



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUN 18 2014

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

Dear Superintendent Huppenthal:

I am writing in response to the May 30, 2014 announcement that Arizona is withdrawing from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) consortium. To meet the requirements of ESEA flexibility, a State educational agency (SEA) must develop annual, Statewide, high-quality assessments, and corresponding academic achievement standards, in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. These assessments must be fully implemented no later than the 2014–2015 school year. Among other characteristics, a high-quality assessment must be valid, reliable, and fair for its intended purposes, be aligned with a State's college- and career-ready content standards, and provide an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course. In its approved ESEA flexibility request, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) met this requirement through its participation in PARCC. Because ADE is no longer participating in PARCC, it must amend its ESEA flexibility request to demonstrate how it will meet the requirement to administer high-quality assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics by the 2014–2015 school year. This letter details how ADE must amend its request in order to remain in compliance with ESEA flexibility requirements.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) provided an SEA with three options to address how it would meet the requirement to develop and administer high-quality assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards: (1) participate in one of the two State assessment consortia — *i.e.*, PARCC or SBAC; (2) if the SEA is not in a consortium and has not yet developed high-quality assessments, provide the SEA's plan to develop and administer those assessments no later than 2014–2015; or (3) if the SEA is not in a consortium but has developed high-quality assessments, it must provide evidence that the SEA submitted those assessments to ED for peer review or provide a timeline of when the SEA will submit them for peer review.

As ADE is no longer participating in PARCC, ADE must amend the extension request for ESEA flexibility that it has already submitted to provide a high-quality plan that details the steps ADE will take to administer a high-quality assessment, as defined in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility* (available at: www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility/documents/esea-flexibility-acc.doc), in reading/language arts and mathematics by the 2014–2015 school year. As described in the *ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance* (available at: www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility/documents/review-guidance.doc), such a plan must include, at a minimum, for each key component of the plan, the following elements: (1) key milestones and

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activities, (2) a detailed timeline, (3) the party or parties responsible, (4) evidence, (5) resources, and (6) significant obstacles. Generally, an SEA's plan to develop and administer high-quality assessments should address, at a minimum, the following key components:

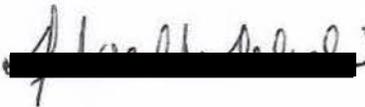
- the process and timeline for development of test blueprints and item specifications;
- the review and selection of items for inclusion in the assessments;
- scaling and scoring procedures to be used;
- test administration procedures, including selection and use of appropriate accommodations;
- data analyses proposed to document validity and reliability of the assessments;
- an independent evaluation of alignment of the assessments with the State's college- and career-ready standards;
- the process and timeline for setting college- and career-ready achievement standards and the method and timeline to validate those achievement standards; and
- meaningful report formats to communicate results to students, parents, and educators.

However, if ADE plans to procure an assessment rather than develop its own, this high-quality plan must still address the issues outlined above.

To amend its approved request for ESEA flexibility, ADE must submit both the amendment request template (available at: www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.html) and a redlined version of its currently approved request reflecting that it has changed its approach to developing and administering high-quality assessments. (The high-quality plan described above may either be inserted into the redlined request or submitted as an attachment to the redlined request.) ADE must submit this amendment request as part of its request to extend flexibility for the 2014–2015 school year. ED will review the request and notify ADE, in writing, of its determination.

ED has already spoken with Karla Philips, your ESEA flexibility lead, to regarding this amendment request. Please refer to the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Amendment Submission Process* (available at: www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/amendment-submission-process.doc), which describes the steps that are necessary as part of requesting an amendment. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Christie Imholt of my staff at: christina.imholt@ed.gov.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

cc: Karla Phillips, Director of Cross Divisional Leadership