



Statement by Michael Casserly, Executive Director  
Council of the Great City Schools  
On  
**Education Secretary Arne Duncan's Announcement on Testing**

August 21, 2014

The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's primary coalition of large urban school systems, strongly supports U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's announcement today granting additional flexibility for those who want it on the application of state test data to teacher and principal evaluations.

States and big-city school districts are working hard to implement significant changes in standards, assessments, and evaluations that are taking place nationwide, and additional time to implement those changes and reforms effectively is welcome. Many jurisdictions will need this added flexibility that the Administration offered today; others will not, but it is important that schools have the option to request what they most need to be effective.

In addition, the assurances that the Department of Education provides are important ones: states and local school districts will be required to calculate student growth based on state assessments during the transition year, and teachers and principals will need to receive these data specifying the results. These are reasonable and thoughtful assurances and will help educators better familiarize themselves with both the new assessments and learn from the results they generate about how we can better teach our children.

Finally, the Council supports additional flexibility beyond the base year for states and school districts that need and request it.

American public education is undergoing substantial revisions and improvements, and it is important that federal, state, and local authorities learn from each other about what works and doesn't work in this important period of transition. The Secretary's statement today reflects this need for mutual support, while keeping squarely in mind the need to improve the academic attainment of our students across the country and to remain responsible and accountable for the academic well-being of our students.

In that spirit, the Council of the Great City Schools has collected an unprecedented volume of data on the assessment practices of the nation's big-city school systems to help intelligently inform issues of testing, its purposes and uses, and how these practices can be improved as we move forward. Results of this work will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead.

Again, the Council applauds the Administration for the steps it announced today offering additional flexibility to schools across the country as they continue to reform and improve.

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