

August 5, 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian

We hope this letter finds you enjoying the last few days of summer and preparing for another year of learning as your son/daughter returns to Saddle Mountain Elementary

The purpose of this letter is to reaffirm our commitment to the success of ALL students and to inform you that we are still working to improve. During the summer, your school, Saddle Mountain Elementary was identified as a Focus, school based on an analysis of student achievement in relationship to how we compare with other schools in our state. This analysis, specifically identified that our Special Ed (sub group) have not met our goals or expectations over the past three years on state assessments in Reading and Mathematics.

To increase learning outcomes for all of our students, we are taking the following action steps over the course of the school year:

- Participate in a Needs Assessment to identify strengths and challenges in our school; the assessment will also include recommendations for improvement.
- Identify next steps we will take to improve learning outcomes for our students, by completing our “Student and School Success Action Plan”; the plan must be submitted to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for review and approval.
- Implement our plan and examine a variety of data to ensure we are making progress.
- Engage parents/guardians and our school community in our improvement efforts.

Attached is a brief description of the basis for the school’s identification as a (Priority, Focus, or Emerging) school. More details about the movement of our state, district, and school in pursuit of ongoing improvement for all our students can be found at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/PublicNotice.aspx>.

We are committed to continued growth as we work together to support our most valuable resource, our children.

Sincerely,

Highlights of Washington State's *ESEA Flexibility Request*

In July, the U. S. Department of Education approved Washington State's *ESEA Flexibility Request*. The request requires districts to notify parents/guardians with students in schools identified as low-performing. Districts also are required to describe the steps the district and school will take to: (a) turn around the school's consistent low performance, and (b), involve parents/guardians in their efforts. Specific information regarding the request follows.

Background Information

Last fall, the U.S. Department of Education offered states the opportunity to apply for a flexibility waiver to specific portions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), sometimes referred to as the "No Child Left Behind Act," or NCLB. Washington State's *ESEA Flexibility Request* was submitted in February 2012; the state received approval in early July.

The request:

- Exempts the state from many of the NCLB requirements, including designation of schools and/or districts as "in improvement" based on performance on state assessments;
- Eliminates requirements for districts to offer Supplemental Education Services and Public School Choice to parents with students in low-performing Title I schools;
- Requires state and district leaders to identify low-performing schools and to hold leaders and staff members in their district and identified schools accountable for turning around performance;
- Mandates the state and districts provide schools with resources and services to support improvement efforts; and
- Frees up \$58 million in federal funding across the state, allowing individual school districts to utilize the funds to address the unique needs of their struggling students.

Identification of Schools

The request also requires states to identify schools for reward, accountability and support based on three years of data in either Reading/Mathematics (combined) or graduation rates. Descriptions for categories of schools follow:

- **Reward Schools:** Highest performing Title I schools and high-progress Title I schools; total is 54 Title I schools.
- **Priority Schools:** Bottom 5% of Title I schools (46 schools) based on the performance of all of their students in Reading/Math (combined) or Title I-eligible secondary schools based on graduation rates.
- **Focus Schools:** Bottom 10% of Title I schools (92 schools) based on the performance of their subgroups in Reading/Math (combined) or graduation rates.
- **Emerging Schools:** Next 5% from the bottom of the list used to identify Priority Schools and next 10% from the bottom of the list used to identify Focus Schools; total is 138 Title I schools.

Additional information regarding the request may be found on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's website: <http://www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/PublicNotice.aspx>