

Chiefs Group: No Moratorium on Common-Core Stakes COMMENTARY

Catherine Gewertz, Education Week

*[Editor's Note] As first appeared in Education Week's [Curriculum Matters](#), May 21, 2013.
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A group of state education chiefs has sent a letter to U.S. [Education Secretary](#) Arne Duncan, urging him to resist a call for a moratorium on high-stakes uses of tests on the common standards.

In a [letter released today](#), [Chiefs for Change](#) says that accountability measures tied to the [Common Core](#) State Standards should be preserved, not delayed.

"The members of Chiefs for Change reject any calls for a moratorium on accountability," the letter says. "This position overstates the challenge and undervalues our educators. ... We will not relax or delay our urgency for creating better teacher, principal, [school](#), and district accountability systems as we implement more rigorous standards. That is a disservice to our students and would undermine the tremendous amount of preparation our states' education agencies, districts, schools, and educators have contributed to this multiyear effort."

Without mentioning her by name, the Chiefs were referring to AFT President Randi Weingarten, who recently called for a [moratorium on high-stakes consequences](#) of the common standards and their assessments. She was referring to policies like teacher evaluations that are based in part on how well students score on those tests.

Chiefs for Change, you might recall, is operated by the [Foundation for Excellence in Education](#), the Tallahassee, Fla.-based group founded by former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush.

In the letter to Duncan, Chiefs for Change called that position tantamount to "pulling back on accountability."

In her speech, Weingarten specifically refuted this claim, knowing it would be forthcoming. She argued that schools and teachers should be held accountable for the common core, but not until they were given enough time to get adequate materials and professional development for it.

Chiefs for Change said that states should—and could—ensure a "thoughtfully" managed transition to the common standards, with sufficient professional development for teachers, and careful attention given to how the new standards will affect teacher evaluations and other policies.

Hanna Skandera, one of the 11 chiefs who signed the letter, said it was driven by "hearing various conversations going on across the country right now and having such a strong conviction, as Chiefs for Change, about the importance of accountability first and foremost."

"We wanted to just say, 'Wait, we've worked so hard as a nation, and in our own states, to take a stand for what we believe is putting kids first, what allows us to get better information so we can get better at serving our kids,'" she said in a telephone interview.

"Now is not the time to step away from accountability, but to embrace it," said Skandera, New Mexico's acting chief. "As we transition to the common core, there is no reason to put a halt on accountability."

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