



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

August 1, 2012

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Office of the Governor
State of Georgia
203 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Deal:

Thank you for your July 3, 2012 and July 6, 2012 letters in response to the July 2, 2012 letter from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) that placed application sub-criterion (D)(2), Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, of Georgia's Race to the Top grant on high-risk status. While the Department appreciates Georgia's dedication to developing high-quality evaluation systems for teachers and leaders, we are concerned about the State's ability to implement effectively the systems described in its Scope of Work.

The Department did not place this portion of Georgia's Race to the Top grant on high-risk status as a result of a single amendment request. Rather, as noted in our July 2 letter, it is the Department's concern about the overall strategic planning, evaluation, and project management for that system, as a whole, that led us to place this portion of Georgia's Race to the Top grant on high-risk status. The State has not demonstrated that it is developing and approaching implementation of the teacher and leader evaluation systems in a comprehensive and deliberate manner that includes consideration of dependent deliverables, a structured process for evaluating and incorporating formative feedback, and a communications strategy including all relevant stakeholders.

The State has been provided ample opportunities to demonstrate a comprehensive decision-making process including consideration of dependent deliverables, a structured process for evaluating and incorporating formative feedback, and a communications strategy including all relevant stakeholders. To date, Georgia has not

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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.

provided sufficient evidence that Georgia is designing and implementing its teacher and leader evaluation system with a comprehensive and deliberate approach.

As previously discussed, the Department understands that Georgia's Race to the Top application was written consistent with the State's plans for developing and implementing educator evaluation systems at that time. This is why we maintain a robust amendment process that allows States to make adjustments to their plans as this vital work evolves. To date, the Department has approved multiple amendments to just this section of Georgia's Scope of Work, including conditional approval of the State's April 18, 2012 amendment request to remove the survey component of the teacher and leader evaluation systems as a separate measure and instead use it to as evidence in "Qualitative Measures," within the observation protocol.

I am confident that, with additional attention in this area, Georgia will ultimately implement a stronger, more effective system that meets the needs of Georgia's students, teachers, and leaders. Based on consultation with the State, the Department is extending the deadline by which Georgia must submit its work plan from August 1, 2012 to October 15, 2012. Additionally, we have postponed the Stocktake meeting that was scheduled for July 23, 2012 until Georgia has had the opportunity to move forward and address the conditions for this complicated work. The Department looks forward to the monthly updates, beginning in August 2012, also described in the July 2, 2012 letter.

The Department will continue to support Georgia as it moves forward implementing this work. As stated in our July 2, 2012 letter, the Department will reassess the high-risk designation if Georgia demonstrates substantial progress in implementing the work plan outlined in the conditions. We appreciate the dedication of Georgia's Race to the Top leadership team and recognize their commitment to implementing the best possible evaluation system for Georgia's educators.

Sincerely,

//s//

Ann Whalen
Director, Policy and Program Implementation

cc: Superintendent John Barge
Teresa MacCartney
Kristin Bernhard