



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Honorable Michael E. Hanson
Superintendent
Fresno Unified School District
2309 Tulare Street
Fresno, CA 93721

SEP 12 2014

Dear Superintendent Hanson:

This letter is in response to the request the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted on May 1, 2014, on behalf of your district and six other districts, to extend approval of the districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to carry out significant education reforms through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. (For ease of reference, the collective districts are referred to as the CORE districts and the collective request of the seven districts is referred to as the CORE districts' request hereafter.)

The CORE districts have proposed important and innovative work. The waivers granted have allowed CORE districts the ability to implement college- and career-ready expectations for all students, design meaningful systems of accountability to improve outcomes for all students, and begin to create teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that take into account student growth and are used to help teachers and principals improve their practices.

Currently, the CORE districts' request is approved through the end of the 2013–2014 school year, subject to two conditions. The CORE districts were required to submit to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for review and approval:

- an amended request incorporating the final version of the new school quality improvement system, and
- final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

Our team has reviewed the CORE districts' request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend the request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, subject to the continuation of both conditions. My decision to extend the CORE districts' request is based on my determination that the waivers have been effective in enabling each of the CORE districts to carry out reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest.

Although I am encouraged by the significant reforms proposed by the CORE districts and the work that the CORE districts have undertaken to date, I also recognize that this is very challenging work. That challenge is demonstrated by the fact that the CORE districts have not yet been able to meet the two conditions on their initial approval through the 2013–2014 school year as discussed below, as well as by the scope of changes the CORE districts proposed through amendments to their request. Despite not yet

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

meeting the two conditions placed on their initial approval, the CORE districts have demonstrated a strong desire and developed detailed plans to address both conditions in the 2014–2015 school year as well as an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. Although I am extending approval of the CORE districts' request through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, because the CORE districts did not meet either condition, I am also placing each of the seven districts on high-risk status, pursuant to the authority in 34 C.F.R. § 80.12.

In February 2014, through onsite monitoring, ED learned that additional work would be required to fully develop the School Quality Improvement Index (SQII). Through their May 1, 2014 waiver extension request, the CORE districts proposed a number of changes to the inclusion of certain metrics, including delays in the timeline for including certain metrics for accountability purposes. Additionally, the CORE districts indicated that they are still working to develop certain social-emotional and culture-climate metrics that will be included in the final SQII. For the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts will continue to implement their transitional accountability system. Although the CORE districts have articulated their plans for finalizing the SQII in the 2014–2015 school year, the work is not yet complete. As a result, and because district-level accountability is a central component of the CORE districts' request, I am continuing the condition to submit to ED for review and approval an amended CORE districts' request incorporating the final version of the SQII. Please note that this approval to extend the CORE districts' request through the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of the SQII. In order to receive approval to implement any system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support that differs from the system that the CORE districts are being approved to use today through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts must submit a final version of that system to ED for review and approval.

On February 25, 2014, I sent you a letter, based on ED's peer review, indicating that the CORE districts had not yet adopted final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems as outlined in the approval of the CORE districts' request and needed to continue working to address the condition they received when approved for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. The CORE districts provided evidence of their continued work to meet the condition to provide final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems in their May 1, 2014 extension request. Although the CORE Board has accepted a set of guidelines as "final" guidelines, and the guidelines demonstrate progress towards eventually meeting the six components required in the original condition, the guidelines do not yet meet each of those components and cannot be approved at this time. For example, the guidelines do not yet articulate how the CORE districts will incorporate student growth as a significant factor in teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as the CORE districts have not yet adopted a growth model to measure student growth for teachers of tested grades and subjects and have not developed CORE-wide guidelines to measure student growth for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects. Accordingly, I have determined that the CORE districts have not yet met the second condition that was placed on the approval of their waiver request and I am extending this condition into the 2014–2015 school year. The CORE districts must submit final guidelines that meet the six required components to ED for review and approval. Although I understand that the CORE districts have also proposed to extend their timeline for fully implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, my decision to extend the waivers for the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of this extended timeline to fully implement teacher and principal evaluation systems. The CORE districts must continue to work with ED regarding this requested change, which may require additional flexibility.

This letter also provides my approval of some of the CORE districts' proposed amendments to their waiver request. A summary of the approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and the CORE districts' amended request will be posted on ED's website. I am unable to grant each of the amendments that the CORE districts requested. Some of the amendment requests, such as the request to approve the CORE districts' guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, are simply not yet ready for a decision because the work is not yet complete.

The amendments that I am approving do not address each of the monitoring findings from ED's February 2014 monitoring visit. I expect that the CORE districts will continue to work with ED during the 2014–2015 school year to address all outstanding findings from that visit.

In order to have the conditions on their waiver request lifted and their high-risk designation removed, the CORE districts must:

- Submit to ED, no later than 45 calendar days from the date of this letter, an updated high-quality plan describing the work the CORE districts will carry out during the 2014–2015 school year to address each of the conditions on the approval of their waiver request. The plan must include key milestones and activities, a detailed timeline, party or parties responsible, evidence, resources, and significant obstacles;
- Provide updates to ED on a monthly basis on their progress in carrying out their high-quality plan to address the outstanding conditions on their waiver request and outstanding monitoring findings, as well as to comprehensively report on the progress of their work implementing the CORE districts' request;
- By March 31, 2015, submit to ED a final version of the SQII adopted by each of the CORE districts; and
- By June 1, 2015, submit to ED an amended joint request that incorporates final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that that each CORE district will use to continually improve instruction; meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels; determine performance levels using multiple valid measures, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities) and other measures of professional practice; evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis; provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and inform personnel decisions. In particular, the final guidelines must articulate the final growth model for teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects, as well as principals. Each of the CORE districts must assure it is able to comply with all elements of the guidelines once fully implemented.

Please note that should the CORE districts request to extend these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year, ED will not be able to grant that request until the issues that resulted in the continued conditions and high-risk status are resolved. If those issues cannot be resolved prior to the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the CORE districts may not be able to continue implementing these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

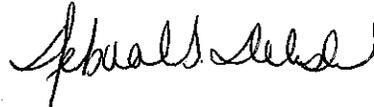
The CORE districts may request reconsideration of their high-risk designation by submitting in writing to me, no later than 10 business days from the date of this letter, a detailed discussion setting forth the basis for their belief that this designation is improper, including the specific facts that support its position. If the CORE districts choose to request such reconsideration, that request must be submitted via email to me (deb.delisle@ed.gov), with a copy to Leslie Clithero (leslie.clithero@ed.gov), as well as

by U.S. mail or commercial delivery. If I do not receive a request for reconsideration within 10 business days, the CORE districts' high-risk status will be considered final and will be lifted only upon completing the actions set forth above.

Your district continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it is in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in its implementation of the waiver request. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the implementation of the CORE districts' waiver request, please do not hesitate to contact Leslie Clithero of my staff at: leslie.clithero@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued focus on enhancing education for Fresno's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deborah S. Delisle".

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Rick Miller, Executive Director, California Office to Reform Education
Richard Zeiger, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education

Approved Amendments to the CORE Districts' Waiver Request

The following is a summary of approved amendments to the CORE districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. Please refer to ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/flexibility/waiverletters2009/index.html#ca>) for the CORE districts' complete waiver request.

Develop and Implement a System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Element 2.A)

Revision: Combines the SQII's social-emotional and culture-climate domains into a single domain, the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain.

Revision: Changes the term "non-cognitive skills," which is used to reference non-academic skills such as mindsets and self-management, to "social-emotional skills."

Revision: Modifies the timeline for the CORE districts to submit to ED the final weighting for the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain factors. The CORE districts will submit final weights by January 2015.

Revision: Revises rules for transitioning to the SQII to include limited stakes the first time a metric is introduced.

Revision: Revises the assessments that factor into the SQII for 2013–2014 to include 2012–2013 California Standards Tests (CST) in grades 2-8 and 2012–2013 performance on the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) in grade 10 in ELA and mathematics, as well as 2012–2013 student performance on the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) and California Modified Assessment (CMA) performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Academic Performance Index (API) growth for 2012–2013 will be the growth measure. Graduation rates will be included in the SQII at the high school level. Middle school persistence rates will not be incorporated into the SQII until 2014–2015.

Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (Element 2.B)

Revision: For purposes of an interim index for 2013–2014, the CORE districts will continue to set interim AMOs using API growth scores and graduation rate targets. Schools in the bottom 30 percent for API and/or not meeting graduation rate targets are considered to be not meeting AMOs.

Reward Schools (Element 2.C)

Revision: For 2013–2014, rather than identifying reward schools based on the SQII, the CORE districts will continue to use the method used to identify reward schools in 2012–2013. 2013 assessment results will be used to make 2013–2014 reward school identifications.

Revision: Modifies the types of recognition required for reward schools. Previously media recognition was required, but in future years it will be optional.

Revision: Modifies the school pairing strategy. Previously priority schools were required to pair with reward school partners. Through this change, priority schools can be paired with non-

reward schools, including other high performing and/or high progress schools, when there is evidence that the pairing will be beneficial.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to participate in a peer review of partner priority and/or focus schools.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to serve as partners to priority and/or focus schools.

Priority Schools (Element 2.D)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify priority schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified priority schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify priority schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed that all priority schools would partner with a reward school. Through this change, priority schools identified because of participation in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program may be paired with SIG-related partners, including an education management organization, SIG Turnaround Office, or a similar organization.

Revision: Changes language in the waiver request to indicate that social-emotional and culture-climate factors will not be required factors in teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Focus Schools (Element 2.E)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify focus schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified focus schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify focus schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: Modifies the community of practice (CoP) model for focus school interventions to include increased flexibility in the structure of CoPs. Focus school interventions will continue to address the reasons that led to the school’s identification as a focus school, but CoPs can now be organized based on a variety of factors including the reason a school was identified as focus, similarity in problems of practice, similarity in interventions being used to address problems of practice, geography, and/or similarities in school population.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required a certain amount of contact between focus schools and their paired school, as well as between the principals of the two schools. Through this change, the amount of required contact is reduced but if a focus school is paired with a reward school, the schools and principals will have at least monthly contact.

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Revision: The CORE districts modified the requirements for when mandatory interventions are required in other Title I schools (now called “other support schools”), such that schools that did not meet the AMO for the first time when analyzed in Summer 2014 (based upon being in the bottom 30% of 2013 API and missing their state API and/or graduation target in 2013) will be in year 1 of missing their AMO in 2014–2015. If such schools miss the interim AMO again using end of year 2014–2015 SQII results (e.g., performing in the bottom 30% on SQII scores), these schools will enter CoPs starting in 2015–2016. Previously, schools that missed the AMO for one year in 2014–2015 would have been required to enter CoPs.

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SEP 12 2014

The Honorable Christopher J. Steinhauser
Superintendent
Long Beach Unified School District
1515 Hughes Way
Long Beach, CA 90810

Dear Superintendent Steinhauser:

This letter is in response to the request the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted on May 1, 2014, on behalf of your district and six other districts, to extend approval of the districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to carry out significant education reforms through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. (For ease of reference, the collective districts are referred to as the CORE districts and the collective request of the seven districts is referred to as the CORE districts' request hereafter.)

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- By June 1, 2015, submit to ED an amended joint request that incorporates final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that that each CORE district will use to continually improve instruction; meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels; determine performance levels using multiple valid measures, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities) and other measures of professional practice; evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis; provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and inform personnel decisions. In particular, the final guidelines must articulate the final growth model for teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects, as well as principals. Each of the CORE districts must assure it is able to comply with all elements of the guidelines once fully implemented.

Please note that should the CORE districts request to extend these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year, ED will not be able to grant that request until the issues that resulted in the continued conditions and high-risk status are resolved. If those issues cannot be resolved prior to the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the CORE districts may not be able to continue implementing these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

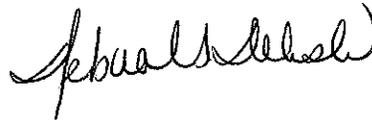
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If you have any questions regarding this letter or the implementation of the CORE districts' waiver request, please do not hesitate to contact Leslie Clithero of my staff at: leslie.clithero@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued focus on enhancing education for Long Beach's children.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Rick Miller, Executive Director, California Office to Reform Education
Richard Zeiger, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education

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Develop and Implement a System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Element 2.A)

Revision: Combines the SQII's social-emotional and culture-climate domains into a single domain, the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain.

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Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (Element 2.B)

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Focus Schools (Element 2.E)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Honorable John Deasy
Superintendent
Los Angeles Unified School District
333 S. Beaudry Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90017

SEP 12 2014

Dear Superintendent Deasy:

This letter is in response to the request the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted on May 1, 2014, on behalf of your district and six other districts, to extend approval of the districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to carry out significant education reforms through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. (For ease of reference, the collective districts are referred to as the CORE districts and the collective request of the seven districts is referred to as the CORE districts' request hereafter.)

The CORE districts have proposed important and innovative work. The waivers granted have allowed CORE districts the ability to implement college- and career-ready expectations for all students, design meaningful systems of accountability to improve outcomes for all students, and begin to create teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that take into account student growth and are used to help teachers and principals improve their practices.

Currently, the CORE districts' request is approved through the end of the 2013–2014 school year, subject to two conditions. The CORE districts were required to submit to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for review and approval:

- an amended request incorporating the final version of the new school quality improvement system, and
- final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

Our team has reviewed the CORE districts' request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend the request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, subject to the continuation of both conditions. My decision to extend the CORE districts' request is based on my determination that the waivers have been effective in enabling each of the CORE districts to carry out reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest.

Although I am encouraged by the significant reforms proposed by the CORE districts and the work that the CORE districts have undertaken to date, I also recognize that this is very challenging work. That challenge is demonstrated by the fact that the CORE districts have not yet been able to meet the two conditions on their initial approval through the 2013–2014 school year as discussed below, as well as by the scope of changes the CORE districts proposed through amendments to their request. Despite not yet

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

meeting the two conditions placed on their initial approval, the CORE districts have demonstrated a strong desire and developed detailed plans to address both conditions in the 2014–2015 school year as well as an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. Although I am extending approval of the CORE districts' request through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, because the CORE districts did not meet either condition, I am also placing each of the seven districts on high-risk status, pursuant to the authority in 34 C.F.R. § 80.12.

In February 2014, through onsite monitoring, ED learned that additional work would be required to fully develop the School Quality Improvement Index (SQII). Through their May 1, 2014 waiver extension request, the CORE districts proposed a number of changes to the inclusion of certain metrics, including delays in the timeline for including certain metrics for accountability purposes. Additionally, the CORE districts indicated that they are still working to develop certain social-emotional and culture-climate metrics that will be included in the final SQII. For the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts will continue to implement their transitional accountability system. Although the CORE districts have articulated their plans for finalizing the SQII in the 2014–2015 school year, the work is not yet complete. As a result, and because district-level accountability is a central component of the CORE districts' request, I am continuing the condition to submit to ED for review and approval an amended CORE districts' request incorporating the final version of the SQII. Please note that this approval to extend the CORE districts' request through the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of the SQII. In order to receive approval to implement any system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support that differs from the system that the CORE districts are being approved to use today through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts must submit a final version of that system to ED for review and approval.

On February 25, 2014, I sent you a letter, based on ED's peer review, indicating that the CORE districts had not yet adopted final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems as outlined in the approval of the CORE districts' request and needed to continue working to address the condition they received when approved for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. The CORE districts provided evidence of their continued work to meet the condition to provide final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems in their May 1, 2014 extension request. Although the CORE Board has accepted a set of guidelines as "final" guidelines, and the guidelines demonstrate progress towards eventually meeting the six components required in the original condition, the guidelines do not yet meet each of those components and cannot be approved at this time. For example, the guidelines do not yet articulate how the CORE districts will incorporate student growth as a significant factor in teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as the CORE districts have not yet adopted a growth model to measure student growth for teachers of tested grades and subjects and have not developed CORE-wide guidelines to measure student growth for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects. Accordingly, I have determined that the CORE districts have not yet met the second condition that was placed on the approval of their waiver request and I am extending this condition into the 2014–2015 school year. The CORE districts must submit final guidelines that meet the six required components to ED for review and approval. Although I understand that the CORE districts have also proposed to extend their timeline for fully implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, my decision to extend the waivers for the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of this extended timeline to fully implement teacher and principal evaluation systems. The CORE districts must continue to work with ED regarding this requested change, which may require additional flexibility.

This letter also provides my approval of some of the CORE districts' proposed amendments to their waiver request. A summary of the approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and the CORE districts' amended request will be posted on ED's website. I am unable to grant each of the amendments that the CORE districts requested. Some of the amendment requests, such as the request to approve the CORE districts' guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, are simply not yet ready for a decision because the work is not yet complete.

The amendments that I am approving do not address each of the monitoring findings from ED's February 2014 monitoring visit. I expect that the CORE districts will continue to work with ED during the 2014–2015 school year to address all outstanding findings from that visit.

In order to have the conditions on their waiver request lifted and their high-risk designation removed, the CORE districts must:

- Submit to ED, no later than 45 calendar days from the date of this letter, an updated high-quality plan describing the work the CORE districts will carry out during the 2014–2015 school year to address each of the conditions on the approval of their waiver request. The plan must include key milestones and activities, a detailed timeline, party or parties responsible, evidence, resources, and significant obstacles;
- Provide updates to ED on a monthly basis on their progress in carrying out their high-quality plan to address the outstanding conditions on their waiver request and outstanding monitoring findings, as well as to comprehensively report on the progress of their work implementing the CORE districts' request;
- By March 31, 2015, submit to ED a final version of the SQII adopted by each of the CORE districts; and
- By June 1, 2015, submit to ED an amended joint request that incorporates final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that that each CORE district will use to continually improve instruction; meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels; determine performance levels using multiple valid measures, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities) and other measures of professional practice; evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis; provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and inform personnel decisions. In particular, the final guidelines must articulate the final growth model for teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects, as well as principals. Each of the CORE districts must assure it is able to comply with all elements of the guidelines once fully implemented.

Please note that should the CORE districts request to extend these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year, ED will not be able to grant that request until the issues that resulted in the continued conditions and high-risk status are resolved. If those issues cannot be resolved prior to the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the CORE districts may not be able to continue implementing these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

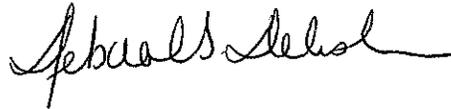
The CORE districts may request reconsideration of their high-risk designation by submitting in writing to me, no later than 10 business days from the date of this letter, a detailed discussion setting forth the basis for their belief that this designation is improper, including the specific facts that support its position. If the CORE districts choose to request such reconsideration, that request must be submitted via email to me (deb.delisle@ed.gov), with a copy to Leslie Clithero (leslie.clithero@ed.gov), as well as

by U.S. mail or commercial delivery. If I do not receive a request for reconsideration within 10 business days, the CORE districts' high-risk status will be considered final and will be lifted only upon completing the actions set forth above.

Your district continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it is in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in its implementation of the waiver request. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the implementation of the CORE districts' waiver request, please do not hesitate to contact Leslie Clithero of my staff at: leslie.clithero@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued focus on enhancing education for Los Angeles' children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah S. Delisle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Rick Miller, Executive Director, California Office to Reform Education
Richard Zeiger, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education

Approved Amendments to the CORE Districts' Waiver Request

The following is a summary of approved amendments to the CORE districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. Please refer to ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/flexibility/waiverletters2009/index.html#ca>) for the CORE districts' complete waiver request.

Develop and Implement a System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Element 2.A)

Revision: Combines the SQII's social-emotional and culture-climate domains into a single domain, the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain.

Revision: Changes the term "non-cognitive skills," which is used to reference non-academic skills such as mindsets and self-management, to "social-emotional skills."

Revision: Modifies the timeline for the CORE districts to submit to ED the final weighting for the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain factors. The CORE districts will submit final weights by January 2015.

Revision: Revises rules for transitioning to the SQII to include limited stakes the first time a metric is introduced.

Revision: Revises the assessments that factor into the SQII for 2013–2014 to include 2012–2013 California Standards Tests (CST) in grades 2-8 and 2012–2013 performance on the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) in grade 10 in ELA and mathematics, as well as 2012–2013 student performance on the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) and California Modified Assessment (CMA) performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Academic Performance Index (API) growth for 2012–2013 will be the growth measure. Graduation rates will be included in the SQII at the high school level. Middle school persistence rates will not be incorporated into the SQII until 2014–2015.

Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (Element 2.B)

Revision: For purposes of an interim index for 2013–2014, the CORE districts will continue to set interim AMOs using API growth scores and graduation rate targets. Schools in the bottom 30 percent for API and/or not meeting graduation rate targets are considered to be not meeting AMOs.

Reward Schools (Element 2.C)

Revision: For 2013–2014, rather than identifying reward schools based on the SQII, the CORE districts will continue to use the method used to identify reward schools in 2012–2013. 2013 assessment results will be used to make 2013–2014 reward school identifications.

Revision: Modifies the types of recognition required for reward schools. Previously media recognition was required, but in future years it will be optional.

Revision: Modifies the school pairing strategy. Previously priority schools were required to pair with reward school partners. Through this change, priority schools can be paired with non-

reward schools, including other high performing and/or high progress schools, when there is evidence that the pairing will be beneficial.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to participate in a peer review of partner priority and/or focus schools.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to serve as partners to priority and/or focus schools.

Priority Schools (Element 2.D)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify priority schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified priority schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify priority schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed that all priority schools would partner with a reward school. Through this change, priority schools identified because of participation in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program may be paired with SIG-related partners, including an education management organization, SIG Turnaround Office, or a similar organization.

Revision: Changes language in the waiver request to indicate that social-emotional and culture-climate factors will not be required factors in teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Focus Schools (Element 2.E)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify focus schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified focus schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify focus schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: Modifies the community of practice (CoP) model for focus school interventions to include increased flexibility in the structure of CoPs. Focus school interventions will continue to address the reasons that led to the school's identification as a focus school, but CoPs can now be organized based on a variety of factors including the reason a school was identified as focus, similarity in problems of practice, similarity in interventions being used to address problems of practice, geography, and/or similarities in school population.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required a certain amount of contact between focus schools and their paired school, as well as between the principals of the two schools. Through this change, the amount of required contact is reduced but if a focus school is paired with a reward school, the schools and principals will have at least monthly contact.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required all focus schools to participate in a CoP. Through this change, the CORE districts are modifying the focus school intervention strategy such that focus schools may choose to participate in school pairing rather than participating in a CoP.

Revision: The CORE districts originally described that CORE would facilitate CoPs and the waiver was ambiguous as to whether they would be inter- or intra-district or both. Through this change, CoPs may occur within or across CORE districts. However, each year there will be at least one inter-district CoP focusing on a discrete topic.

Provide Incentives and Supports for Other Title I Schools (Element 2.F)

Revision: The CORE districts modified the requirements for when mandatory interventions are required in other Title I schools (now called “other support schools”), such that schools that did not meet the AMO for the first time when analyzed in Summer 2014 (based upon being in the bottom 30% of 2013 API and missing their state API and/or graduation target in 2013) will be in year 1 of missing their AMO in 2014–2015. If such schools miss the interim AMO again using end of year 2014–2015 SQII results (e.g., performing in the bottom 30% on SQII scores), these schools will enter CoPs starting in 2015–2016. Previously, schools that missed the AMO for one year in 2014–2015 would have been required to enter CoPs.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required other Title I schools to “attend” a CoP. Through this amendment those schools are now required to “participate” in a CoP.

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Revision: Modifies the expectations for locally developed teacher and principal evaluation systems such that ratings are now required to meaningfully differentiate among levels of effectiveness using at least three categories. Previously, the CORE districts required at least four categories.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

SEP 12 2014

The Honorable Antwan Wilson
Superintendent
Oakland Unified School District
1000 Broadway, Suite 680
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Superintendent Wilson:

This letter is in response to the request the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted on May 1, 2014, on behalf of your district and six other districts, to extend approval of the districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to carry out significant education reforms through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. (For ease of reference, the collective districts are referred to as the CORE districts and the collective request of the seven districts is referred to as the CORE districts' request hereafter.)

The CORE districts have proposed important and innovative work. The waivers granted have allowed CORE districts the ability to implement college- and career-ready expectations for all students, design meaningful systems of accountability to improve outcomes for all students, and begin to create teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that take into account student growth and are used to help teachers and principals improve their practices.

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- final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

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Although I am encouraged by the significant reforms proposed by the CORE districts and the work that the CORE districts have undertaken to date, I also recognize that this is very challenging work. That challenge is demonstrated by the fact that the CORE districts have not yet been able to meet the two conditions on their initial approval through the 2013–2014 school year as discussed below, as well as by the scope of changes the CORE districts proposed through amendments to their request. Despite not yet

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- By March 31, 2015, submit to ED a final version of the SQII adopted by each of the CORE districts; and
- By June 1, 2015, submit to ED an amended joint request that incorporates final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that that each CORE district will use to continually improve instruction; meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels; determine performance levels using multiple valid measures, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities) and other measures of professional practice; evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis; provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and inform personnel decisions. In particular, the final guidelines must articulate the final growth model for teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects, as well as principals. Each of the CORE districts must assure it is able to comply with all elements of the guidelines once fully implemented.

Please note that should the CORE districts request to extend these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year, ED will not be able to grant that request until the issues that resulted in the continued conditions and high-risk status are resolved. If those issues cannot be resolved prior to the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the CORE districts may not be able to continue implementing these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

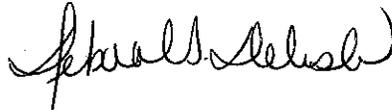
The CORE districts may request reconsideration of their high-risk designation by submitting in writing to me, no later than 10 business days from the date of this letter, a detailed discussion setting forth the basis for their belief that this designation is improper, including the specific facts that support its position. If the CORE districts choose to request such reconsideration, that request must be submitted via email to me (deb.delisle@ed.gov), with a copy to Leslie Clithero (leslie.clithero@ed.gov), as well as

by U.S. mail or commercial delivery. If I do not receive a request for reconsideration within 10 business days, the CORE districts' high-risk status will be considered final and will be lifted only upon completing the actions set forth above.

Your district continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it is in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in its implementation of the waiver request. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the implementation of the CORE districts' waiver request, please do not hesitate to contact Leslie Clithero of my staff at: leslie.clithero@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued focus on enhancing education for Oakland's children.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Rick Miller, Executive Director, California Office to Reform Education
Richard Zeiger, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education

Approved Amendments to the CORE Districts' Waiver Request

The following is a summary of approved amendments to the CORE districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. Please refer to ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/flexibility/waiverletters2009/index.html#ca>) for the CORE districts' complete waiver request.

Develop and Implement a System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Element 2.A)

Revision: Combines the SQII's social-emotional and culture-climate domains into a single domain, the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain.

Revision: Changes the term "non-cognitive skills," which is used to reference non-academic skills such as mindsets and self-management, to "social-emotional skills."

Revision: Modifies the timeline for the CORE districts to submit to ED the final weighting for the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain factors. The CORE districts will submit final weights by January 2015.

Revision: Revises rules for transitioning to the SQII to include limited stakes the first time a metric is introduced.

Revision: Revises the assessments that factor into the SQII for 2013–2014 to include 2012–2013 California Standards Tests (CST) in grades 2-8 and 2012–2013 performance on the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) in grade 10 in ELA and mathematics, as well as 2012–2013 student performance on the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) and California Modified Assessment (CMA) performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Academic Performance Index (API) growth for 2012–2013 will be the growth measure. Graduation rates will be included in the SQII at the high school level. Middle school persistence rates will not be incorporated into the SQII until 2014–2015.

Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (Element 2.B)

Revision: For purposes of an interim index for 2013–2014, the CORE districts will continue to set interim AMOs using API growth scores and graduation rate targets. Schools in the bottom 30 percent for API and/or not meeting graduation rate targets are considered to be not meeting AMOs.

Reward Schools (Element 2.C)

Revision: For 2013–2014, rather than identifying reward schools based on the SQII, the CORE districts will continue to use the method used to identify reward schools in 2012–2013. 2013 assessment results will be used to make 2013–2014 reward school identifications.

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Revision: Modifies the school pairing strategy. Previously priority schools were required to pair with reward school partners. Through this change, priority schools can be paired with non-

reward schools, including other high performing and/or high progress schools, when there is evidence that the pairing will be beneficial.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to participate in a peer review of partner priority and/or focus schools.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to serve as partners to priority and/or focus schools.

Priority Schools (Element 2.D)

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Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed that all priority schools would partner with a reward school. Through this change, priority schools identified because of participation in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program may be paired with SIG-related partners, including an education management organization, SIG Turnaround Office, or a similar organization.

Revision: Changes language in the waiver request to indicate that social-emotional and culture-climate factors will not be required factors in teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Focus Schools (Element 2.E)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify focus schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified focus schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify focus schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: Modifies the community of practice (CoP) model for focus school interventions to include increased flexibility in the structure of CoPs. Focus school interventions will continue to address the reasons that led to the school’s identification as a focus school, but CoPs can now be organized based on a variety of factors including the reason a school was identified as focus, similarity in problems of practice, similarity in interventions being used to address problems of practice, geography, and/or similarities in school population.

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Revision: The CORE districts originally described that CORE would facilitate CoPs and the waiver was ambiguous as to whether they would be inter- or intra-district or both. Through this change, CoPs may occur within or across CORE districts. However, each year there will be at least one inter-district CoP focusing on a discrete topic.

Provide Incentives and Supports for Other Title I Schools (Element 2.F)

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Revision: Modifies the expectations for locally developed teacher and principal evaluation systems such that ratings are now required to meaningfully differentiate among levels of effectiveness using at least three categories. Previously, the CORE districts required at least four categories.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Honorable Richard A. Carranza
Superintendent
San Francisco Unified School District
555 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

SEP 12 2014

Dear Superintendent Carranza:

This letter is in response to the request the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted on May 1, 2014, on behalf of your district and six other districts, to extend approval of the districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to carry out significant education reforms through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. (For ease of reference, the collective districts are referred to as the CORE districts and the collective request of the seven districts is referred to as the CORE districts' request hereafter.)

The CORE districts have proposed important and innovative work. The waivers granted have allowed CORE districts the ability to implement college- and career-ready expectations for all students, design meaningful systems of accountability to improve outcomes for all students, and begin to create teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that take into account student growth and are used to help teachers and principals improve their practices.

Currently, the CORE districts' request is approved through the end of the 2013–2014 school year, subject to two conditions. The CORE districts were required to submit to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for review and approval:

- an amended request incorporating the final version of the new school quality improvement system, and
- final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

Our team has reviewed the CORE districts' request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend the request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, subject to the continuation of both conditions. My decision to extend the CORE districts' request is based on my determination that the waivers have been effective in enabling each of the CORE districts to carry out reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest.

Although I am encouraged by the significant reforms proposed by the CORE districts and the work that the CORE districts have undertaken to date, I also recognize that this is very challenging work. That challenge is demonstrated by the fact that the CORE districts have not yet been able to meet the two conditions on their initial approval through the 2013–2014 school year as discussed below, as well as by the scope of changes the CORE districts proposed through amendments to their request. Despite not yet

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

meeting the two conditions placed on their initial approval, the CORE districts have demonstrated a strong desire and developed detailed plans to address both conditions in the 2014–2015 school year as well as an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. Although I am extending approval of the CORE districts' request through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, because the CORE districts did not meet either condition, I am also placing each of the seven districts on high-risk status, pursuant to the authority in 34 C.F.R. § 80.12.

In February 2014, through onsite monitoring, ED learned that additional work would be required to fully develop the School Quality Improvement Index (SQII). Through their May 1, 2014 waiver extension request, the CORE districts proposed a number of changes to the inclusion of certain metrics, including delays in the timeline for including certain metrics for accountability purposes. Additionally, the CORE districts indicated that they are still working to develop certain social-emotional and culture-climate metrics that will be included in the final SQII. For the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts will continue to implement their transitional accountability system. Although the CORE districts have articulated their plans for finalizing the SQII in the 2014–2015 school year, the work is not yet complete. As a result, and because district-level accountability is a central component of the CORE districts' request, I am continuing the condition to submit to ED for review and approval an amended CORE districts' request incorporating the final version of the SQII. Please note that this approval to extend the CORE districts' request through the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of the SQII. In order to receive approval to implement any system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support that differs from the system that the CORE districts are being approved to use today through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts must submit a final version of that system to ED for review and approval.

On February 25, 2014, I sent you a letter, based on ED's peer review, indicating that the CORE districts had not yet adopted final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems as outlined in the approval of the CORE districts' request and needed to continue working to address the condition they received when approved for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. The CORE districts provided evidence of their continued work to meet the condition to provide final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems in their May 1, 2014 extension request. Although the CORE Board has accepted a set of guidelines as "final" guidelines, and the guidelines demonstrate progress towards eventually meeting the six components required in the original condition, the guidelines do not yet meet each of those components and cannot be approved at this time. For example, the guidelines do not yet articulate how the CORE districts will incorporate student growth as a significant factor in teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as the CORE districts have not yet adopted a growth model to measure student growth for teachers of tested grades and subjects and have not developed CORE-wide guidelines to measure student growth for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects. Accordingly, I have determined that the CORE districts have not yet met the second condition that was placed on the approval of their waiver request and I am extending this condition into the 2014–2015 school year. The CORE districts must submit final guidelines that meet the six required components to ED for review and approval. Although I understand that the CORE districts have also proposed to extend their timeline for fully implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, my decision to extend the waivers for the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of this extended timeline to fully implement teacher and principal evaluation systems. The CORE districts must continue to work with ED regarding this requested change, which may require additional flexibility.

This letter also provides my approval of some of the CORE districts' proposed amendments to their waiver request. A summary of the approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and the CORE districts' amended request will be posted on ED's website. I am unable to grant each of the amendments that the CORE districts requested. Some of the amendment requests, such as the request to approve the CORE districts' guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, are simply not yet ready for a decision because the work is not yet complete.

The amendments that I am approving do not address each of the monitoring findings from ED's February 2014 monitoring visit. I expect that the CORE districts will continue to work with ED during the 2014–2015 school year to address all outstanding findings from that visit.

In order to have the conditions on their waiver request lifted and their high-risk designation removed, the CORE districts must:

- Submit to ED, no later than 45 calendar days from the date of this letter, an updated high-quality plan describing the work the CORE districts will carry out during the 2014–2015 school year to address each of the conditions on the approval of their waiver request. The plan must include key milestones and activities, a detailed timeline, party or parties responsible, evidence, resources, and significant obstacles;
- Provide updates to ED on a monthly basis on their progress in carrying out their high-quality plan to address the outstanding conditions on their waiver request and outstanding monitoring findings, as well as to comprehensively report on the progress of their work implementing the CORE districts' request;
- By March 31, 2015, submit to ED a final version of the SQII adopted by each of the CORE districts; and
- By June 1, 2015, submit to ED an amended joint request that incorporates final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that that each CORE district will use to continually improve instruction; meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels; determine performance levels using multiple valid measures, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities) and other measures of professional practice; evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis; provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and inform personnel decisions. In particular, the final guidelines must articulate the final growth model for teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects, as well as principals. Each of the CORE districts must assure it is able to comply with all elements of the guidelines once fully implemented.

Please note that should the CORE districts request to extend these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year, ED will not be able to grant that request until the issues that resulted in the continued conditions and high-risk status are resolved. If those issues cannot be resolved prior to the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the CORE districts may not be able to continue implementing these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

The CORE districts may request reconsideration of their high-risk designation by submitting in writing to me, no later than 10 business days from the date of this letter, a detailed discussion setting forth the basis for their belief that this designation is improper, including the specific facts that support its position. If the CORE districts choose to request such reconsideration, that request must be submitted via email to me (deb.delisle@ed.gov), with a copy to Leslie Clithero (leslie.clithero@ed.gov), as well as

by U.S. mail or commercial delivery. If I do not receive a request for reconsideration within 10 business days, the CORE districts' high-risk status will be considered final and will be lifted only upon completing the actions set forth above.

Your district continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it is in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in its implementation of the waiver request. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the implementation of the CORE districts' waiver request, please do not hesitate to contact Leslie Clithero of my staff at: leslie.clithero@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued focus on enhancing education for San Francisco's children.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Rick Miller, Executive Director, California Office to Reform Education
Richard Zeiger, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education

Approved Amendments to the CORE Districts' Waiver Request

The following is a summary of approved amendments to the CORE districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. Please refer to ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/flexibility/waiverletters2009/index.html#ca>) for the CORE districts' complete waiver request.

Develop and Implement a System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Element 2.A)

Revision: Combines the SQII's social-emotional and culture-climate domains into a single domain, the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain.

Revision: Changes the term "non-cognitive skills," which is used to reference non-academic skills such as mindsets and self-management, to "social-emotional skills."

Revision: Modifies the timeline for the CORE districts to submit to ED the final weighting for the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain factors. The CORE districts will submit final weights by January 2015.

Revision: Revises rules for transitioning to the SQII to include limited stakes the first time a metric is introduced.

Revision: Revises the assessments that factor into the SQII for 2013–2014 to include 2012–2013 California Standards Tests (CST) in grades 2-8 and 2012–2013 performance on the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) in grade 10 in ELA and mathematics, as well as 2012–2013 student performance on the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) and California Modified Assessment (CMA) performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Academic Performance Index (API) growth for 2012–2013 will be the growth measure. Graduation rates will be included in the SQII at the high school level. Middle school persistence rates will not be incorporated into the SQII until 2014–2015.

Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (Element 2.B)

Revision: For purposes of an interim index for 2013–2014, the CORE districts will continue to set interim AMOs using API growth scores and graduation rate targets. Schools in the bottom 30 percent for API and/or not meeting graduation rate targets are considered to be not meeting AMOs.

Reward Schools (Element 2.C)

Revision: For 2013–2014, rather than identifying reward schools based on the SQII, the CORE districts will continue to use the method used to identify reward schools in 2012–2013. 2013 assessment results will be used to make 2013–2014 reward school identifications.

Revision: Modifies the types of recognition required for reward schools. Previously media recognition was required, but in future years it will be optional.

Revision: Modifies the school pairing strategy. Previously priority schools were required to pair with reward school partners. Through this change, priority schools can be paired with non-

reward schools, including other high performing and/or high progress schools, when there is evidence that the pairing will be beneficial.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to participate in a peer review of partner priority and/or focus schools.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to serve as partners to priority and/or focus schools.

Priority Schools (Element 2.D)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify priority schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified priority schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify priority schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed that all priority schools would partner with a reward school. Through this change, priority schools identified because of participation in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program may be paired with SIG-related partners, including an education management organization, SIG Turnaround Office, or a similar organization.

Revision: Changes language in the waiver request to indicate that social-emotional and culture-climate factors will not be required factors in teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Focus Schools (Element 2.E)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify focus schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified focus schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify focus schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: Modifies the community of practice (CoP) model for focus school interventions to include increased flexibility in the structure of CoPs. Focus school interventions will continue to address the reasons that led to the school's identification as a focus school, but CoPs can now be organized based on a variety of factors including the reason a school was identified as focus, similarity in problems of practice, similarity in interventions being used to address problems of practice, geography, and/or similarities in school population.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required a certain amount of contact between focus schools and their paired school, as well as between the principals of the two schools. Through this change, the amount of required contact is reduced but if a focus school is paired with a reward school, the schools and principals will have at least monthly contact.

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Revision: The CORE districts originally described that CORE would facilitate CoPs and the waiver was ambiguous as to whether they would be inter- or intra-district or both. Through this change, CoPs may occur within or across CORE districts. However, each year there will be at least one inter-district CoP focusing on a discrete topic.

Provide Incentives and Supports for Other Title I Schools (Element 2.F)

Revision: The CORE districts modified the requirements for when mandatory interventions are required in other Title I schools (now called “other support schools”), such that schools that did not meet the AMO for the first time when analyzed in Summer 2014 (based upon being in the bottom 30% of 2013 API and missing their state API and/or graduation target in 2013) will be in year 1 of missing their AMO in 2014–2015. If such schools miss the interim AMO again using end of year 2014–2015 SQII results (e.g., performing in the bottom 30% on SQII scores), these schools will enter CoPs starting in 2015–2016. Previously, schools that missed the AMO for one year in 2014–2015 would have been required to enter CoPs.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

SEP 12 2014

The Honorable Matthew Navo
Superintendent
Sanger Unified School District
1905 Seventh Street
Sanger, CA 93657

Dear Superintendent Navo:

This letter is in response to the request the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted on May 1, 2014, on behalf of your district and six other districts, to extend approval of the districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to carry out significant education reforms through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. (For ease of reference, the collective districts are referred to as the CORE districts and the collective request of the seven districts is referred to as the CORE districts' request hereafter.)

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- final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

Our team has reviewed the CORE districts' request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend the request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, subject to the continuation of both conditions. My decision to extend the CORE districts' request is based on my determination that the waivers have been effective in enabling each of the CORE districts to carry out reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest.

Although I am encouraged by the significant reforms proposed by the CORE districts and the work that the CORE districts have undertaken to date, I also recognize that this is very challenging work. That challenge is demonstrated by the fact that the CORE districts have not yet been able to meet the two conditions on their initial approval through the 2013–2014 school year as discussed below, as well as by the scope of changes the CORE districts proposed through amendments to their request. Despite not yet

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In order to have the conditions on their waiver request lifted and their high-risk designation removed, the CORE districts must:

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- By March 31, 2015, submit to ED a final version of the SQII adopted by each of the CORE districts; and
- By June 1, 2015, submit to ED an amended joint request that incorporates final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that that each CORE district will use to continually improve instruction; meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels; determine performance levels using multiple valid measures, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities) and other measures of professional practice; evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis; provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and inform personnel decisions. In particular, the final guidelines must articulate the final growth model for teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects, as well as principals. Each of the CORE districts must assure it is able to comply with all elements of the guidelines once fully implemented.

Please note that should the CORE districts request to extend these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year, ED will not be able to grant that request until the issues that resulted in the continued conditions and high-risk status are resolved. If those issues cannot be resolved prior to the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the CORE districts may not be able to continue implementing these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

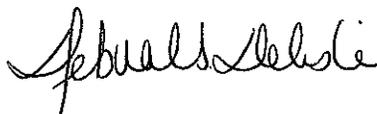
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Your district continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it is in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in its implementation of the waiver request. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the implementation of the CORE districts' waiver request, please do not hesitate to contact Leslie Clithero of my staff at: leslie.clithero@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued focus on enhancing education for Sanger's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deborah S. Delisle".

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Rick Miller, Executive Director, California Office to Reform Education
Richard Zeiger, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education

Approved Amendments to the CORE Districts' Waiver Request

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Develop and Implement a System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Element 2.A)

Revision: Combines the SQII's social-emotional and culture-climate domains into a single domain, the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain.

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Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (Element 2.B)

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Reward Schools (Element 2.C)

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reward schools, including other high performing and/or high progress schools, when there is evidence that the pairing will be beneficial.

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Focus Schools (Element 2.E)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Honorable Rick Miller
Superintendent
Santa Ana Unified School District
1601 East Chestnut Ave.
Santa Ana, CA 92701

SEP 12 2014

Dear Superintendent Miller:

This letter is in response to the request the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted on May 1, 2014, on behalf of your district and six other districts, to extend approval of the districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to carry out significant education reforms through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. (For ease of reference, the collective districts are referred to as the CORE districts and the collective request of the seven districts is referred to as the CORE districts' request hereafter.)

The CORE districts have proposed important and innovative work. The waivers granted have allowed CORE districts the ability to implement college- and career-ready expectations for all students, design meaningful systems of accountability to improve outcomes for all students, and begin to create teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that take into account student growth and are used to help teachers and principals improve their practices.

Currently, the CORE districts' request is approved through the end of the 2013–2014 school year, subject to two conditions. The CORE districts were required to submit to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for review and approval:

- an amended request incorporating the final version of the new school quality improvement system, and
- final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

Our team has reviewed the CORE districts' request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend the request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, subject to the continuation of both conditions. My decision to extend the CORE districts' request is based on my determination that the waivers have been effective in enabling each of the CORE districts to carry out reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest.

Although I am encouraged by the significant reforms proposed by the CORE districts and the work that the CORE districts have undertaken to date, I also recognize that this is very challenging work. That challenge is demonstrated by the fact that the CORE districts have not yet been able to meet the two conditions on their initial approval through the 2013–2014 school year as discussed below, as well as by the scope of changes the CORE districts proposed through amendments to their request. Despite not yet

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

meeting the two conditions placed on their initial approval, the CORE districts have demonstrated a strong desire and developed detailed plans to address both conditions in the 2014–2015 school year as well as an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. Although I am extending approval of the CORE districts' request through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, because the CORE districts did not meet either condition, I am also placing each of the seven districts on high-risk status, pursuant to the authority in 34 C.F.R. § 80.12.

In February 2014, through onsite monitoring, ED learned that additional work would be required to fully develop the School Quality Improvement Index (SQII). Through their May 1, 2014 waiver extension request, the CORE districts proposed a number of changes to the inclusion of certain metrics, including delays in the timeline for including certain metrics for accountability purposes. Additionally, the CORE districts indicated that they are still working to develop certain social-emotional and culture-climate metrics that will be included in the final SQII. For the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts will continue to implement their transitional accountability system. Although the CORE districts have articulated their plans for finalizing the SQII in the 2014–2015 school year, the work is not yet complete. As a result, and because district-level accountability is a central component of the CORE districts' request, I am continuing the condition to submit to ED for review and approval an amended CORE districts' request incorporating the final version of the SQII. Please note that this approval to extend the CORE districts' request through the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of the SQII. In order to receive approval to implement any system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support that differs from the system that the CORE districts are being approved to use today through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, the CORE districts must submit a final version of that system to ED for review and approval.

On February 25, 2014, I sent you a letter, based on ED's peer review, indicating that the CORE districts had not yet adopted final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems as outlined in the approval of the CORE districts' request and needed to continue working to address the condition they received when approved for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. The CORE districts provided evidence of their continued work to meet the condition to provide final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems in their May 1, 2014 extension request. Although the CORE Board has accepted a set of guidelines as "final" guidelines, and the guidelines demonstrate progress towards eventually meeting the six components required in the original condition, the guidelines do not yet meet each of those components and cannot be approved at this time. For example, the guidelines do not yet articulate how the CORE districts will incorporate student growth as a significant factor in teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as the CORE districts have not yet adopted a growth model to measure student growth for teachers of tested grades and subjects and have not developed CORE-wide guidelines to measure student growth for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects. Accordingly, I have determined that the CORE districts have not yet met the second condition that was placed on the approval of their waiver request and I am extending this condition into the 2014–2015 school year. The CORE districts must submit final guidelines that meet the six required components to ED for review and approval. Although I understand that the CORE districts have also proposed to extend their timeline for fully implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, my decision to extend the waivers for the 2014–2015 school year is not an approval of this extended timeline to fully implement teacher and principal evaluation systems. The CORE districts must continue to work with ED regarding this requested change, which may require additional flexibility.

This letter also provides my approval of some of the CORE districts' proposed amendments to their waiver request. A summary of the approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and the CORE districts' amended request will be posted on ED's website. I am unable to grant each of the amendments that the CORE districts requested. Some of the amendment requests, such as the request to approve the CORE districts' guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, are simply not yet ready for a decision because the work is not yet complete.

The amendments that I am approving do not address each of the monitoring findings from ED's February 2014 monitoring visit. I expect that the CORE districts will continue to work with ED during the 2014–2015 school year to address all outstanding findings from that visit.

In order to have the conditions on their waiver request lifted and their high-risk designation removed, the CORE districts must:

- Submit to ED, no later than 45 calendar days from the date of this letter, an updated high-quality plan describing the work the CORE districts will carry out during the 2014–2015 school year to address each of the conditions on the approval of their waiver request. The plan must include key milestones and activities, a detailed timeline, party or parties responsible, evidence, resources, and significant obstacles;
- Provide updates to ED on a monthly basis on their progress in carrying out their high-quality plan to address the outstanding conditions on their waiver request and outstanding monitoring findings, as well as to comprehensively report on the progress of their work implementing the CORE districts' request;
- By March 31, 2015, submit to ED a final version of the SQII adopted by each of the CORE districts; and
- By June 1, 2015, submit to ED an amended joint request that incorporates final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that that each CORE district will use to continually improve instruction; meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels; determine performance levels using multiple valid measures, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities) and other measures of professional practice; evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis; provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and inform personnel decisions. In particular, the final guidelines must articulate the final growth model for teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects, as well as principals. Each of the CORE districts must assure it is able to comply with all elements of the guidelines once fully implemented.

Please note that should the CORE districts request to extend these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year, ED will not be able to grant that request until the issues that resulted in the continued conditions and high-risk status are resolved. If those issues cannot be resolved prior to the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the CORE districts may not be able to continue implementing these waivers beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

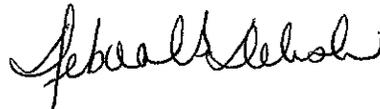
The CORE districts may request reconsideration of their high-risk designation by submitting in writing to me, no later than 10 business days from the date of this letter, a detailed discussion setting forth the basis for their belief that this designation is improper, including the specific facts that support its position. If the CORE districts choose to request such reconsideration, that request must be submitted via email to me (deb.delisle@ed.gov), with a copy to Leslie Clithero (leslie.clithero@ed.gov), as well as

by U.S. mail or commercial delivery. If I do not receive a request for reconsideration within 10 business days, the CORE districts' high-risk status will be considered final and will be lifted only upon completing the actions set forth above.

Your district continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it is in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in its implementation of the waiver request. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the implementation of the CORE districts' waiver request, please do not hesitate to contact Leslie Clithero of my staff at: leslie.clithero@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued focus on enhancing education for Santa Ana's children.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Rick Miller, Executive Director, California Office to Reform Education
Richard Zeiger, Chief Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education

Approved Amendments to the CORE Districts' Waiver Request

The following is a summary of approved amendments to the CORE districts' request for waivers under section 9401 of the ESEA. Please refer to ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/flexibility/waiverletters2009/index.html#ca>) for the CORE districts' complete waiver request.

Develop and Implement a System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (Element 2.A)

Revision: Combines the SQII's social-emotional and culture-climate domains into a single domain, the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain.

Revision: Changes the term "non-cognitive skills," which is used to reference non-academic skills such as mindsets and self-management, to "social-emotional skills."

Revision: Modifies the timeline for the CORE districts to submit to ED the final weighting for the Social-Emotional and School Culture-Climate domain factors. The CORE districts will submit final weights by January 2015.

Revision: Revises rules for transitioning to the SQII to include limited stakes the first time a metric is introduced.

Revision: Revises the assessments that factor into the SQII for 2013–2014 to include 2012–2013 California Standards Tests (CST) in grades 2–8 and 2012–2013 performance on the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) in grade 10 in ELA and mathematics, as well as 2012–2013 student performance on the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) and California Modified Assessment (CMA) performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Academic Performance Index (API) growth for 2012–2013 will be the growth measure. Graduation rates will be included in the SQII at the high school level. Middle school persistence rates will not be incorporated into the SQII until 2014–2015.

Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (Element 2.B)

Revision: For purposes of an interim index for 2013–2014, the CORE districts will continue to set interim AMOs using API growth scores and graduation rate targets. Schools in the bottom 30 percent for API and/or not meeting graduation rate targets are considered to be not meeting AMOs.

Reward Schools (Element 2.C)

Revision: For 2013–2014, rather than identifying reward schools based on the SQII, the CORE districts will continue to use the method used to identify reward schools in 2012–2013. 2013 assessment results will be used to make 2013–2014 reward school identifications.

Revision: Modifies the types of recognition required for reward schools. Previously media recognition was required, but in future years it will be optional.

Revision: Modifies the school pairing strategy. Previously priority schools were required to pair with reward school partners. Through this change, priority schools can be paired with non-

reward schools, including other high performing and/or high progress schools, when there is evidence that the pairing will be beneficial.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to participate in a peer review of partner priority and/or focus schools.

Revision: Beginning in 2014–2015, reward schools will no longer be required to serve as partners to priority and/or focus schools.

Priority Schools (Element 2.D)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify priority schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified priority schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify priority schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed that all priority schools would partner with a reward school. Through this change, priority schools identified because of participation in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program may be paired with SIG-related partners, including an education management organization, SIG Turnaround Office, or a similar organization.

Revision: Changes language in the waiver request to indicate that social-emotional and culture-climate factors will not be required factors in teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Focus Schools (Element 2.E)

Revision: The CORE districts originally proposed to identify focus schools in 2014–2015 using the SQII. Through this change, newly identified focus schools for 2014–2015 will be identified using the same criteria used to identify focus schools for 2013–2014.

Revision: Modifies the community of practice (CoP) model for focus school interventions to include increased flexibility in the structure of CoPs. Focus school interventions will continue to address the reasons that led to the school’s identification as a focus school, but CoPs can now be organized based on a variety of factors including the reason a school was identified as focus, similarity in problems of practice, similarity in interventions being used to address problems of practice, geography, and/or similarities in school population.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required a certain amount of contact between focus schools and their paired school, as well as between the principals of the two schools. Through this change, the amount of required contact is reduced but if a focus school is paired with a reward school, the schools and principals will have at least monthly contact.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required all focus schools to participate in a CoP. Through this change, the CORE districts are modifying the focus school intervention strategy such that focus schools may choose to participate in school pairing rather than participating in a CoP.

Revision: The CORE districts originally described that CORE would facilitate CoPs and the waiver was ambiguous as to whether they would be inter- or intra-district or both. Through this change, CoPs may occur within or across CORE districts. However, each year there will be at least one inter-district CoP focusing on a discrete topic.

Provide Incentives and Supports for Other Title I Schools (Element 2.F)

Revision: The CORE districts modified the requirements for when mandatory interventions are required in other Title I schools (now called “other support schools”), such that schools that did not meet the AMO for the first time when analyzed in Summer 2014 (based upon being in the bottom 30% of 2013 API and missing their state API and/or graduation target in 2013) will be in year 1 of missing their AMO in 2014–2015. If such schools miss the interim AMO again using end of year 2014–2015 SQII results (e.g., performing in the bottom 30% on SQII scores), these schools will enter CoPs starting in 2015–2016. Previously, schools that missed the AMO for one year in 2014–2015 would have been required to enter CoPs.

Revision: The CORE districts originally required other Title I schools to “attend” a CoP. Through this amendment those schools are now required to “participate” in a CoP.

Develop and Adopt Guidelines for Local Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support Systems (Element 3.A)

Revision: Modifies the expectations for locally developed teacher and principal evaluation systems such that ratings are now required to meaningfully differentiate among levels of effectiveness using at least three categories. Previously, the CORE districts required at least four categories.