



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

DEC 19 2014

The Honorable Mike Hanley  
Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Education and Early Development  
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200  
P.O. Box 110500  
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Commissioner Hanley:

This letter is in response to a request received by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED) to amend its approved ESEA flexibility request to withdraw from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and to not administer assessments developed by SBAC in the 2014-2015 school year. EED included in its request a plan that details the steps it will take to implement a high-quality assessment, as defined in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*, in the 2014-2015 school year.

ED staff has reviewed EED's plan to implement the high-quality assessment from the Achievement and Assessment Institute (AAI) at the University of Kansas and subsequently engaged in follow-up discussions. Based on that review and your responses to ED's inquiries, I am approving EED's request to amend its ESEA flexibility request to include its new plan to implement in 2014-2015. Please note that approval of this amendment does not constitute approval of the assessment EED intends to implement. The EED will need to submit the assessment for peer review when the new assessment peer review process is available.

In addition, EED requested two additional amendments to its approved ESEA flexibility request. I am pleased to approve these amendments and Alaska's amended request through the 2014-2015 school year. Alaska's amended request, along with a copy of this letter, will be posted on ED's website. A summary of Alaska's amendments is enclosed with this letter.

Alaska continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its districts are in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in their implementation of ESEA flexibility as well as their implementation of all other Federal education programs. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

I am confident that Alaska will continue to implement the reforms it proposed under its approved ESEA flexibility request and advance its efforts to hold schools and school districts accountable for the

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<http://www.ed.gov/>

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achievement of all students. ED is committed to helping you accomplish your goals and remains available to provide technical assistance as needed. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Emily Bank at [emily.bank@ed.gov](mailto:emily.bank@ed.gov) or Robyn Pettiford at [robyn.pettiford@ed.gov](mailto:robyn.pettiford@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah S. Delisle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Deborah S. Delisle  
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Margaret MacKinnon, Title I/ESEA Administrator

## **Amendments to Alaska's Approved ESEA Flexibility Request**

The following is a summary of amendments to Alaska's approved ESEA flexibility request. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) approves the following amendments through the 2014–2015 school year because Alaska's ESEA flexibility request, as amended, continues to be aligned with the principles of ESEA flexibility. Please refer to ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.html>) for Alaska's complete ESEA flexibility request.

### **1.C: Develop and Administer Annual, Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth**

Revision: EED has changed membership from the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) consortium to the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) consortium, to develop and administer an alternate assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities.

### **2.A: State Developed System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support**

Revision: EED's amendment removed the college- and career-ready WorkKeys participation rate factor from the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI) and increased the weighting of the scores-based college- and career-readiness indicator.