



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

January 14, 2014

The Honorable Chris Christie
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Governor Christie:

I am writing in response to New Jersey's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. Between June 28, 2013 and December 20, 2013, the State held conversations with and submitted amendment requests 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 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 following amendment:

- For the Educator Evaluation project in sub-criterion (D)(2), adjust the weights of the components of the State's educator evaluation system for teachers of tested grades and subjects from 50% teacher practice and 50% student growth to 55% teacher practice and 45% student growth.ⁱ These weights are being applied during full implementation of the teacher evaluation system beginning school year (SY) 2013-2014.ⁱⁱ The State reported this adjustment is in response to stakeholders' input and an analysis of data from districts that participated in teacher evaluation system pilot programs in SY 2011-2012 and SY 2012-2013.

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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.

The State reported that it will continuously review the components and weights of the educator evaluation system and may propose additional adjustments in the future based on lessons learned.

It is our understanding that this amendment will not result in a change in your State's performance measures and outcomes, nor will they substantially change the scope and objectives of the 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 New Jersey's Race to the Top Program Officer, Renee Faulkner, at 202-205-4012 or Renee.Faulkner@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Superintendent Chris Cerf
James Palmer, Director of Performance Management
Evan Linhardt, Race to the Top Manager
Takecia Saylor, Race to the Top Manager

ⁱ In New Jersey's teacher evaluation system, for teachers of tested grades and subjects, the student growth component of an educator's rating will be composed of 30% based on student growth percentiles (SGPs) - a comparison measure of a student's achievement on the state assessment from one year to the next - and 15% based on performance on student learning objectives.

ⁱⁱ The Department acknowledges that the weights described above were approved by the New Jersey Board of Education in May 2013. The weights are also aligned with New Jersey's ESEA flexibility waiver application regarding the use of multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students, and other measures of professional practice.