



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

November 5, 2012

The Honorable Rick Scott
Office of the Governor
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

I am writing in response to Florida's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. On September 23, 2011, the State submitted an amendment request concerning the funding of an external assessment evaluator to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). The Department did not approve the amendment request at that time.¹ In August 2012, the State requested that the Department reconsider the amendment. Final revisions to the amendment were submitted on October 1, 2012. In addition to this amendment, on August 15, 2012 and September 27, 2012, the State submitted an amendment request and revisions to the Department regarding its student achievement targets. As you are aware, the Department has the authority to approve amendments to your plan and budget, provided that such a change does not alter the scope or objectives of the approved proposal. On October 4, 2011, the Department sent a letter and revised "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document to Governors of grantee States indicating the process by which amendments would be reviewed and approved or denied. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top program *Principles*, which are also included in that document.

I approve the amendments outlined below:

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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.

¹ This amendment was formally submitted and considered in September 2011, but the Department postponed approval until the interim assessment item bank contract had been executed and the State determined that there was sufficient funding to shift to this activity.

- In the project area of (B)(3) “Supporting the Transition to High-Quality Assessments,” revise the State’s approach to this project as follows:
 - Expand the State’s plan for “Supporting the Transition to High-Quality Assessments” by funding an external assessment evaluator to review the process for developing assessment items for the interim assessment item bank and hard-to-measure subject area assessments by shifting \$2 million from other activities in the project budget. As part of this evaluation, it is the Department’s understanding that the State’s external evaluator will review a sample of the items as well as the process for developing the items and assessments to ensure that items and assessments are accurate, valid, reliable, and meet high standards for use by local educational agencies (LEAs) to measure student progress and instructional effectiveness. In order to fund this project, Florida will shift funding from two existing projects.
 - The State will redirect \$1 million from the interim assessment item bank and test platform budget. The State executed a contract for the interim assessment item bank and test platform that came in \$16,323,252 under the projected budget. Five hundred thousand dollars in unobligated funds will be shifted from each of the Year 3 and Year 4 interim assessment item bank budgets to Year 3 and Year 4 of the external evaluator budget. In the near future, the State will request an amendment to shift the remaining unobligated funds in the interim assessment and item bank budget to other Race to the Top projects.
 - The State will shift \$1 million from the hard-to-measure subject area budget. The State originally proposed to award \$21 million for this activity but ultimately awarded a total of \$20 million to support development of assessments in hard-to-measure content areas through LEA partnerships. As part of this amendment, the State is shifting \$3,902,239 budgeted in the hard-to-measure subject area project from Year 2 to Year 3. Five hundred thousand dollars will be shifted from each of the Year 3 and 4 budgets in the hard-to-measure subject area project to Year 3 and 4 of the external evaluator project.
- In subcriteria (A)(2) “State Success Factors”, establish student achievement goals for Florida’s statewide assessments. In its Race to the Top application, Florida did not set goals related to its State assessments. Florida indicated at the time of its application that it was transitioning to a new statewide assessment—the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test 2.0 (FCAT 2.0). The State did not include assessment data because it felt that accurate comparisons between the former FCAT assessment and new FCAT 2.0 assessment were not possible across years. Florida stated that it would establish baseline data for the assessment and set goals once additional data was available. Florida has determined that it now has the data available to establish these goals. In doing so, Florida chose to align its Race to the Top State assessment goals with the targets in its Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility request. In this request, the State chose (AMO) option A: Set AMOs in annual equal increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the “all students” group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years. Florida’s student achievement goals can be found in the attached chart.

It is our understanding that these amendments will not substantially change the State’s scope of work. Please note that 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 Florida’s Race to the Top Program Officer, Lauren Scott, at 202-205-0940 or Lauren.Scott@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

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Ann Whalen
Director, Policy and Program Implementation
Implementation and Support Unit

cc: Pam Stewart, Interim Commissioner of Education
Linda Champion, Deputy Commissioner, Finance and Operations
Holly Edenfield, Race to the Top Coordinator

Table 1: Reading Student Achievement Goals: Grades 3,4,5

	Baseline (Retrofitted)ⁱ 2011	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target
ALL STUDENTS	59%	62%	66%	69%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	56%	60%	63%	67%
ASIAN	77%	79%	81%	83%
BLACK OR AFRICAN- AMERICAN	40%	45%	50%	55%
HISPANIC	55%	59%	63%	66%
WHITE	71%	73%	76%	78%
ELL/Former ELL	38%	43%	48%	54%
SWD	33%	39%	44%	50%
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	48%	52%	57%	61%

Table 2: Reading Student Achievement Goals: Grades 6,7,8

	Baseline (Retrofitted) 2011	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target
ALL STUDENTS	57%	61%	64%	68%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	55%	59%	63%	66%
ASIAN	76%	78%	80%	82%
BLACK OR AFRICAN- AMERICAN	37%	42%	48%	53%
HISPANIC	54%	58%	62%	66%
WHITE	69%	72%	74%	77%
ELL/Former ELL	27%	33%	39%	45%
SWD	28%	34%	40%	46%
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	46%	51%	55%	60%

Table 3: Reading Student Achievement Goals: Grades 9 and 10

	Baseline (Retrofitted) 2011	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target
ALL STUDENTS	53%	57%	61%	65%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	51%	55%	59%	63%
ASIAN	71%	73%	76%	78%
BLACK OR AFRICAN- AMERICAN	31%	37%	43%	48%
HISPANIC	48%	52%	57%	61%
WHITE	65%	68%	71%	74%
ELL/Former ELL	18%	25%	32%	39%
SWD	25%	31%	38%	44%
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	39%	44%	49%	54%

Table 4: Mathematics Student Achievement Goals: Grades 3,4,5

	Baseline (Retrofitted) 2011	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target
ALL STUDENTS	58%	62%	65%	69%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	55%	59%	63%	66%
ASIAN	81%	83%	84%	86%
BLACK OR AFRICAN- AMERICAN	40%	45%	50%	55%
HISPANIC	55%	59%	63%	66%
WHITE	67%	70%	73%	75%
ELL/Former ELL	43%	48%	53%	57%
SWD	34%	40%	45%	51%
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	47%	51%	56%	60%

Table 5: Mathematics Student Achievement Goals: Grades 6,7,8

	Baseline (Retrofitted) 2011	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target
ALL STUDENTS	56%	60%	63%	67%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	56%	60%	63%	67%
ASIAN	82%	84%	85%	87%
BLACK OR AFRICAN- AMERICAN	37%	42%	48%	53%
HISPANIC	53%	57%	61%	65%
WHITE	67%	70%	73%	75%
ELL/Former ELL	33%	39%	44%	50%
SWD	27%	33%	39%	45%
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	45%	50%	54%	59%

Table 6: Mathematics Student Achievement Goals: Grades 9,10,11,12

	Baseline (Retrofitted) 2011	2012 Target	2013 Target	2014 Target
ALL STUDENTS	43%	48%	53%	57%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	41%	46%	51%	56%
ASIAN	61%	64%	68%	71%
BLACK OR AFRICAN- AMERICAN	31%	37%	43%	48%
HISPANIC	38%	43%	48%	54%
WHITE	52%	56%	60%	64%
ELL/Former ELL	28%	34%	40%	46%
SWD	30%	36%	42%	48%
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	36%	41%	47%	52%

ⁱ On December 19, 2011, the Florida State Board of Education established new Achievement Level standards for FCAT 2.0 Reading and Mathematics and the Algebra 1 End-of-Course (EOC) Assessment. Spring 2012 is the first time results were reported according to the new standards. The spring 2011 FCAT 2.0 Reading and Mathematics and the spring 2011 and winter 2011-12 Algebra 1 EOC Assessment results have been converted to the new score scales for each assessment and

are being provided according to the new standards so that stakeholders and the general public are able to see what the results would have been if the new score scales and Achievement Levels had been approved and implemented at that time. These scores are referred to as the retrofitted scores because of this conversion.