

## Closing

States have two historic opportunities before them that could improve the odds for kids. First, the advent of the Common Core standards gives them the chance to repair two legs of their tripod: the academic standards and the assessments aligned to them. Most states have already traded up their subpar state standards in exchange for the CCSS. Our fingers remain crossed on the assessments.

The administration's waiver process offers the second opportunity. It allows states to restore the third leg of their tripod—the accountability limb. They can take advantage of this opening to infuse their schools with demanding content standards and rigorous assessments; collect, use, and report actionable data to all stakeholders; develop user-friendly classification systems that differentiate school and district performance; and devise novel ways to reward and reprove schools, districts, students, and adults. Or they can squander their chance by rolling back or watering down the tougher accountability provisions, masking the performance of low performers, and/or overlooking the commendable progress of hardworking students and adults.

We stand at a critical juncture. Will states make the most of the opportunities before them? Or will they recoil and renege on their responsibility to students, parents, and communities? We'll follow this unfolding story over the next several years, and let you decide.