



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

DEC 22 2014

The Honorable Thomas Bice
Superintendent of Education
Alabama Department of Education
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36104

Dear Superintendent Bice:

Thank you for submitting Alabama's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as well as the corresponding changes to Principle 3 of your ESEA flexibility request, for peer review. On October 14 and 15, 2014, two expert peers reviewed Alabama's guidelines and the corresponding changes to Principle 3 of Alabama's request. Staff from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) also reviewed Alabama's submission.

During that review, the expert peers provided comments in the form of Peer Panel Notes to inform my decision regarding Alabama's guidelines. The Peer Panel Notes, a copy of which is enclosed with this letter, identify strengths of Alabama's Principle 3 submission and revisions that may be needed to meet Principle 3; they also provide technical assistance suggestions.

Based on the review of Alabama's guidelines and taking into account the feedback from the expert peers, I have determined that Alabama has not yet adopted guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that meet all requirements of ESEA flexibility, nor does it have a process for ensuring that each district in Alabama develops, adopts, pilots, and implements teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with those guidelines as required by ESEA flexibility.

The enclosed list provides details regarding concerns raised in the review of Alabama's Principle 3 submission that must be addressed before I can approve Alabama's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. In addition, I encourage Alabama to consider all of the peers' comments and technical assistance suggestions in making revisions. If Alabama chooses to renew its ESEA flexibility request, Alabama must submit to ED through the renewal process an amended request incorporating its final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with all requirements for these systems under Principle 3 of ESEA flexibility and consistent with the renewal requirements pertaining to Principle 3 described in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Guidance for Renewal Process* (Nov. 13, 2014). Renewal request submissions are due no later than March 31, 2015.

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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.

In addition to modifying its guidelines to address the issues raised during peer review, Alabama may wish to make other changes as a result of its ongoing development and piloting of its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. If Alabama wishes to make any additional changes through the renewal process, it should ensure that those changes are consistent with Principle 3 of ESEA flexibility.

ED remains committed to working with Alabama on your request for ESEA flexibility. ED staff will reach out to Alabama to set up a call soon to provide clarification of the concerns on the enclosed list and technical assistance that may be useful as you revise and refine your Principal 3 submission in anticipation of renewal. I also strongly encourage Alabama to schedule regular check-ins with Meredith Farace, Group Leader, Office of State Support, about Alabama's progress in addressing the concerns raised in the enclosed list.

If you have any questions regarding the renewal process or anything else related to Alabama's implementation of ESEA flexibility, please contact Meredith Farace at: meredith.farace@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink is partially visible above a solid black rectangular redaction box.

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosures

cc: Melinda Maddox

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING ALABAMA'S PRINCIPLE 3 SUBMISSION

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

- Please address concerns regarding the guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems:
 - Provide additional information of how the State will ensure that teachers and principals will continue to be involved in the design of the evaluation system in an ongoing manner. *See 3.A.i, Option B.iii.*
 - Provide additional information about how the evaluation systems will be used for continual improvement of instruction, particularly for teachers of English Learners and students with disabilities, and how they will guide professional development for teachers and principals based on evaluation results. *See 3.A.ii.a.*
 - Provide additional information about how Alabama will ensure that all teachers and principals are evaluated on a regular basis and often enough to lead to improved instruction. *See 3.A.ii.c(iii); 3.A.ii.d*
 - Provide additional information about how Alabama's guidelines promote systems that will provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development. *See 3.A.ii.e.*
 - Provide additional information about how evaluation results and feedback from the evaluation process will inform personnel decisions. *See 3.A.ii.f.*

- Please address concerns regarding the implementation of teacher and principal evaluation and support systems:
 - Provide additional information about how Alabama will ensure that LEAs create and implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the principles of ESEA flexibility. *See 3.B.*
 - Provide additional information about how Alabama will ensure comparability among LEAs, and ensure rigor, and reliability and validity of all measures, including observations and student learning measures. *See 3.A.ii.c(i)*
 - Provide additional information on why Alabama has requested delaying full implementation of its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems until after the 2015-2016 school year.