

Building on Educational Excellence



The coming month will bring a number of exciting events for education in our state. Later this month we'll be submitting a request for a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability waiver to the U.S. Department of Education. This is significant because, if granted, the waiver will change the way we hold schools, districts and the state accountable for student performance.

Since the implementation of NCLB more than a decade ago, accountability for student performance has been based on one measure - achievement of predetermined performance targets on state reading and math assessments. Educators knew from the beginning this was, in many ways, a false measure of the quality of a school. As parents and community members began to see their schools labeled as failing for falling short of annual targets, despite having shown significant growth from previous years, they too began to recognize the shortcomings of the accountability plan.

In our state's request for an accountability waiver, we've outlined an alternate accountability plan that will hold schools and districts accountable based on multiple measures. In addition to achievement of performance targets, we'll also look at achievement growth and the ability to reduce the achievement gap. The waiver request includes a number of other provisions, including how we'll recognize top performing schools in the state, and provide support to our lowest performing schools. A copy of our waiver application is available on the KSDE [website](#).

Also in February, KSDE will once again host the Kansas Exemplary Educators Network (KEEN) State Education Conference in Topeka. This conference brings together educators from around the state who have been recognized as among the best in their field, either through the Kansas Teacher of the Year Program, the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards program, the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the Kansas Cable Telecommunications Horizon Awards or National Board Certification. The educators will spend two half days reflecting on the elements of great teaching and learning,

hearing more about the educational challenges and opportunities in our state and learning about best practices in assessing student and educator performance.

As part of the KEEN Conference, we'll get to recognize two special groups of teachers. Those teachers who achieved National Board Certification in 2011 will be honored in a special ceremony. Thirteen Kansas teachers achieved first-time certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in 2011, and 21 Kansas teachers were recertified in 2011. National Board Certification is recognized nationwide as a model for identifying accomplished teaching practice. We'll also get to recognize 31 beginning teachers who received the 2012 Kansas Cable Telecommunication Horizon Award. The Horizon Award recognizes teachers who have successfully completed their first year of teaching and have performed in such a way as to distinguish themselves as outstanding. A full list of 2012 Kansas Cable Telecommunications Horizon Award winners is available on the KSDE [website](#).

It will be an exciting month - one that promises to build on the solid educational foundation we've created in Kansas.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane".

Dr. Diane DeBacker
Kansas Commissioner of Education