



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

FEB 07 2014

The Honorable Melody Schopp
Secretary of Education
South Dakota Department of Education
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Secretary Schopp:

On June 26, 2013, South Dakota submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) its guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as per the State's previous commitment to complete its ESEA flexibility request. During the week of December 16, 2013, ED conducted a peer review of these guidelines, along with corresponding changes to Principle 3 of South Dakota's ESEA flexibility request, to ensure that these guidelines are consistent with Principle 3 of ESEA flexibility.

During this peer review, two expert peers considered South Dakota's submission and provided comments in the form of Peer Panel Notes to inform the U.S Secretary of Education's decision regarding approval of South Dakota's guidelines. The Peer Panel Notes, a copy of which is enclosed with this letter, identify strengths of South Dakota's Principle 3 submission and indicates areas where further revisions are needed to meet Principle 3 requirements; the Peer Panel Notes also provide technical assistance suggestions. In addition to the expert peers, ED staff also reviewed South Dakota's Principle 3 submission.

The enclosed list provides details regarding concerns raised in the reviews of South Dakota's Principle 3 submission that must be addressed before the Secretary can approve South Dakota's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems and any corresponding changes to Principle 3. We encourage South Dakota to consider all of the peers' comments and technical assistance suggestions in making revisions, but South Dakota should focus primarily on addressing the concerns identified on the enclosed list.

We remain committed to working with South Dakota on its request for ESEA flexibility, including the completion of final guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. ED staff will reach out to South Dakota to set up a call in the near future to provide clarification of the concerns on the enclosed list and technical assistance that may be useful as South Dakota revises and refines its Principle 3 submission. Please submit these revisions by February 28, 2014. Should South Dakota submit a request for extension of ESEA flexibility, these revisions may be included as a part of that process.

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If you have any additional questions or want to request technical assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Emily Bank at emily.bank@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Deborah S. Delisle

Enclosure

cc: Mary Stadick-Smith, Director of Operations and Information

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING SOUTH DAKOTA'S PRINCIPLE 3 SUBMISSION

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

- Please address concerns regarding the guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems:
 - Provide additional detail on how South Dakota's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems will meaningfully differentiate teacher and principal performance, in particular whether student growth is incorporated into South Dakota's guidelines with sufficient weighting to ensure that performance levels will differentiate among teachers and principals who have made significantly different contributions to student growth or closing achievement gaps. *See 3.A.ii.b.*
 - Provide additional detail on how South Dakota will ensure that the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) chosen by local educational agencies (LEAs), schools and teachers are rigorous and comparable. *See 3.A.ii.c(i).*
 - Provide additional detail on South Dakota's approach to measuring student growth for grades and subjects in which assessments are required under ESEA section 1111(b)(3), specifically how South Dakota will ensure that the evaluation systems used in all LEAs and schools provide teachers with a rating that includes growth as a significant factor, in accordance with the definition included in ESEA Flexibility. *See 3.A.ii.c(ii) and 3.A.ii.c(iii)*
 - Provide further detail on how South Dakota will ensure that its teacher and principal evaluation system will be used to inform personnel decisions. *See 3.A.ii.f.*
- Please address concerns regarding the implementation of teacher and principal evaluation and support systems:
 - Provide additional information on how South Dakota will ensure that LEAs develop and implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the principles in ESEA flexibility, particularly given the level of flexibility provided in the incorporation of student growth. *See 3.B.*