

## **Changes in Accountability for Wisconsin Schools**

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The U.S. Department of Education is allowing each state to apply for a waiver that allows flexibility under The No Child Left Behind Act (2001). In February of 2012 the State of Wisconsin applied for this waiver. One of the major premises of The No Child Left Behind Act, is by the year 2014 100% of students (regardless of whether they have a disability or not) will score on the state wide test in the advanced or proficient ranges in the areas of math and reading. If the state of Wisconsin is granted its waiver request, it would no longer be held to the standard of 100% by 2014 but would have to make other changes to the current state testing and accountability system.

One of the major criteria for the waiver is to raise the standards or cut scores of who falls within the advanced or proficiency ranges on state wide exams. Currently, our students take the Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE) with standards that are set by the state of Wisconsin. In a very short time, we will move from the standards set by Wisconsin to standards that are set by National Assessment Education Progress (NAEP). The standards set by NAEP are much higher than the traditional standards set by Wisconsin. When the new standards go into effect, the percentages of students who score within the advanced or proficient ranges on state tests will drastically drop not only for students in Glenwood City but for student across the state.

To give you an example using the traditional Wisconsin standards, in 2011 90% of Glenwood City student in 7<sup>th</sup> grade scored within the proficient/advanced ranges in reading and 84% in math on the WKCE. Once we move to the more rigorous NAEP standard using the same testing data Glenwood City may see scores fall to 50% in reading and 40% in math.

Not only are we going to new standards, we are moving away from the WKCE and moving to a computer based exam (The SMARTER Balanced Assessment System). In the school year 2014-2015, all Wisconsin school will be using this new exam along with 27 other states. With this new exam, will be not only be able to compare our test scores with other schools in Wisconsin but other students in other states that are taking the same test.

Many people including educators are very concerned about these changes and how they will impact your son/daughter. No one likes to see test scores drop. I want to caution you on the use of dropping test scores. It is not that our students are performing worse on the test but the bar that we use to measure them has been raised. Although the unknown is scary, in the long run this is a good move for our students. We should be holding our students to high standards. I believe our students and teachers can rise to the occasion.