



DAVE BOND • SUPERINTENDENT
1000 W. 4TH AVE. • KENNEWICK, WA 99336-5601
P: (509) 222-5000 • F: (509) 222-5050
DAVE.BOND@KSD.ORG • WWW.KSD.ORG

Kennewick School District Comments on the Federal Requirements Letter (No Child Left Behind)

October 1, 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians,

For the past two years, Washington State has had a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind law. The law was passed in 2001 and was scheduled to be updated in 2008-09. It has not yet been updated, although there is almost universal agreement that the law isn't working. The law requires that every student in a school or district must be meeting standard – regardless of special education needs, challenges in learning English, or other life circumstances – or the school or district is deemed to be failing.

The U.S. Department of Education began offering waivers of this law several years ago when they realized it wasn't working as intended. To get a waiver, a state had to agree to several school improvement ideas created by the Department of Education. This past March, the U.S. Department of Education declined to renew Washington's waiver from the federal law because the Washington state legislature refused to agree to one of those Department of Education ideas - that student test data be a part of a teacher's evaluation. As a result of that, Washington state lost its waiver and has to meet the requirements of the old law and notify parents that any school where fewer than 100% of students are meeting standard is a failing school.

Ironically, over the past five years, schools in the Kennewick School District have received the Washington State Board of Education Achievement Award 24 times for excelling in areas like "Overall Excellence," High Progress, Language Arts, and "Science." Our high schools have received recognition from "US News and World Report" and "Newsweek" for being in the top group of high schools in the country. Yet, these same schools are now deemed to be failing under the federal law, while winning awards under the state system.

In Kennewick, we remain committed to helping each and every student reach his/her full potential. We are constantly assessing our students and designing instruction and interventions to help each and every student succeed. To label our schools as failing is punitive and unfair, as nearly every school in Washington State will get that federal label this year.

The bottom line is this: Our schools in Kennewick are working hard to meet the needs of every student who comes through our doors. Our School Board – along with thousands of other School Boards around the country – has called on Congress to set aside their differences and update federal education law. Certainly, Congress doesn't believe that every school in Washington state is failing. It's way past time that they update federal law to reflect that reality.

Again, we want you to know that your child's school is not failing. We have outstanding educators working daily with your children to help them get the best possible education. If you ever have a question about your child's education, contact your child's teacher or principal. We appreciate your support of our teachers and our schools.

Sincerely,

Dave Bond, Superintendent