



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

October 2, 2014

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Office of the Governor
Maryland State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

I am writing in response to Maryland's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant, including revisions to the project period to implement a portion of its plan. As you are aware, the U.S. Department of Education (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. 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, including an extension to the time period for implementation of one project, as described below.

- In the "Extend Student Learning and Improve School Culture, Climate, and Student Support" project (46/57), shift \$235,594 in unexpended funds from Year 4 to Year 5 personnel, fringe, travel, contractual supplies, and supplemental funding for participating local educational agencies (LEAs) to continue to: 1) monitor and provide training support to ensure fidelity of implementation and 2) promote sustainability through training opportunities and build skills that support a multi-tiered system of support in schools.

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In addition, Maryland requested amendments to sub-criterion (D)(2), Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance. In response to the request to make changes to the teacher and principal evaluation system originally proposed in the Race to the Top application, the Department acknowledges the amendments described below. The State will continue to work with the Department to ensure that Maryland's educator evaluation system meets Principle 3 requirements under Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility.

- The Department acknowledges changes in the use of growth data in final teacher and principal evaluation ratings. In school year (SY) 2013-2014, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) implemented all components of its evaluation system across all Race to the Top participating local educational agency (LEAs). However, the State did not incorporate student growth data on State assessments in a teacher's final rating record for teachers and principals of tested grades and subjects. All teachers in the State received student growth information, but it was not used to inform personnel decisions as outlined in Maryland's approved Race to the Top plan. In SY 2014-2015, MSDE and its Race to the Top participating LEAs will include Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) informed by State assessment data to measure student growth in educator evaluations and to inform personnel decisions.
- The Department acknowledges changes to the components and weights for teacher evaluation ratings. In its Race to the Top plan, Maryland presented a teacher and principal evaluation system that consisted of a State model and guidelines for LEA models. The plan established the required elements of LEA- created evaluation systems and the State model described the system an LEA would be required to adopt if it did not develop an approvable local model. Within the State model, MSDE determined that for teachers of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in grades three through eight, student growth would be determined 20 percent by classroom-level student growth on the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs), 20 percent by SLOs, and 10 percent by the Maryland School Performance Index. For high school teachers and teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, student growth would be determined 35 percent by SLOs and 15 percent by the Maryland School Performance Index. In SY 2013-2014 and SY 2014-2015, MSDE removed the School Performance Index from the State model for teachers and increased the percentage of a teacher's rating based on SLOs. The School Performance Index is still included as 15percent of the principal evaluation State model.

This acknowledgement 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. As such, in alignment with ESEA flexibility, the Department expects that:

- 1) In addition to continuing to implement their educator evaluation systems, for SY 2014-2015, the SEA 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 SEA and /or LEA capacity to make these calculations in an accurate manner going forward; and
- 2) 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.

Please note that we have shared this information with the Office of School Turnaround because it may impact Maryland's implementation of its School Improvement Grant (SIG). We encourage you to contact Kimberly Light at (202) 260-1749 or Kimberly.Light@ed.gov regarding Maryland's SIG requirements.

This letter will be posted on the Department's website. If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Maryland's Race to the Top Program Officer, Melissa Siry, at 202-260-0926 or Melissa.Siry@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/S/

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

cc:

Dr. Lillian Lowery, State Superintendent of Schools
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