

December 10, 2012

Dr. Brenda Cassellius Commissioner, MN Department of Education 1500 Highway 36 West Roseville, MN 55113-4266

Dear Dr. Cassellius:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate as a member of the Assessment and Accountability Working Group. With Minnesota Business Partnership (MBP) member companies employing over 400,000 Minnesotans and 2 million people worldwide, ensuring our students have a world-class education is a top priority.

While there are several promising aspects of the Working Group's recommendations, we ask that you **not adopt** the report, as is.

Our fundamental concern with the Working Group's recommendations is the elimination of any consistent, statewide expectation for student competency in reading, writing and math as a condition of earning a high school diploma.

We have strongly supported the Basic Skills Tests (BSTs), the GRAD assessments and a potential shift to the ACT and related exams because they offer the opportunity to establish minimum expectations for student competence in core subjects. Why are statewide expectations important?

- The substantial disparities in student performance on high school reading and math MCA results and high school graduation rates indicate too many students may be graduating unprepared;
- Too many high school graduates require remedial coursework when they enroll in a Minnesota public post-secondary institution - 40% of recent high school graduates required remedial coursework (most frequently in math); and
- According to the Alliance for Excellence in Education, post-secondary remedial coursework cost Minnesota students and post-secondary institutions \$88 million in 2007-08.

We see the transition to the Explore, Plan, Compass and ACT exams as an excellent opportunity to help more students transition to, and through a post-secondary education. However, the positive impact these assessments will have can only be realized if students meet the expectations needed to be successful after graduation.

We look forward to working with you, Governor Dayton and the legislature to ensure all of Minnesota's students are prepared for success in our global economy.

Thank you,

Jim Bartholomew

**Education Policy Director**