**U.S. Department of Education**

***Plain Writing Act of 2010***

**2013 Compliance Report**

The Department continued the plain writing work startedin 2011 and carried on in 2012. Our goal is to write in language that is “clear, concise, and well-organized.” This report updates the 2012 report posted at [www.ed.gov/plain-language](http://www.ed.gov/plain-language). At the Department, the Office of Communications and Outreach is responsible for implementing the Plain Writing Act. In 2013 the Office had a change in leadership and a major reorganization to better serve the public. The Department continued to focus on plain writing in print documents and put new emphasis on Web and social media products.

The Department applied the plain writing standards to a growing number of communication channels. This broadened the Department’s reach to a wide audience. The public can receive information and news from the Department in different ways, e.g., through conventional TV, radio and print news channels; online news outlets and blogs; and social media, such as Twitter and Facebook.

**Editing Resources for the Web**: With the reorganization, some editing functions transferred to the Web Team. The editors worked to make the text clearer on the Department’s website [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov). These services also provided plain writing support for social media, such as for the Homeroom Blog and Facebook.

**Resources for the Public in Plain Writing:** In 2013, the Department’s Office of Communications and Outreach developed a “bookshelf” of communications resources for the general public. Department staff used the bookshelf in presentations and when talking about Department policies and priorities.

This bookshelf “translated” often complex education policy into plain language. It included Power Point presentations, talking points, and fact sheets. It covered critical topics of early learning, kindergarten – 12th grade education reform, higher education, and equity. These resources were posted on the Web at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/presentations/index.html>.

The bookshelf was part of the Office’s work plan for its “Organizational Performance Review,” or yearly performance “report card.” This year management focused on this plain writing for creating easy-to-understand products for the public. The review group gave the Office’s work a “highly successful” rating. The public liked the bookshelf, and teachers and others interested in Department policies and priorities used it.

**Twitter Forces Plain Writing:** The Department increased its use of Twitter to convey messages. Twitter is like a virtual ticker tape of headlines on people’s phones and tablets. It allows the Department to have direct contact in plain language with citizens. The 140-character limit for each tweet forces the writer use plain language and be brief. The Department tweets the latest news to followers in real time with links to more information. It also began to provide daily tweets to teachers and the general public with links to federal government resources on popular topics in education including holidays and anniversaries like the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We also shared these resources through our “Parents” tab for families to use at home.