



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Honorable Kathy Hoffman
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Arizona Department of Education
1535 West Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

July 2, 2019

Dear Superintendent Hoffman:

In a letter dated March 29, 2019, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) placed Arizona on high-risk status because the State did not comply with the assessment requirements in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(i)(II) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to administer the same assessment to all public school students in the State. Specifically, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) does not have a single statewide high school assessment, but rather allows any of three AzMERIT end-of-course reading/language arts and mathematics assessments to be used. ADE had not responded to assessment peer review feedback (as noted in a letter to ADE on December 2, 2016 available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbfinalassess/az6.pdf>) regarding the lack of a single statewide assessment in reading/language arts and mathematics with any corrective action.

Because of the high-risk status, Arizona's receipt of fiscal year (FY) 2018 funds under Title I, Part A was made subject, in part, to the condition that the State demonstrate a plan to come into compliance with the requirements identified above for school year 2019-2020 to administer the same assessment to all high school students in reading/language arts and mathematics except those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who took an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards.

On May 31, 2019, ADE provided sufficient evidence to fulfill the terms of the high-risk status applied to Arizona's FY 2018 Title I, Part A grant. According to its letter, in school year 2019-2020, Arizona will administer the same mathematics and reading/language arts assessment, the AzMERIT End of Grade test, to all 10th graders, with the exception of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Based on the evidence provided in the May 31 letter, the Department is removing ADE's high-risk status.

Please note that this letter does not remove a related condition that was placed on Arizona's FY 2018 Title I, Part A grant. This related condition will remain in place until such time as ADE provides the evidence needed for the peer review of Arizona's standards and assessment system. This evidence is described in letters sent to ADE by the Department on December 2, 2016 and June 29, 2018. This condition will be amended for FY 2019 to require ADE to demonstrate that the statewide administration of its 10th-grade assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics occurred as planned and included all students.

We would also like to note that ADE has indicated more long range plans to select a nationally recognized test as the single high-school test beginning in the 2021-2022 school year (to replace the AzMerit mentioned above). ADE has also indicated plans to allow local educational agencies (LEAs) to select a different nationally recognized assessment in lieu of the single high school test. I want to remind you, in the event ADE does choose to allow LEAs to utilize the locally selected nationally recognized high school test option, of the requirements of

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section 1111(b)(2)(H) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, and 34 CFR 200.3(b)(2)(ii). These requirements stipulate that, before a State may approve a locally selected, nationally recognized high school academic assessment for use by an LEA, the State must submit evidence to the Department that demonstrates that each locally selected, nationally recognized high school assessment meets the requirements under 34 CFR 200.3, including technical review by the State, and peer review and approval by the Department under section 1111(a)(4) of the ESEA. This means that ADE would have to submit the nationally recognized high school assessment that is to be used as the locally selected option to the Department for peer review prior to allowing LEAs this flexibility.

Thank you for your efforts and the efforts of your staff in correcting assessment issues in Arizona. We look forward to continuing our work with you to support the education of students in Arizona. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: Arizona.OESE@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Frank T. Brogan
Assistant Secretary for
Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Charles Tack, Associate Superintendent, Policy Development and Government Relations
Kelly Koenig, Associate Superintendent, Student Achievement and Educator Excellence Division
Audra Ahumada, Deputy Associate Superintendent, Assessment Section