



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT AND TEACHER QUALITY PROGRAMS

September 22, 2009

Charlotte Marvel  
State Department of Education  
Four State Capital Mall,  
Room 107 A  
Little Rock, AR 72201-1071

Dear Ms. Marvel:

On April 14, 2009, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) submitted a response to the monitoring report that resulted from a program review conducted by the Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs office of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The program office team reviewed your State's progress in meeting the highly qualified teacher provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and your State's administration of the ESEA Title II, Part A Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program. Thank you for sending this response to the monitoring report.

This response, in combination with additional information submitted on June 8, June 12, and August 14, satisfactorily addresses the findings identified in the monitoring report. The multi-subject HOUSSE document developed by ADE was of primary focus in the resolution of monitoring findings. In correspondence received from ADE on June 12, a revised multi-subject HOUSSE document was provided that required teachers to earn 100 points in *each* relevant subject area. In the future, use of this multi-subject HOUSSE document will ensure that teachers seeking highly qualified status in multiple subject areas will be held to the same standard as teachers seeking status in a single subject area.

The revision of the multi-subject HOUSSE document required that ADE provide additional information on how it will address other requirements. Among these, ADE assured that it would provide accurate data, based on the use of the new multi-subject HOUSSE, in the 2010 CSPR. ADE also provided a plan to include the revised data in the State Report Card and LEA report cards by spring 2011. Each of these deadlines are based on the projection that the revised multi-subject HOUSSE document will be implemented in October of 2009, allowing for accurate data collection in the fall of 2010. ADE also provided an assurance that, based on this timeline for the implementation of the revised multi-subject HOUSSE document, it will be able to accurately identify LEAs that have not met 2141(a) and 2141(b) requirements.

In addition, ADE provided the Department with evidence that it revised its LEA assurances to include 1) that all teachers in Title I programs are highly qualified at the time of hire, 2) that all teachers paid with Title II, Part A funds for class-size reduction are highly qualified, and 3) that through the implementation of various strategies, poor and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. The State

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also provided evidence that it will monitor LEAs to ensure that these assurances are supported by appropriate activities. In response to the Department's finding that the State is not regularly and systematically monitoring LEAs, Arkansas provided a statement that it would conduct on-site monitoring of all LEAs on a five-year cycle in addition to conducting ongoing desk monitoring.

Finally, ADE developed and entered into agreements with five LEAs that failed to make progress toward meeting annual measurable objectives and failed to make adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years based on a finding that the State was not using the correct standard to determine if LEAs are subject to 2141(c). ADE also provided a plan for further action to be taken in the instance that these districts do not use Title II, Part A funds in the manner outlined in the agreement.

The Department will follow up with ADE to ensure that progress is being made on these issues and that all agreed upon deadlines are met.

During the State agency for higher education (SAHE) portion of the monitoring review, the program team determined the SAHE could not ensure that all grants are awarded to eligible partnerships that include a high-need LEA. In response, the SAHE provided an assurance that, in the future, it will use the correct definition of high-need LEA in identifying eligible partnerships. This satisfies the further actions requirements for the SAHE portion of the monitoring report.

We commend your work in responding to the concerns raised by the monitoring report. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff to ensure that all teachers meet the highly qualified requirements and to help improve the delivery of ESEA Title II, Part A services in Arkansas.

Sincerely,

  
Jessica Clark  
Program Officer

cc: Beverly Williams  
Suzanne Mitchell

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