



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

February 25, 2013

The Honorable Bobby Jindal
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Jindal:

I am writing in response to Louisiana's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between July 25, 2012 and February 13, 2013 the State submitted amendment requests and clarifying documentation to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). 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 posted on its website a revised "Grant Amendment Submission Process" document indicating the process by which amendment 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 following amendments:

- For the project area of State Success Factors, in the "Trailblazer Initiative" project:
 - Increase the project budget by \$590,707 to allow the State to expand project activities to support all local educational agencies (LEAs). In its Race to the Top application the State explained that it would support participating LEAs in the implementation of their scopes of work through Initiative, it will utilize Network Support Teams¹ to provide resources, technical assistance, and coaching to all LEAs as they transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Compass evaluation its existing Trailblazer Initiative.² Now, in place of the Trailblazer system the Network Support Teams will also provide technical assistance to participating LEAs related to their Race to the Top scopes of work. The additional funds will be reallocated from the "Implementing Enhanced STEM

¹ Five Network Support Teams, each consisting of 10 to 12 LDOE staff members will work with LEAs across the State. LEAs have been grouped into Networks according to their needs and characteristics.

² The Trailblazer Initiative was a partnership between the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and the group of LEAs that committed to implementing the State's education reform plan.

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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.

Standards: CCSS” and “High Performance LEAs Initiative” projects (see below). Project funding will support travel, materials, and resources for Network Support Teams to work with all LEAs and to allow for additional reform resources and tools to be procured based on LEAs’ needs.

- Shift the timeline on which Louisiana will select a vendor to develop tools and resources to support LEA implementation of the CCSS and new evaluation system. In the Race to the Top application, this procurement was scheduled to occur in May 2012; due to delays in beginning project activities, procurement began in September 2012.
- For the project area of Standards and Assessments, in the “Implementing Enhanced STEM Standards: CCSS” project:
 - Adjust the State’s approach to providing resources to support teachers and principals in the transition to the CCSS. Race to the Top funds were originally budgeted to support the development of Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC) and accompanying guides and scope and sequence documents. The State now intends to use project funds to expand and vet content for an online resource repository to provide teachers with resources to guide instruction. The budget for this project is reduced by \$550,622, all of which is reallocated to the “Trailblazer Initiative” project as explained above.
- For the project area of Standards and Assessments, in the “Implementing Enhanced STEM Standards: AP Initiative” project:
 - Increase the project budget by \$688,760 to support the development of online Advanced Placement (AP) course registration system, which will be operational in spring 2013. The State believes that this system will increase access to and enrollment in AP courses, as it will make the registration process more efficient and allow parents and students to complete course registration. The additional funds will be reallocated from the “High Performance LEAs Initiative” project (see below).
 - Alter the timeline by which the State will develop or revise AP courses for the Louisiana Virtual School AP Academy. In its approved application, Louisiana indicated that it would revise or develop three AP courses per year, for a total of 12 courses within the grant period. Due to delays in beginning project activities in Year 1 and the need to revise the State’s plan to align with its grant budget years, the State will now develop or revise eight courses in Year 2 and four courses in Year 3.
- For the project area of Data Systems to Support Instruction, in the “EAGLE: Using Data to Improve Instruction” project:
 - Adjust the State’s approach to expanding the resources available through the State’s online classroom assessment tool, the Enhanced Assessments of Grade Level Expectations (EAGLE) system. Initially the State planned to use Race to the Top funds to support the development of pre- and post-test forms within EAGLE. Now, Louisiana would like to utilize Race to the Top funds to expand EAGLE’s test item bank and to align existing test items with the CCSS. The State believes that expanding the availability of CCSS-aligned test items in EAGLE will better allow teachers to assess student understanding and adjust instructional delivery. The budget for this project will not change as a result.

- Alter the timeline on which the State will carry out activities to enhance EAGLE’s reporting functions. In its application, Louisiana indicated that the work would begin in Year 3 of the Race to the Top grant period. The State now plans to begin this work in Year 2.
- Adjust the timing and increase the frequency of training regarding the use of the EAGLE system. Louisiana originally anticipated that it would provide trainings to districts and schools in November 2012 and July 2013. The State conducted its first training in August 2012 and plans to provide training annually throughout the Race to the Top grant period.
- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, in the “Compass: Louisiana’s Path to STEM Educator Effectiveness” project:
 - Adjust the project timeline to reflect that refinement of measures of student growth for non-tested grades and subjects will now begin in May 2013 instead of summer 2012. The State originally intended to conduct an analysis to support the refinement of measures following the pilot of the evaluation process and rubric in selected districts during school year (SY) 2011-2012. However, given that substantial revisions have been made to the process and rubric as a result of the pilot year, Louisiana intends to conduct its data analysis following SY 2012-2013 when additional data from all districts in the State will be available. This shift does not impact Louisiana’s overall timeline for implementation of its evaluation system, including the inclusion of student growth as 50% of teachers’ and principals’ evaluations beginning in SY 2012-2013.
 - Adjust the project timeline to reflect that the development of training and resources to support district implementation of Compass began in July 2012, instead of March 2012 due to the additional time needed to make adjustments to the evaluation rubric and process piloted in SY 2011-2012.
 - Increase the project budget by \$136,721 to allow for planned training on Compass to be provided to all districts, instead of just Race to the Top participating LEAs. Funds will be reallocated from the “Louisiana Statewide Staffing Initiative” and “High Performance LEAs Initiative” projects (see below).
- For the project area of Great Teachers and Leaders, in the “Louisiana Statewide Staffing Initiative” project:
 - Adjust project activities in order to support LEAs in implementation of Act 1’s³ requirement for LEAs to base decisions about tenure and salaries on effectiveness. In its Race to the Top application, the State explained that project funds would be used to provide training to LEAs on effective recruiting, hiring, and placement strategies. In order to support LEAs’ implementation of Act 1, Louisiana would like to focus the Statewide Staffing Initiative on helping LEAs align current staffing policies, performance management requirements, and salary schedules to the requirements of the legislation. The State plans to contract with a vendor to develop training and materials to support districts in this work. The project budget is reduced by \$115,566, all of which will be reallocated to the “Compass: Louisiana’s Path to STEM Educator Effectiveness” project (see above).

³ For more information about Act 1, please see http://www.louisianaschools.net/topics/act1_talent_statute.html and <http://www.legis.state.la.us/billdata/streamdocument.asp?did=793654>.

- For the project area of Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools, in the “High-Performance LEAs Initiative” project:
 - Reallocate the \$750,000 originally budgeted for the Louisiana Best Practices Fund to support other Race to the Top work. \$688,760 will be shifted to project “Implementing Enhanced STEM Standards: AP Initiative” to support the development of an online AP course registration platform, as described above. The remaining \$61,240 will be reallocated to the “Trailblazer Initiative” (\$40,085) and “Compass: Louisiana’s Path to STEM Educator Effectiveness” (\$21,155) projects.
 - Expand the scope of charter incubation activities to all LEAs in the State. Initially, Louisiana intended to utilize Race to the Top funds to support charter incubation in participating LEAs only. Now the State believes that it is important to provide such an opportunity to communities with low-achieving schools in all LEAs in the State.

- For Race to the Top performance measures and performance measure targets⁴ the following:
 - Given the above described changes to its Race to the Top project, several corresponding performance measures have been revised for (B)(3), (C)(3), and (E)(2). (See Appendix A, item #1)
 - In its Race to the Top Phase 3 application, the State indicated that its goal is to reduce race and class achievement gaps⁵ by 10% per year. However, some targets set in the application did not correctly represent a 10% reduction in the achievement gaps. Several of the Louisiana targets have been updated, as appropriately, to reflect this correction. (See Appendix A, item #2)
 - To align with the *Louisiana Believes* plan some performance measures have been deleted and others revised. (See Appendix A, item #3)

⁴Louisiana has noted that some of its Race to the Top performance measures targets differ from the annual measurable objectives (AMOs) included in its ESEA Flexibility Waiver, especially as it relates to student performance. For example, the ESEA Flexibility Waiver AMOs set 100% proficiency targets for all students in English Language Arts and Mathematics by 2014 while the Race to the Top includes a performance measure for students performing at or above grade level on Math LEAP by 8th that has a target of 70% by 2014-2015. The State believes the Race to the Top performance measures will allow them to track statewide implementation of critical reform strategies supported by Race to the Top, thus is not aligning Race to the Top targets to the 2014 aspiration AMOs set in the ESEA Flexibility Waiver

⁵ Louisiana’s “race gap” means the difference in the percentage of white students and black students who achieve a particular goal. Louisiana’s definition of “class gap” is the difference between the percentage of students not eligible for free or reduced priced lunch and the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch who achieve a particular goal.

It is our understanding that these amendments will not result in changes in your State's other performance measures and outcomes, nor will it substantially change the scope of work. Please note that this letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendments.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Louisiana's Race to the Top Program Officer, Karen Dorsey at (202) 453-6695 or Karen.dorsey@ed.gov

Sincerely,

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

Attachment: As stated.

cc: Superintendent John White
Sheila Guidry

Appendix A

1. Revised performance measures to align with amendments to Race to the Top projects

(B)(3)

Performance Measures <i>Applicants must develop and propose for the Department's approval performance measure(s) for any sub-criterion that did not include performance measures in the Phase 2 application. Please enter the proposed performance measure in the row in this table and provide annual targets in the columns provided.</i>	Actual Data: Baseline SY 2010 - 2011	End of SY 2011- 2012	End of SY 2012- 2013	End of SY 2013- 2014	End of SY 2014- 2015
Students perform at or above grade level on Math LEAP by 8 th grade (Statewide)	60%	62.5%	65%	67%	70%
Percentage of schools offering one or more AP courses (Statewide)	43%	*	45%	47%	50%
Increase the number of students enrolled in AP courses (Statewide)	7,984	*	10,000	11,000	12,000
Increase the number of students taking AP exams (Statewide)	7,668	*	9,500	10,500	11,500
Increase the number of students scoring 3 or better on AP exams (Statewide)	3,297	*	3,800	4,200	4,600
Increase the number of students enrolled in STEM focused AP courses (Statewide)	2,755	*	3,500	4,000	4,500

*End of SY 2011-2012 actual data were received and considered via the Race to the Top's Annual Performance Reporting system prior to this amendment being finalized, therefore no targets for SY 2011-2012 were set.

1. Revised performance measures to align with amendments to Race to the Top projects (continued)

(C)(3)

Performance Measures <i>Applicants must develop and propose for the Department's approval performance measure(s) for any sub-criterion that did not include performance measures in the Phase 2 application. Please enter the proposed performance measure in the row in this table and provide annual targets in the columns provided.</i>	Actual Data: Baseline SY 2010 - 2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014	End of SY 2014-2015
Total number of test forms for benchmark assessment created by teachers (Statewide)	100,000	105,000	110,250	115,756	121,544

(E)(2)

Performance Measures <i>Applicants must develop and propose for the Department's approval performance measure(s) for any sub-criterion that did not include performance measures in the Phase 2 application. Please enter the proposed performance measure in the row in this table and provide annual targets in the columns provided.</i>	Actual Data: Baseline SY 2010 - 2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014	End of SY 2014-2015
Total number of charter schools Statewide	90	98	107	117	127

2. Corrected performance measures targets

Louisiana Priority Goal	Category	Baseline SY 2010-2011	SY 2011-2012	SY 2012-2013	SY 2013-2014
Students perform at or above grade level in English Language Arts by 8th grade	Race Gap	25%	<i>Prior: 22%</i> <i>Revised: 23%</i>	<i>Prior: 20%</i> <i>Revised: 21%</i>	<i>Prior: 18%</i> <i>Revised: 19%</i>
	Class Gap	25%	<i>Prior: 22%</i> <i>Revised: 23%</i>	<i>Prior: 20%</i> <i>Revised: 21%</i>	<i>Prior: 18%</i> <i>Revised: 19%</i>
Students will graduate from high school on time	Race Gap	15%	14%	<i>Prior: 12%</i> <i>Revised: 13%</i>	<i>Prior: 10%</i> <i>Revised: 12%</i>
Students will enroll in postsecondary education within two years of graduation	Class Gap	13%	<i>Prior: 11%</i> <i>Revised: 12%</i>	<i>Prior: 10%</i> <i>Revised: 11%</i>	<i>Prior: 9%</i> <i>Revised: 10%</i>

NAEP: 8th Grade Math	Baseline SY 2010-2011	SY 2012-2013	SY 2014-2015
Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups, race	29%	<i>Prior: 27%</i> <i>Revised: 26%</i>	<i>Prior: 25%</i> <i>Revised: 23%</i>

NAEP: 4th Grade Math	Baseline SY 2010-2011	SY 2012-2013	SY 2014-2015
Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups, class	30%	27%	<i>Prior: 25%</i> <i>Revised: 24%</i>

2. Corrected performance measures targets (continued)

Increasing Student Achievement of Subgroups on Assessments Required under the ESEA: 8th Grade Math

Subgroup	Baseline SY 2010- 2011	SY 2011-2012	SY 2012-2013	SY 2013-2014	SY 2014-2015
Black or African American	44%	49%	<i>Prior: 53%</i> <i>Revised: 54%</i>	<i>Prior: 58%</i> <i>Revised: 57%</i>	62%
Paid Lunch	79%	80%	82%	<i>Prior: 83%</i> <i>Revised: 84%</i>	84% <i>Revised: 85%</i>

3. Revised performance measures to align with *Louisiana Believes* plan

Remove the following Gifted/Talented Subgroup Targets in the APR for State ELA and Mathematics Assessments⁶:

Performance Measure	Baseline: SY 2010- 2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014	End of SY 2014-2015
Percent of Gifted/Talented student scoring basic or above on 3 rd grade ELA assessment	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Percent of Gifted/Talented student scoring basic or above on 3 rd grade math assessment	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Percent of Gifted/Talented student scoring basic or above on 4 th grade ELA assessment	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Percent of Gifted/Talented student scoring basic or above on 4 th grade math assessment	94%	94%	94%	94%	94%
Percent of Gifted/Talented student scoring basic or above on 8 th grade ELA assessment	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Percent of Gifted/Talented student scoring basic or above on 8 th grade math assessment	91%	91%	92%	92%	92%

⁶ Gifted/Talented subgroup data is not collected or utilized in the State's reporting and accountability systems. The State is unsure of the source of the baseline data (included in the application).

3. Revised performance measures to align with *Louisiana Believes* plan (continued)

Remove the following 3rd Grade Priority Goal:

Performance Measure	Baseline: SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014	End of SY 2014-2015
75% of 3 rd graders will perform on or above grade level on the iLEAP	69%	--	--	--	75%

Revise 4th grade measure as indicated in bold text below:

Performance Measure	Baseline: SY 2010-2011	End of SY 2011-2012	End of SY 2012-2013	End of SY 2013-2014	End of SY 2014-2015
82% of Kindergartners will reach the 4 th grade on time	76.7%	--	--	--	82%
<i>Percentage of kindergarten students entering the fourth grade on level and on time</i>	51.5%	--	--	--	60%
Students will enter 4 th grade on time (Race Gap)	10%	9%	8%	7%	--
<i>Students will enter 4th grade on level and on time (Race Gap)</i>	26.4%	--	23%	21%	--
Students will enter 4 th grade on time (Class Gap)	16%	14%	13%	11%	--
<i>Students will enter 4th grade on level and on time (Class Gap)</i>	30.8%	--	25%	23%	--