



**Response to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Announcement on Testing  
August 23, 2014**

The Large Countywide and Suburban District Consortium, a network of leaders from 16 of the nation's most diverse and high achieving districts, applauds the announcement by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan regarding growing concerns from teachers, students, parents, and others about standardized testing. Consortium Chair J. Alvin Wilbanks, Superintendent of Gwinnett County Public Schools, and Co-chair Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, issued the following statement on Saturday, August 23, 2014:

"We agree with Secretary Duncan that there is too much focus on testing in education today—it is something that we hear every day from our parents, our teachers, and our students. We also agree with the Secretary that meaningful assessments are a critical part of good teaching and learning—but only if the tests are valid measures of what students know and are able to do and accountability measures are focused on fostering improvement. With so much change happening in education, we need to take the time to get things right and that means reducing the pressure of high-stakes tests.

"We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve education, with new, rigorous standards and the development of stronger curricula and assessments to raise the level of instruction in our country. But to take full advantage of this opportunity, we must give our teachers and school leaders the time they need to implement the standards and prepare students for success.

"We have seen first-hand the impact of policies that rely too heavily on standardized assessments and how our students, teachers, and parents bear the burden of these ill-advised accountability systems. It is critically important that we work together to use the right assessments to measure student learning and to, in turn, hold ourselves accountable for meeting the needs of our students.

"We agree with Secretary Duncan that new assessments need to be developed carefully and wisely and we appreciate his recognition that educator evaluations should be based on multiple measures. It makes sense that states have been given the opportunity to request a delay in the use of test results for educator evaluations as they transition to better measures of student performance.

"The time has come for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to be reauthorized and our state and federal accountability systems to be aligned with the skills and knowledge that students will need to be successful in the 21st century. The Consortium has developed a proposed accountability framework that includes high-quality systems of assessment; multiple measures to assess the performance of schools and districts; and policies and funding streams designed to encourage collaboration and creativity.

"The Consortium stands ready to work with Secretary Duncan and Congress on the reauthorization of ESEA and an accountability system that is meaningful, educationally sound, and is focused on what is right for children."