



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

MAR 07 2011

The Honorable Larry Shumway  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Utah State Office of Education  
PO Box 144200  
250 East 500 South  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

Dear Superintendent Shumway:

I am writing in response to your letter to Joanne Weiss, Chief of Staff to Secretary Arne Duncan, dated February 11, 2011. The purpose of your letter was to request permission for 12 local educational agencies (LEAs) that are currently participating in Utah's pilot regarding the administration of the Utah Local Adaptive Assessments (ULAAAs) to administer the ULAAAs in spring 2011 to meet the assessment requirements under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) amended, and to use the results of those assessments in adequate yearly progress (AYP) determinations. You specifically requested that the 12 pilot LEAs not be required to administer in spring 2011 both the ULAAAs and the Core Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs), Utah's currently approved State assessments, in order to meet the Title I assessment and accountability requirements (*i.e.*, that the LEAs not be required to double test).

In support of your request, you submitted assessment materials related to the ULAAAs for peer review in January and additional documentation in February 2011. We appreciate the efforts that were required to prepare for peer review.

We acknowledge the work Utah is doing to improve its standards, assessments, and accountability system, as evidenced by its commitment to implement the Common Core State Standards and by its commitment to the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, and we agree that the pilot involving the administration of the ULAAAs may ease Utah's transition to new assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards. As you know, in order to permit the 12 pilot LEAs to administer only the ULAAAs to meet the ESEA assessment and accountability requirements (*i.e.*, without double testing), we requested that Utah submit evidence that the ULAAAs are comparable to the State's currently approved CRTs. In a timely response, Utah submitted, along with other assessment materials, evidence related to content comparability and evidence related to the comparability of achievement standards between the ULAAAs and Utah's CRTs.

The comparability analysis that was submitted on February 18, 2011 and used the equipercentile method demonstrated that the achievement levels on the ULAAAs matched the achievement levels on the CRTs between 57 and 72 percent of the time. The results are very close to those achieved in an earlier study that compared the ULAAAs and CRTs using a regression method, which tends

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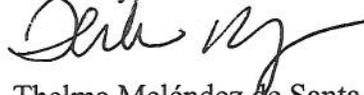
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to validate the methodology used. In addition, for the categories used in determining whether a school or LEA has made AYP — based on either meeting or not meeting proficiency — correct identification ranged from about 82 to 92 percent. Given that no two test forms are strictly equivalent, I am pleased to see this relatively high level of comparability.

In light of this evidence of comparability, I am approving Utah's request to allow the 12 LEAs currently participating in the ULAA pilot to administer only the ULAA, and not the CRTs, in spring 2011 and to use the results of the ULAA in AYP determinations. Please note that this approval is for the 2010–2011 school year only. Approval for the pilot LEAs to continue to use the ULAA to meet ESEA assessment and accountability requirements in future years is contingent upon Utah's meeting all ESEA assessment requirements with respect to the ULAA, including providing additional evidence of comparability. In particular, through the expansion of the ULAA pilot to 12 LEAs (rather than the two that were previously anticipated), Utah should be able to provide evidence that the matches between the achievement levels on the ULAA and the achievement levels on the CRTs are higher than those established by the recently conducted analysis using the equipercntile method (*i.e.*, higher than the 57 to 72 percent range). The enclosed document provides a detailed list of the additional evidence Utah must provide to establish that the ULAA meets all ESEA assessment requirements. If Utah is not able to provide this evidence prior to next year's test administration, the pilot districts will be required to double test their students (*i.e.*, on both the ULAA and the CRTs) in the 2011–2012 school year.

Again, I appreciate the steps Utah is taking to improve its standards, assessments, and accountability system. We are committed to helping you in this effort and remain available to provide technical assistance. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact David J. Harmon of my staff at david.harmon@ed.gov.

Sincerely,



Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, Ph.D.

Enclosure

cc: Judy Park  
John Jesse

# **SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE THAT UTAH MUST SUBMIT TO MEET ESEA REQUIREMENTS FOR UTAH'S STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM**

## **UTAH LOCAL ADAPTIVE ASSESSMENTS**

### **2.0 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS**

1. Evidence that the ULAA and CRT cut scores are comparable.

### **3.0 FULL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM**

1. Evidence tables showing that the item pool adequately represents the Utah content standards and at appropriate levels of complexity as well as the State's plans to address deficiencies.-

### **4.0 TECHNICAL QUALITY**

1. Validity argument for the ULAA that is supported by content, process, criterion-related and consequential evidence. Each of these evidence sources have been represented by separate requests to the State.
2. Report of its ULAA generalizability study once they are available.
3. Report of its accommodations policy review when it is completed.
4. Evidence describing how Utah's item selection algorithm ensures appropriate content representation and documents that there are sufficient items in each subdomain to implement adaptive assessment in each content-grade combination.
5. Report of its study of the relationships among IEPs, instructional practices, and assessment accommodations for Utah students on the ULAA.

### **5.0 ALIGNMENT**

1. Evidence tables showing that the item pool adequately represents the Utah content standards and at appropriate levels of complexity as well as the State's plans to address deficiencies. See Section 3 (Full Assessment System).
2. Validity argument for the ULAA that is supported by content, process, criterion-related and consequential evidence. Each of these evidence sources have been represented by separate requests to the State. See Section 4 (Technical Quality).
3. Evidence describing how Utah's item selection algorithm ensures appropriate content representation and documents that there are sufficient items in each

subdomain to implement adaptive assessment in each content-grade combination.  
See Section 4 (Technical Quality).