Transitioning to the new Common Core State Standards and the new assessments will be challenging while still maintaining the current system of content standards and assessments. It would be of tremendous benefit to our state if the accountability targets could remain consistent, yet still challenging. Our 2011-2012 state AYP targets are 85 percent in mathematics for grades K-5; 82.28 percent in grades 6-8; and 82.30 percent in grades 9-12. In literacy the targets are 85.60 percent for grades K-5; 83.80 percent in grades 6-8; and 83.88 percent in grades 9-12. Considering the changes in learning standards and assessments, we believe these targets are fair and challenging.

Again, Arkansas appreciates your leadership and the work you are doing to ensure the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Knowing it may take time for this legislation to be enacted, we thank you for your consideration of the request for waiver. I look forward to discussing it further with you and/or members of your staff.

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Little Rock, AR  
72201-1019  
(501) 682-4475  
ArkansasEd.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Naccaman Williams".

Dr. Naccaman Williams, Chairman  
Arkansas State Board of Education

*An Equal Opportunity  
Employer*

c Governor Mike Beebe