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December 27, 2012

Ms. Deborah Delisle
Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202-6132

Dear Ms. Delisle:

The South Dakota Department of Education is requesting that the U.S. Department of Education temporarily suspend its review of South Dakota's ESEA Waiver Principle 3. With the defeat of Referred Law 16 in the November election, the state requires time to revise its plan for supporting effective instruction and leadership.

As we discussed with your staff in a call on Dec. 19, 2012, South Dakota plans to continue the work related to teacher evaluation and principal standards and evaluation that began during the summer of 2012. Two work groups, with broad representation from the field, began meeting last summer to develop evaluation guidelines, instruments and processes that schools will be able to adopt as models for teacher and principal evaluation. These models will form the state-recommended framework for pilot schools to implement during the 2013-14 school year and all schools to implement in 2014-15.

While the two work groups mentioned above have accomplished much, there is still work that needs to be done. To that end, the department is partnering with the South Dakota Education Association to move the work forward. A Commission on Teaching and Learning will be established in January 2013. This group will be tasked with several critical decisions, including a specific plan for how student growth will be used in determining performance levels.

Through SDCL 13-3-69, which originated as Senate Bill 25 during the 2012 session, the Legislature granted authority to the South Dakota Board of Education to promulgate administrative rules to establish the state accountability system based on student achievement and other indicators. Among those "other indicators" outlined in statute is "Establishment of the process for teacher and principal evaluation."

Our expectation is that the Commission on Teaching and Learning's work will be completed in April 2013, so that the guidelines, instruments and processes they develop are available for the pilots to use in 2013-14 and all schools in 2014-15.

That said, we propose to have a revised version of our Principle 3 available for your review by early June 2013.

Please find enclosed a document that lays out our rough plan and timeline for moving forward. Detailed information will be provided when we resubmit Principle 3 in June.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Melody Schopp". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" and "S".

Dr. Melody Schopp
Secretary

Enc: