



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

June 9, 2020

Dr. Ben Jones
Secretary of Education
South Dakota Department of Education,
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Secretary Jones:

Thank you for your participation in the U.S. Department of Education's (the Department) assessment peer review process under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). I appreciate the efforts of the South Dakota Department of Education (SD DOE) to prepare for the peer review, which occurred in March 2020.

State assessment systems provide essential information that States, districts, principals and teachers can use to identify the academic needs of students, target resources and supports toward students who need them most, evaluate school and program effectiveness and close achievement gaps among students. A high-quality assessment system also provides useful information to parents about their children's advancement against and achievement of grade-level standards. The Department's peer review of State assessment systems is designed to provide feedback to States to support the development and administration of high-quality assessments.

External peer reviewers and Department staff carefully evaluated SD DOE's submission and the Department found, based on the evidence received, that this component of your assessment system met the requirements of the ESEA. Based on the recommendations from this peer review and our own analysis of the State's submission, I have determined the following:

- Reading/language arts and mathematics AA-AAAS (NCSC/MSAA) in grades 3-8 and high school: **Meets the requirements of the ESEA.**

Congratulations on this significant accomplishment. Assessments that produce valid and reliable results are fundamental to a State's accountability system. Please be aware that approval of SD DOE's assessments is not a determination that the system complies with Federal civil rights requirements, including 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, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Also, please remember that, if SD DOE makes significant changes in its assessments, the State must submit information about those changes to the Department for review and approval.

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

The full peer review notes from the review are enclosed. These recommendations to the Department formed the basis of our determination. Please note that the peers' recommendations may differ from the Department's feedback; we encourage you to read the full peer notes for additional suggestions and recommendations for improving your assessment system beyond what is noted in the Department's feedback. Department staff will reach out to your assessment director in the next few days to discuss the peer notes and the Department's determination and to answer any questions you have.

The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) placed a condition on SD DOE's Title I, Part A grant award beginning July 1, 2017. The condition stated that until SD DOE provided all of the requested information from assessment peer reviews held in 2016, the condition would remain on the grant. This condition was also placed on SD DOE's Title I, Part A grant award for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 and 2019. Because all of the evidence has been resubmitted and approved in peer review, the Department is lifting this condition.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. I look forward to our continued partnership as we move ahead with this critical work. I appreciate the work you are doing to improve your schools and provide a high-quality education for your students.

If you have any questions, please contact my staff at ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank T. Brogan". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "F" and a long, sweeping underline.

Frank T. Brogan
Assistant Secretary
for Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosures

cc: Matt Gill, Assessment Director