



February 12, 2014

Dear Legislators,

As you continue to consider school accountability, I am writing to raise our concerns about AB 379. We appreciate that the bill makes some modifications to previous versions of accountability legislation, but it still raises major concerns.

In Madison, our focus is on ensuring that every school is a thriving school that prepares every student for college, career and community. We need an environment that allows us to stay focused on what's most important – the day-to-day work of great teaching and learning – and do it extremely well. Unfortunately, this bill is not focused on creating that environment for schools.

First, it shifts the report cards from performance categories to A through F letter grades. This type of “grade” does not focus our schools or communities on the improvements needed to get the best outcomes for children, but rather on politically charged rankings. Our families and communities deserve a more accurate, clear picture of how their school is performing.

It also places unnecessary restrictions on school district actions for improvement. If a school is truly failing its students, we are responsible for taking action to dramatically improve it. This bill does not focus on creating a path to improvement. Rather, it limits local districts and locally elected school boards across the state by requiring closure or charter conversion.

I encourage you to focus on true accountability that holds all schools to the same standards and supports them in getting the best results for students. I would be happy to talk with you more and welcome your questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Cheatham

Jennifer Cheatham, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Madison Metropolitan School District