



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

June 30, 2017

The Honorable John White
State Superintendent of Education
Louisiana Department of Education
PO Box 94064
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Superintendent White:

Thank you for submitting Louisiana's consolidated State plan to implement requirements of covered programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and of the amended McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act).

I am writing to provide initial feedback based on the U.S. Department of Education's (the Department's) review of your consolidated State plan. As you know, the Department also conducted, as required by the statute, a peer review of the portions of your State plan related to ESEA Title I, Part A, ESEA Title III, Part A, and the McKinney-Vento Act using the Department's *State Plan Peer Review Criteria* released on March 28, 2017. Peer reviewers examined these sections of the consolidated State plan in their totality, while respecting State and local judgments. The goal of the peer review was to support State- and local-led innovation by providing objective feedback on the technical, educational, and overall quality of a State plan and to advise the Department on the ultimate approval of the plan. I am enclosing a copy of the peer review notes for your consideration.

Based on the Department's review of all programs submitted under Louisiana's consolidated State plan, including those programs subject to peer review, the Department is requesting clarifying or additional information to ensure the State's plan has met all statutory and regulatory requirements, as detailed in the enclosed table. Each State has flexibility in how it meets the statutory and regulatory requirements. Please note that the Department's feedback may differ from the peer review notes. I encourage you to read the full peer notes for additional suggestions and recommendations for improving your consolidated State plan.

ESEA section 8451 requires the Department to issue a written determination within 120 days of a State's submission of its consolidated State plan. Given this statutory requirement, I ask that you revise Louisiana's consolidated State plan and resubmit it through OMB Max within 15 days of the date of this letter. If you need more time than this to resubmit your consolidated State plan, please contact your Office of State Support Program Officer, who will work with you in establishing a new submission date. Please recognize that if we accommodate your request for

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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.

additional time, we may be unable to issue a written determination on your plan within the 120-day review period.

Department staff will contact you to support Louisiana in addressing the items enclosed with this letter. If you have any immediate questions or need additional information, I encourage you to contact your Program Officer for the specific Department program.

Please note that the Department only reviewed information provided in Louisiana's consolidated State plan that was responsive to the Revised Template for the Consolidated State Plan that was issued on March 13, 2017. Each State is responsible for administering all programs included in its consolidated State plan consistent with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. Additionally, the Department can only review and approve complete information. If Louisiana indicated that any aspect of its plan may change or is still under development, Louisiana may include updated or additional information in its resubmission. Louisiana may also propose an amendment to its approved plan when additional data or information are available consistent with ESEA section 1111(a)(6)(B). The Department cannot approve incomplete details within the State plan until the State provides sufficient information.

Thank you for the important work that you and your staff are doing to support the transition to the ESSA. The Department looks forward to working with you to ensure that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jason Botel
Acting Assistant Secretary

Enclosures

cc: Governor
State Title I Director
State Title II Director
State Title III Director
State Title IV Director
State Title V Director
State 21st Century Community Learning Center Director
State Director for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program

Items That Require Additional Information or Revision in Louisiana’s Consolidated State Plan

Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)	
<p>A.2.iii: Eighth Grade Math Exception: Strategies</p>	<p>ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C) and 34 CFR § 200.5(b) permits a State only to exempt an eighth-grade student who takes the high school mathematics course associated with the end-of-course assessment the State administers to high school students for Federal accountability under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I)(bb) from the mathematics assessment typically administered in eighth grade under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I)(aa). In its State plan, it is not clear that the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) would limit the exemption to only eighth graders. Moreover, LDE indicates that students in middle school could take geometry or Algebra I.</p>
<p>A.4.iv.a: Academic Achievement Indicator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In its State Plan, LDE includes, within the Academic Achievement indicator, student achievement on reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies assessments. For the Academic Achievement indicator required under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B)(i)(I), a State may only include measures of proficiency on the annual assessments required under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) (<i>i.e.</i>, reading/language arts and mathematics); a State may include performance on assessments other than those required under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) (<i>e.g.</i>, science, social studies) in the indicator for public elementary and secondary schools that are not high schools as required under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B)(ii) (<i>i.e.</i>, the Other Academic indicator) for elementary and secondary schools that are not high schools or in the School Quality or Student Success indicator for any schools, including high schools.
<p>A.4.iv.b: Other Academic Indicator for Elementary and Secondary Schools that are Not High Schools</p>	<p>In its State plan, LDE’s indicator for elementary and secondary schools that are not high schools (<i>i.e.</i>, the Other Academic indicator) measures student growth on the reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in grades 3-10. However, the indicator required under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B)(ii) must be limited to elementary and secondary schools that are not high schools. A State may include a measure of student growth for high schools either within the Academic Achievement indicator, consistent with ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B)(i)(II), or as a School Quality or Student Success indicator.</p>
<p>A.4.iv.d: Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency Indicator</p>	<p>The ESEA requires a State to establish and describe in its State plan a Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator that is the same indicator across all LEAs in the State, is based on the State’s definition of English language proficiency, is measured by the State’s English language proficiency assessment, and includes the State-determined timeline for students to achieve English language proficiency. In its State plan, LDE includes its Progress in</p>

	<p>Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator within its Assessment Index. As a result, it is unclear whether LDE meets the statutory requirements for the Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator.</p>
<p>A.4.iv.e: School Quality or Student Success Indicator(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In its State plan, LDE identifies a School Quality or Student Success indicator for middle and high school that meets the timeline requirement that each State identify schools using an accountability system that includes each of the required indicators by the beginning of the 2018–2019 school year. However, LDE’s State plan does not include a School Quality or Student Success indicator for the elementary school grade band that meets the statutory requirements (see bullet below) and will be implemented on the required timeline. The ESEA requires the State to establish a system of meaningful differentiation on an annual basis that includes all indicators, including the School Quality or Student Success indicator, to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement by the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, consistent with the Secretary’s April 2017 Dear Colleague letter.¹ • The ESEA requires a State’s accountability system to annually measure, for all students and separately for each subgroup of students, one or more indicators of School Quality or Student Success that allow for meaningful differentiation in school performance, and are valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide. Because, in its State plan, LDE does not provide detail regarding the Interests and Opportunity indicator for the elementary grade band, including how the indicator is calculated, it is unclear whether LDE meets the statutory requirements for a School Quality or Student Success indicator for the elementary grade band.
<p>A.4.v.b: Weighting of Indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESEA requires that the Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator receive substantial weight individually. In its State Plan, LDE describes its Progress in Achieving English language proficiency calculation for the Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator, which is then factored into its Assessment Index. However, the Assessment Index is composed of other measures. As a result, the weighting of the Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator, including whether such weighting meets the statutory requirement, is unclear. • The ESEA requires that the four academic indicators (Academic Achievement, Other Academic, Graduation Rate, and Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency) receive, in the aggregate, much greater weight than the School Quality or Student Success

¹ Available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/dcltr410207.pdf>

	<p>indicators, in the aggregate. In its State Plan, LDE provides a graphic with the weights of each measure within its system of annual meaningful differentiation for each grade band. However, for the high school grade band, it is unclear if the four academic indicators receive much greater weight, in the aggregate, than the School Quality or Student Success indicators, in the aggregate.</p>
A.4.v.c: If Applicable, Different Methodology for Annual Meaningful Differentiation	<p>The ESEA requires a State to include <u>all</u> public schools in its system of annual meaningful differentiation and to describe that system in its State plan. LDE states that schools with fewer than 40 units do not receive a school performance score or letter grade. Because LDE does not describe the different methodology it will use for schools with fewer than 40 units or how the methodology will be used to identify such schools for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement, it is unclear whether LDE meets the statutory requirements.</p>
A.4.viii.a: Exit Criteria for Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools	<p>The ESEA requires a State to establish statewide exit criteria for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement and to describe such exit criteria in its State plan, including the number of years over which schools are expected to meet such criteria. In its State plan, LDE describes its statewide exit criteria for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, but does not include the number of years over which schools are expected to meet such criteria.</p>
A.4.viii.b: Exit Criteria for Schools Receiving Additional Targeted Support	<p>The ESEA requires a State to establish statewide exit criteria for schools that receive additional targeted support and to describe such exit criteria in its State plan, including the number of years of which schools are expected to meet such criteria. In its State plan, LDE describes its statewide exit criteria for schools that receive additional targeted support, but does not include the number of years over which these schools are expected to meet such exit criteria.</p>
A.4.viii.c: More Rigorous Interventions	<p>The ESEA requires a State to describe the more rigorous actions it will require for all schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to meet the State’s exit criteria within a State-determined number of years. In its State plan, LDE describes the more rigorous actions it will require certain schools to take. However, it is unclear if the more rigorous actions will be required for all schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to meet the State’s exit criteria within a State-determined number of years or if the more rigorous interventions are required only for schools that receive an “F” rating for four consecutive years. As a result, it is unclear whether LDE meets the statutory requirement.</p>
A.6: School Conditions	<p>In its State plan, LDE describes how it will support LEAs receiving assistance under Title I, Part A to improve school conditions through reviews of data related to student behavior and discipline (e.g., out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, other behavior and discipline needs). The ESEA</p>

	<p>requires a State to describe how it will support LEAs in reducing the incidences of bullying and harassment and this is not addressed in LDE’s plan.</p>
<p>Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children</p>	
<p>B.1: Supporting the Needs of Migratory Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESEA requires that LDE’s description of the planning of its program must also include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How it will address the identified unique educational needs of migratory children through the full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, State, and Federal educational programs. ○ How it is joint planning among local, State, and Federal education programs, including language instruction educational programs under Part A of Title III and the integration of services available under Title I, Part C with services provided by those other programs. ○ How it will address the unique needs of preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school. • The ESEA requires that LDE’s description of the implementation of its program must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How it will implement the full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, State, and Federal programs and the integration of services available under Title I, Part C with services provided by those other programs. ○ How it will implement joint planning among local, State, and Federal education programs, including language instruction educational programs under Part A of Title III. ○ How it will address the unique needs of preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school. • The ESEA requires that LDE’s description of the evaluation of its program must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How it will evaluate the full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, State, and Federal education programs and the integration of those services with services provided by those other programs. ○ How it will evaluate the joint planning among local, State, and Federal programs including language instruction educational programs under Part A of Title III. ○ How it will address the unique needs of preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school.

<p>B.2. Promote Coordination of Services</p>	<p>The ESEA requires that a State specifically describe how it will use Title I, Part C funds to promote interstate and intrastate coordination of services for migratory children when children move from one school to another whether such move occurs during the regular school year and this is not addressed in the State plan. In describing the process, the ESEA requires a State to include how it will provide for educational continuity through the transfer of pertinent school records, including information on health.</p>
<p>Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk</p>	
<p>C.1: Transitions Between Correctional Facilities and Local Programs</p>	<p>LDE’s State plan indicates that a working group will provide input and recommendations by August 1, 2017, regarding the transition of students both to and from the State Office of Juvenile Justice schools. The ESEA requires a State to include a plan for assisting in the transition of children and youth between locally operated programs and correctional facilities.</p>
<p>C.2: Program Objectives and Outcomes</p>	<p>In its State plan, LDE indicates that a working group will provide input and recommendations to define effective alternative education and accountability measures for correctional facilities and locally operated programs. The State plan does not describe the program objectives and outcomes the LDE will use to assess the effectiveness of the Title I, Part D program in improving the academic, career, and technical skills of children in the program. The ESEA requires a State to include objectives and outcomes established by the State that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the Title I, Part D program in improving the academic, career, and technical skills of children in the program.</p>
<p>Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction</p>	
<p>D.3: System of Certification and Licensing</p>	<p>In its State plan, LDE describes in detail its teacher preparation program, “Believe and Prepare,” and the competencies for initial certification that all teachers must know and be able to do in order to be eligible for certification. However, in addition to teachers, the ESEA requires a State to also describe its certification and licensing system for principals or school leaders.</p>
<p>D.4: Improving Skills of Educators</p>	<p>In its State plan, LDE describes how it supports teachers in identifying and providing instruction for students generally, including English learners, struggling readers, and students with disabilities. However, LDE does not address all of the required subgroups for this requirement. The ESEA requires a State to describe how it will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in order to enable them to identify students with specific learning needs and provide instruction based on the needs for such students, specifically for students who are gifted and talented.</p>

<p>D.5: Data and Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In its State plan, LDE describes its consultation efforts in the development of the State plan generally. However, the ESEA requires a State to describe how it will use data and ongoing consultation, as described in ESEA section 2101(d)(3), to continually update and improve the activities supported under Title II, Part A. • The ESEA also requires a State to describe how it will use ongoing consultation with all required stakeholders consistent with ESEA section 2101(d)(3), which includes teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals (including organizations representing such individuals), specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders (in a State that has charter schools), parents, community partners, and other organizations or partners with relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities designed to meet the purpose of Title II.
<p>Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants</p>	
<p>F.1: Use of Funds</p>	<p>The State plan indicates that LDE’s decision to use Title IV, Part A funds will remain undetermined until the level of Title IV funding is clear. In addition, while LDE addresses instances in which there are sufficient funds to provide all LEAs with at least \$10,000 as long as LEAs in the higher range are reduced proportionately, it does not address what happens when there are insufficient funds to provide every LEA with at least \$10,000 (<i>i.e.</i>, ratable reduction). The ESEA requires a State to describe how it will use funds received under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 for State-level activities, and to confirm that it will (1) use funds received under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 for State-level activities and (2) make allocations to LEAs when there are insufficient funds to provide every LEA with at least \$10,000.</p>
<p>F.2: Awarding Subgrants</p>	<p>Note: The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Pub. L. 115-31) provides States with a new option of awarding the Title IV, Part A subgrants to LEAs competitively. Please consider whether LDE wishes to revise this response in light of this new flexibility.</p>
<p>Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program</p>	
<p>H.1: Outcomes and Objectives</p>	<p>The ESEA requires a State to provide information on program objectives and outcomes for activities under Title V, Part B, Subpart 2, including how the SEA will use funds to help all students meet the challenging State academic standards. While LDE provided a description about its program objectives and outcomes under the ESEA generally, LDE failed to identify its objectives and outcomes for activities under the Rural and Low Income Schools (RLIS) program (<i>e.g.</i>, which of the objectives and outcomes under the ESEA programs in 5222(a) are the objectives and outcomes for RLIS; or objectives and outcomes tailored specifically to the State’s plans for RLIS). The ESEA requires a State to include a description of how it will use RLIS</p>

	funds to help all students meet the challenging State academic standards.
H.2: Technical Assistance	The ESEA requires a State to describe how it will provide technical assistance specifically to LEAs eligible for funds under RLIS to help such agencies implement the activities described in ESEA section 5222. While LDE provided a description about how it will provide technical assistance to LEAs generally, this description did not specifically address technical assistance for RLIS-eligible LEAs. In particular, the ESEA requires a State to include information about how the SEA will provide technical assistance to RLIS-eligible LEAs (<i>i.e.</i> , the methods and strategies). Additionally, the ESEA requires that the description specifically address how the SEA’s technical assistance will assist RLIS-eligible LEAs’ implementation of RLIS activities.
Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B	
I.4 iii: Access to Services	While LDE’s State plan indicates there are sources of funding for before-and-after school, extended day, and summer programs for homeless children and youth, it does not describe procedures that ensure homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs, if such programs are available at the State and local levels. The McKinney-Vento Act requires the State to describe procedures that ensure that homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, and charter school programs, if such programs are available at the State and local levels.
I.6: Policies to Remove Barriers	LDE’s State plan demonstrates that the SEA and LEAs have developed, policies, which it must review and revise, to remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youth, and the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in schools in the State. However, the State plan does not address removing barriers to the enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. The McKinney-Vento Act requires the State to demonstrate how the SEA and LEAs in the State have developed, and will review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in the State due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.