



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

October 1, 2014

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 316
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Gray:

I am writing in response to District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)'s request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. Between July 15 and September 22, 2014, OSSE submitted documentation to and held conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to support amendment requests to its approved Race to the Top plan. As you are aware, the Department has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal. In March 2013, the Department issued "Amendment Requests with No-Cost Extension Guidance and Principles" indicating the process by which amendments containing requests to provide additional time for a grantee to accomplish the reform goals and deliverables it committed to in its Race to the Top application and approved Scope of Work would be reviewed. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department has applied the conditions and elements specific to no-cost extensions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top program *Principles* included in the "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document issued to Governors of grantee States in October 2011.

I approve the following amendment, with conditions described below.

For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, OSSE, for the 2014-2015 school year (SY) only, revises its requirement that participating local educational agencies (LEAs) include student growth as 50 percent of teacher evaluations. As a result of the implementation of a new District-wide assessment in SY 2014-

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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.

2015, OSSE will now offer participating LEAs that have applied for and received no-cost extensions the opportunity to apply for a one-year waiver to change the portion of teacher evaluation rating that is derived from student performance. If granted a waiver, participating LEAs would be able to adjust the portion of a teacher's evaluation rating in SY 2014-2015 that is derived from the common District-wide value-added measure (VAM) to zero, but would be required to use other student performance measures (growth or proficiency) for a minimum of 15 percent. Additionally, if granted a waiver, all teachers in participating LEAs will continue to receive a summative evaluation rating and this rating will continue to be applied to a variety of human capital decisions such as retention, promotion, compensation, and support.

Conditions: As a condition of approval for this project, OSSE must:

1. Ensure that it remains on track to implement teacher and principal evaluations as described above as well as Principle 3 of its flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA Flexibility), including the following assurances:
 - a. In addition to continuing to implement their educator evaluation systems, OSSE or its LEAs will calculate student growth data based on State assessments during the transition year for all teachers of tested grades and subjects, in order to ensure and improve OSSE and/or LEA capacity to make these calculations in an accurate manner going forward; and
 - b. Each teacher of a tested grade and subject and all principals will receive their student growth data based on State assessments for SY 2014-2015 in order to provide educators with all available information and build a deeper understanding of the information and its uses.
2. Ensure that participating LEAs that are granted a one-year waiver return to implementing teacher evaluations that include the common District-wide VAM at a minimum of 30 percent in SY 2015-2016.

This decision is consistent with Secretary Duncan's August 2014 announcement that State educational agencies (SEAs) that are approved for ESEA flexibility are eligible for additional flexibility to delay inclusion of student growth on State assessments in teacher and principal evaluation and support systems during the year of transition to new assessments. Please note that we have shared this information with the Office of School Turnaround because it may impact OSSE's implementation of its School Improvement Grant (SIG). We encourage you to contact Michael Wells at 202-453-6689 or Michael.Wells@ed.gov regarding OSSE's SIG requirements.

As described in the May 1, 2014, amendment approval letter, the Department indicated that it generally approves the OSSE's process to review LEA subgrant requests to obligate and liquidate funds after September 23, 2014.

It is our understanding that this amendment and no-cost extension will not result in a change in OSSE's performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that we expect grantees with no-cost extensions to liquidate all funds by September 1, 2015, given that by law all Race to the Top funds revert to the U.S. Department of Treasury as of October 1, 2015. OSSE must request and receive approval to move forward with no-cost extensions for any additional projects. This letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendment.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact OSSE's Race to the Top Program Officer, Ariel Jacobs, at 202-453-7025 or ariel.jacobs@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

Patrick Rooney
Acting Director, Policy and Program Implementation
Implementation and Support Unit

cc: Jesus Aguirre, State Superintendent of Education
Abigail Smith, Deputy Mayor for Education
Sharon Gaskins, Deputy Assistant Superintendent for Accountability,
Performance and Support