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-----**POLO R-VII SCHOOL DISTRICT**-----

August 7, 2012

Dear Parent or Guardian:

On June 29, 2012, Missouri received a waiver of certain No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. The purpose of this letter is to describe the educational opportunities made possible by the waiver, and to help you understand what the waiver will mean for you and your child.

NCLB required Missouri to measure the progress schools were making toward the goal of 100 percent proficiency in reading and math by the year 2014. Schools that did not make sufficient progress for two or more consecutive years were “identified for improvement”. Under NCLB, schools receiving federal Title I funds that did not make sufficient progress were required to offer parents the opportunity to transfer their child to another school in the district that was not identified for improvement and/or offer supplemental educational services (SES) to children from low income families.

When NCLB was passed in 2002, it provided families useful information about the performance of their children’s schools. However, NCLB’s rising targets have led to an increasing number of schools deemed failing under the law. Missouri’s approved NCLB waiver corrects many of the problems under NCLB including ineffectual identification of schools and restrictive use of federal funds. Districts will have greater flexibility in using federal Title I funds to meet identified needs.

Due to the flexibility offered under the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, I am writing to inform you that beginning in the 2012-13 school year, Polo R-VII School District will no longer offer NCLB school choice or SES. Instead, we will use federal funds to improve teaching and learning for our neediest students.

Tutoring will be offered as an intervention to the students who are scoring Basic and Below Basic on the MAP (and EOC) tests. This tutoring will be designed to help your child reach classroom goals and state performance standards. We will contact you soon after school starts in regards to tutoring for your child.

If your child is enrolled in a school as a result of NCLB school choice, he or she is entitled to remain in that school through the highest grade served by the school. Since Polo R-VII does not have school choice, then transportation is not an issue.

Another important change with the waiver is that Missouri will now use its own state-designed system of accountability eliminating a dual system of classification and reports under the federal and state systems. The state system will give parents, students, teachers and families a more accurate report on the success of their child's school. With NCLB, a school either did or did not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP), resulting in an accountability system that did not distinguish among the lowest performing schools and schools that needed help in only one or two areas.

The flexibility approval allows Missouri to implement an aligned accountability and support system that requires real change in the lowest performing schools; promotes locally-designed solutions based on individual school needs; and recognizes schools for success. When schools are identified, families will know that school and district leaders will adopt targeted and focused strategies for the students most at risk or in need of support and intervention.

Through the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP), a school's annual performance report (APR) provides a more complete and comprehensive picture of where a school or district is meeting performance expectations and where it is not. Using 2011 – 2012 school year assessment and graduation rate data, a percentage of schools will be identified as reward, priority, or focus schools.


- Reward school - Missouri will recognize reward schools throughout the state as models of excellence. Recognition will be based on measures of high achievement for all students and those schools that are making significant progress in closing the achievement gap.
- Priority school - Priority schools are among the lowest-performing schools in the state when considering the school's overall student population. If a school is not demonstrating the expected outcomes for students, the Department will intervene with rapid and targeted interventions. The intervention system includes tools and strategies to build capacity at the local level for district-focused school improvement.
- Focus school - Focus schools are Title 1 schools whose student gap groups are among the lowest-performing in the state according to state assessment results. Interventions and support will assist identified schools in improving the performance of all students with a particular focus on improving the performance of groups of students that have the greatest achievement gap.

These new school designations will provide a deeper understanding of what resources schools need in order to be successful in their efforts to prepare students to be "College and Career Ready". Obtaining the ESEA waiver is an important step for Missouri as it works to achieve its Top 10 by 20 Plan. The plan calls for Missouri to rank in the top 10 states nationwide in academic achievement by the year 2020.

The waiver does not affect our continuing obligation to share with you information on the performance of your child's school; nor does it affect our commitment to involving all parents as full partners in the education of their children.

For more information on the waiver and what it will mean for your child, or for more information on how you can become involved in your child's school to help take Missouri and the Polo R-VII School District to the "Top by 2020", please contact either Dr. Robert Newhart, Superintendent at (660) 354-2326; or contact Dr. Beverly Deis, Elementary Principal and/or Mr. Kyle Ross, High School Principal, at (660) 354-2326. Plus we invite you to visit us online at <http://polo.k12.mo.us>. If you have additional questions about the waiver, please visit the DESE website for more information at: <http://dese.mo.gov/qs/esea-waiver.html>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Newhart", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Newhart  
Superintendent  
Polo R-VII School District