



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

April 29, 2013

The Honorable Bill Haslam  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0001

Dear Governor Haslam:

I am writing in response to Tennessee's request to amend its approved Race to the Top grant project. On April 4, 2013, the State submitted an amendment request 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:

In its initial application, Tennessee planned to increase overall funding to local educational agencies (LEAs) by administering a general supplemental fund of \$1.2 million per year that would be distributed to participating LEAs according to the Title I formula through a project called the "Overall Supplemental Fund." Over the first year of the grant, the State determined that the \$4.8 million budget could be leveraged to more purposefully support LEAs' implementation of reform initiatives underway. The State was approved in April 2012 to shift those funds to expand its "Common Core Standards Professional Development" project to more effectively leverage funds to support LEAs and better enable the State to meet its goals.

Also in a previous amendment, in order to align Tennessee's Race to the Top plan with its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility request's updated vision for

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the continuum of lowest achieving schools, the State combined the funds allocated for “Renewal Schools” and “Focus Schools” into a “Turnaround” project budget that includes support for Priority, Focus, and Reward schools identified in its new accountability system.

At the time the amendment was approved in September 2012, the State indicated that it would submit future requests for funds remaining from the original budget.

The State will utilize \$10 million of the funds remaining from the original “Renewal” and “Focus” budgets, to create an opportunity for LEAs to increase their Race to the Top allocation through a “Scope of Work Supplemental Fund” (Supplemental Fund).<sup>i</sup> Based on implementation to date and research in the field, the State developed a set of specific reform activities related to implementation of teacher evaluation, Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and student assignment that it believes can have an immediate impact on student outcomes (see appendix 1).

Each LEA must commit to implementing one activity in each category in all of its schools during school year (SY) 2013-2014 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State to receive a proportional share of the Scope of Work Supplemental Fund.<sup>ii</sup> LEAs participation in Tennessee’s Supplemental Fund is voluntary and they will have discretion in how they apply supplemental funds to their Year 4 Scopes of Work and may choose to use them to support implementation of its teacher evaluation, CCSS, or student assignment-related commitments, or another allowable activity.

To help the State determine the impact of this investment and its implications for both the LEAs that participate in SY 2013-2014 and the other LEAs in the State, LEAs participating in the Scope of Work Supplemental Fund will submit a final analysis at the end of the school year including its assessment of impact on student achievement for each activity, as well as information about whether the activity will or will not be sustained.

Approval of this amendment is conditioned on the State establishing a list of evidence it expects LEAs to share with the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) during and at the end of SY 2013-2014. This evidence will be used by the State to assess LEAs’ progress carrying out their commitments within the specific State set of activities related to teacher evaluation, CCSS, and student assignment, and to begin to evaluate the impact of each set of activities. The State will provide evidence to the Department to meet this condition as soon as possible but no later than September 3, 2013.

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 amendment.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top, please do not hesitate to contact Tennessee's Race to the Top Program Officer, Jessie Harteis, at 202-453-6651 or [jessie.harteis@ed.gov](mailto:jessie.harteis@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

//s//

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

cc: Kevin Huffman, Commissioner  
Meghan Curran, Director, First to the Top

## Appendix 1

The State developed a menu of options that LEAs will choose from to opt into the Scope of Work Supplemental Fund. Each LEA must commit to implementing one activity in each of the three categories below in all of its schools in SY 2013-2014 in order to receive a supplemental award.

### Teacher Evaluation

- 1) Implement student surveys to count as 5% of the qualitative portion of the evaluation score for teachers. Surveys have been approved by the state board, and districts will work with the Tennessee Department of Education to administer.
- 2) Use two observers for at least one of the mandatory observations for each teacher. These observers must co-observe and consult with each other on scoring prior to the post-observation conference.
- 3) Use a second observer from outside the school for each observation of Level 1 (on final evaluation score *or* on TVAAS individual growth metric) teachers. The second observer could be from a different school in the district, from the district office, or could be a TEAM coach from the CORE office.

### Common Core Implementation

- 1) Conduct the February writing assessment online in all grades, 3-11.
- 2) Ensure that teachers score all student responses for the optional CRAs (October and February, grades 1-8, Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II) in teams of two.
- 3) Enroll all building level principals and assistant principals in the relevant Common Core Leadership Course (101 or 202, depending on prior engagement) for the 2013-14 school year.

### Student Assignment

- 1) Assign students to classes ensuring that no students who were Below Basic in either reading or math on TCAP in the 2012-13 school year are assigned to a Level 1 (on final evaluation score *or* on TVAAS individual growth metric) teacher.
- 2) Assign students so that Level 5 teachers will teach at least 10% more students, on average, than Level 1 teachers. The district will stay within the mandates of the state class-size restrictions, but will differentiate size to ensure top teachers reach more students. Stipends or other recognition plan for the Level 5 teachers are encouraged and would be created by the LEA.
- 3) Significantly increase the percentage of students with disabilities that are assigned to a general education classroom environment for at least 80% or more of the school day in the 2013-14 school year, with tracking supported by Easy IEP. Districts will work with the state to set an ambitious target for the percentage increase.

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<sup>i</sup> It is the Department's understanding that the State will submit additional amendment(s) for the \$3,164,903 remaining from the original "Focus" and "Renewal" budgets for Department review.

<sup>ii</sup> It is the Department's understanding that, after LEAs submit MOUs affirming their commitment to implement three reform strategies from the State's approved set, the State will determine supplemental allocations based on the fiscal year 2013 Title I allocations for those committed LEAs.