



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Feds grant waiver for last year's interrupted student assessments;
Alaska will resume testing this spring**

JUNEAU -- The U.S. Department of Education has waived, after the fact, the federal requirement for Alaska to administer English language arts, mathematics, and science assessments in the 2015-2016 school year. Also waived was the federal requirement to publicly report data from 2015-2016 assessments.

The U.S. Department of Education granted the waiver on the condition that Alaska administer such assessments in 2016-2017. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) will soon announce its selection of an assessment contractor, with the assessments to be administered in spring 2017.

The state was not able to complete the assessments last school year because of significant technical problems with administering the computer-based tests.

On March 29, 2016, the first day of testing, construction workers severed a fiber optic cable at the University of Kansas, where Alaska's testing provider was based, shutting down Internet service at the university and interrupting the computer-based tests for Alaska students until March 31. After resuming testing on March 31, the system crashed two more times that morning.

Even before the cable was cut, and after it was repaired, schools reported multiple technology errors that affected students, such as blank screens, no sound, questions out of sequence, and answers not being saved. Many students had their testing interrupted, had to answer the same question more than once, or had a test that did not work as designed.

On April 1, the department canceled further testing, based on concerns that technical disruptions had rendered the affected tests invalid. Canceled were the Alaska Measures of Progress (grades 3-10), the Alaska science tests (grades 4, 8, and 10), and the Dynamic Learning Maps (grades 3-10) for students with severe cognitive disabilities.

Alaska did not resume testing later in the school year because there was insufficient evidence that students would have a high probability of successful testing.

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