



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

December 8, 2015

The Honorable Hanna Skandera
Secretary of Education
New Mexico Public Education Department
300 Don Gaspar Avenue
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Secretary Skandera:

This letter is in response to the New Mexico Public Education Department's (PED) request to amend its method for calculating the student growth component of its school grading model, as currently approved by the State's flexibility waiver under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA).

Specifically, PED requested to change its method for calculating the student growth component of its school accountability system from a longitudinal method to a covariate adjustment method. Under the proposed covariate adjustment method, PED would continue to use three years of data and focus on individual student calculations. The proposed method would, however, allow the State to incorporate student growth information for students at feeder schools (which exclusively serve Kindergarten through second grade students) and 9th graders in the school grading model. The proposed method would also more closely align the State's school grading model with its teacher and principal evaluation and support system.

Staff from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has reviewed PED's amendment request and has followed up with the PED team with clarifying questions. Based on that review and your responses to the Department's inquiries, I am approving PED's request to amend its ESEA flexibility waiver to include the proposed covariate adjustment method for calculating the student growth component of the State's school grading model.

New Mexico 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. 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.

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

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Thank you for your commitment and continued focus on enhancing education for all of New Mexico's students. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Lisa Sadeghi and Denise Lockley-Cobb of my staff at: OSS.NewMexico@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ann Whalen
Delegated the authority to perform the function
and duties of Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education

cc: Leighann Lenti, Deputy Secretary of Policy and Program