



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Rick Scott
Executive Office of the Governor
PL05, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

I am writing in response to the amendment request submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) on September 26, 2011, and supplemental information submitted on December 2, 2011, by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). PARCC proposed an amendment modifying its assessment design and clarifying its approach to high school mathematics assessment.

As you know, the Department has the authority to approve an amendment to your plan and budget provided that such a change does not alter the scope or objectives of the approved grant project. On February 28, 2011, the Department sent you a letter indicating the review process for any amendment to PARCC's approved plan. In determining whether to approve this request, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the February 28 letter.

Through this amendment request, PARCC proposes to refine the description of the components in its assessment system. This proposal states that PARCC will develop a summative assessment comprised of a computer-based, end-of-year assessment component and a performance-based assessment component that will be combined for a summative score, similar to two of the components proposed in its initial application. In lieu of also including results from two additional "through-course" assessment components administered early in the school year in the summative score, as outlined in the approved application, this amendment proposes developing diagnostic and interim components. The diagnostic and interim components would be optional for states and districts and would not count toward summative scores. The assessment of speaking and listening would still be required, but, unlike in the initial application, it would not be connected to the English language arts performance task component. Additionally, through this amendment, the consortium clarified that it will build high school mathematics assessments for both course-based (Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II) and integrated (Math I, Math II, Math III) sequences for students in high school. States will have the option of choosing either sequence, but all three assessments in a sequence will be required of member states.

PARCC proposed this amendment in order to address three concerns from its member states. Those states raised questions about the cost of assessment in a strained fiscal environment; the potential that the required three summative through-course assessments could unintentionally dictate the scope and sequence of the curriculum and limit local curricular flexibility; and the potential that multiple required

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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.

summative through-course assessments would disrupt the instructional program too frequently. The consortium described its proposal as responsive to these concerns while also faithful to the intent of its initial application. PARCC indicated that this amendment will not result in a change to its overall budget and outcomes, nor will it substantially change the scope of work.

This request is *conditionally approved*. To receive full approval, the consortium will provide by January 6, 2012:

1. The evidence (such as results of research/simulations) used to inform decisions about the summative assessment design; and
2. A detailed work plan for finalizing the PARCC summative assessment design. The plan should include the specific tasks, responsible person(s), and the full process and detailed timeline (to the one month level), identifying decision-making authority and project management authority for each decision point/task, and including a date by which the overall determination must be finalized.

If PARCC does not fulfill the conditions specified above, the Department may take appropriate enforcement action.

Regarding the consortium's decision to create two possible mathematics sequences for high school students, the Department notes that the consortium must develop such assessments consistent with the eligibility requirements of the program. Included in those eligibility requirements and in the memoranda of understanding states signed to join the consortium is the requirement that PARCC states adopt common achievement standards no later than the 2014-2015 school year. As defined in the NIA, those achievement standards must indicate that students are college- and career-ready or on track to being college- and career-ready.

I am confident that PARCC will continue its bold efforts to create the next generation of assessment systems that will more accurately measure what students know and are able to do. As noted in our communication of February 28, 2011, this letter will be posted on the Department's website as a public record of the amendment proposal and consideration. If you need any assistance or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jessica McKinney at (202) 401-1960 or Jessica.McKinney@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

Anthony W. Miller
Acting Assistant Deputy Secretary
Implementation and Support Unit

cc: Gerard Robinson, Florida Department of Education
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