



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

August 13, 2012

The Honorable Brenda Cassellius
Commissioner of Education
Minnesota Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113-4266

Dear Commissioner Cassellius:

Congratulations again on being approved for ESEA flexibility. Consistent with the assurance provided in Minnesota's approved request, Minnesota recently submitted for peer review and approval its guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, along with any corresponding changes to Principle 3 of its ESEA flexibility request, to ensure that the guidelines are consistent with Principle 3 of ESEA flexibility.

As you know, the Department conducted the peer review during the week of July 16, 2012. During that review, two expert peers considered Minnesota's submission and provided comments in the form of Peer Panel Notes to inform the Secretary's approval of Minnesota's guidelines. The Peer Panel Notes, a copy of which is enclosed with this letter, identify strengths of Minnesota's Principle 3 submission and revisions that may be needed to meet Principle 3; they also provide technical assistance suggestions. Department staff also reviewed Minnesota's Principle 3 submission.

The enclosed list provides details regarding concerns raised in the review of Minnesota's Principle 3 submission that we believe must be addressed before the Secretary can approve Minnesota's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems and any corresponding changes to Principle 3. We encourage Minnesota to consider all of the peers' comments and technical assistance suggestions in making revisions, but Minnesota should focus primarily on addressing the concerns identified on the enclosed list.

We remain committed to working with Minnesota to implement your request for ESEA flexibility, including the completion of final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. Department staff will reach out to Minnesota to set up a call as early as this week to provide clarification of the concerns on the enclosed list and technical assistance that may be useful as you revise and refine your Principle 3 submission. Please be assured that together we will set Principle 3 completion timelines that best meet your needs.

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Thank you for your continuing work to implement fully and effectively Minnesota's ESEA flexibility request. If you have any additional questions or want to request technical assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Clayton Hollingshead, at 202-260-1539.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Deborah S. Delisle.

Deborah S. Delisle

Enclosure

cc: Sam Kramer, Federal Education Policy Specialist

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING MINNESOTA'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 detail about how teacher and principal evaluation and support systems will be used for continual improvement of instruction, including how all teachers will receive continuous feedback to improve instruction and guide professional development. *See 3.A.ii.a.*
 - Describe how Minnesota will ensure that all measures that are included in determining teacher and principal performance levels are valid measures, including the selection of goal areas for principals. *See 3.A.ii.c(i).*
 - Provide additional information on Minnesota's approach to measuring student growth in tested grades and subjects, including which assessments will be used, how they will be used, and specifically which model of student growth will be implemented. *See 3.A.ii.c(ii).*
 - Provide additional information on Minnesota's approach to measuring student growth in non-tested grades and subjects, including information on the specific measures that will be used. *See 3.A.ii.c(iii).*
 - Address the concern that continuing contract teachers will only receive a formal professional review once every three years. *See 3.A.ii.d.*
 - Provide further detail on how evaluation results will be used to guide professional development for teachers and principals, including by describing a mechanism for improving the effectiveness of all teachers, not just those that are rated as underperforming. *See 3.A.ii.e.*
 - Provide details on how the peer review process will provide timely and useful feedback to guide the professional development of all teachers. *See 3.A.ii.e.*
 - Provide additional information on how teacher and principal evaluation and support systems will be used to inform personnel decisions, including clarifying what constitutes not making adequate progress in the teacher improvement process. *See 3.A.ii.f.*