



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**Department of Education &  
Early Development**

DIVISION OF TEACHING & LEARNING SUPPORT

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**To:** Superintendents

**cc:** District Test Coordinators  
Title I/Federal Programs Coordinators

**From:** Margaret MacKinnon  
Title I/ESEA Administrator

**Date:** July 11, 2014

**Subject: Notification of intent to amend Alaska's ESEA Flexibility Waiver Principle 1**

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The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) is planning to request amendments to its approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver of certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. These amendments apply to Principle 1, College & Career Ready Standards and Assessments. The amendments will reflect EED's decision to develop new assessments following the withdrawal from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Alaska's approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver was contingent upon participation in SBAC and a plan to administer assessments designed by SBAC. EED will not administer SBAC assessments. The background and the proposed changes are outlined below. The department is requesting comments about these proposed changes by **July 17**.

#### **Required Notice and Invitation for Comments**

This notice is to meet the notification requirements under Section 9401(b)(3)(A)(i) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. **Districts are invited to submit comments to the department regarding this amendment to its ESEA Flexibility Waiver no later than July 17, 2014. After that date, the department will submit the district comments to the US Department of Education (USED) along with its amended waiver request. Comments may be submitted to Margaret MacKinnon by email at [margaret.mackinnon@alaska.gov](mailto:margaret.mackinnon@alaska.gov) or by fax at 907-465-2989.**

Information and a copy of Alaska's currently approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver can be found at this link:  
<http://education.alaska.gov/akaccountability/#c3gtabs-esea>.

#### **Background and Proposed Changes**

To meet the requirements of ESEA flexibility, a State education agency (SEA) must develop annual, statewide, high-quality assessments, and corresponding academic achievement standards, reading/language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. These assessments must be fully implemented no later than the 2014-2015 school year. Among other characteristics, a high-quality assessment must be valid, reliable and fair for its intended purposes, be aligned with a State's college- and career-ready content standards, as well as providing an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year. In Alaska's approved ESEA

flexibility request, EED met this requirement through its intended participation in SBAC. Because EED is no longer administering the SBAC assessment we are required to amend Alaska's ESEA flexibility request to demonstrate how it will meet the requirements of Principle 1. EED plans to administer the new state-designed Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) in spring 2015 for grades 3 through 10. EED will provide USED with a detailed plan for implementing AMP in the current school year. The plan will include the following key components:

- the process and timeline for development of test blueprints and item specifications;
- the review and selection of items for inclusion in the assessments;
- scaling and scoring procedures to be used;
- test administration procedures, including selection and use of appropriate accommodations;
- data analyses proposed to document validity and reliability of the assessments;
- an independent evaluation of alignment of the assessments with the state's college- and career-ready standards;
- the process and timeline for setting college- and career-ready achievement standards and the method to validate those achievement standards, and;
- meaningful report formats to communicate results to students, parents, and educators.

EED is currently working with a vendor, the Achievement and Assessment Institute (AAI), to develop new assessments (AMP) that are based on the Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards. Information has been provided to districts and to the public over the last few months about the planned changes to the assessments. See information about the new assessments on the department's website at <http://education.alaska.gov> and <http://education.alaska.gov/akassessments/>. Documents that provide an overview of the new assessment system include the "Commissioner's Memorandum 2014-011 to Superintendents and Business Managers" dated May 21, 2014; "Alaska Measures of Progress Assessment Information Document" dated May 22, 2014; and the press release "Alaska Selects New Assessment Contractor" dated January 14, 2014. Updated information will continue to be posted on the website as it becomes available throughout the process of transitioning to the new assessments. For specific questions about the new assessment system, contact Elizabeth Davis, Assessments Administrator, at [elizabeth.davis@alaska.gov](mailto:elizabeth.davis@alaska.gov).