



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Dear State Directors:

As we start the 2015–2016 school year, I wanted to provide an update to the February 27, 2015, letter I sent to include additional information regarding transition that occurred in many States to new reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in 2014–2015 school year. Specifically, the additional information included below addresses State requirements for holding local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving Title III subgrants accountable for meeting Title III annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs).

Title III AMAOs contain three parts: annual increases in the number or percentage of students making progress in learning English (AMAO 1), annual increases in the number or percentage of children attaining English proficiency (AMAO 2), and making adequate yearly progress (AYP) (AMAO 3) for the English learner subgroup. This letter provides additional guidance related to calculating AMAO 3 based on reading/language arts and mathematics assessment results from the 2014–2015 school year when a State implemented new assessments.

As the majority of States implemented new reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in spring 2015, I want to provide guidance on a few important transition issues related to your assessment and accountability systems. As part of our guidance to States regarding the ESEA flexibility renewal process, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) permitted any State administering new assessments aligned to college and career ready standards in the 2014–2015 school year to not assign schools new ratings based on those assessments under Title I. A State is still required to report publicly the results of the assessments, including against annual measurable objectives (AMOs), but the State may assign the same school ratings and permit its schools and LEAs to continue the same interventions that are being used in the 2014–2015 school year. The State would resume annually assigning schools a new rating based on the 2015–2016 assessments.

Similarly, this letter clarifies that States may permit LEAs receiving Title III subgrants to continue the same sanctions in 2015–2016 that they used in the 2014–2015 school year for LEAs that do not meet the AMO component of AMAO 3 for the 2014–2015 school year due to the transition to new assessments. Specifically:

1. If an LEA misses AMAO 1, AMAO 2, participation rate, graduation rate, or the other academic indicator in elementary and middle schools in 2014–2015, that LEA is considered to have not met AMAOs for that year;
2. If an LEA meets AMAO 1, AMAO 2, participation rate, graduation rate, and the other academic indicator in elementary and middle schools in 2014–2015, but misses the AMO

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component of AMAO 3, it maintains its status and continues the sanctions from the 2014–2015 school year in 2015–2016. This would mean that if an LEA missed an AMAO in 2013–2014 for the first time, maintains status based on AMAOs in 2014–2015, and misses an AMAO again in 2015–2016, it would have missed AMAOs for two consecutive years.

3. If an LEA meets AMAO 1, AMAO 2, participation rate, graduation rate, and the other academic indicator in elementary and middle schools, and meets the AMO component of AMAO 3 for 2014–2015, it is considered to have met AMAOs for 2014–2015 and could exit status if it was carrying out an improvement plan or implementing sanctions that are more rigorous.

This opportunity is available to all States that administered new reading/language arts and mathematics assessments aligned to college- and career-ready standards in the 2014–2015 school year, even States that are not implementing ESEA flexibility. Each State that would like to take advantage of this opportunity may submit a request to its Office of State Support (OSS) Program Officers to waive section 3122 (a)(3)(A)(iii) of the ESEA no later than October 1, 2015. This would permit the State to continue in 2015–2016 the improvement status that a LEA has for the 2014–2015 school year and permit the LEA to continue implementing the same Title III sanctions in 2015–2016 that it used in the 2014–2015 school year, if the reason for missing AMAO 3 based on 2014–2015 assessments is due to achievement in reading/language arts or mathematics in the LEA. The State would still need to calculate AMAO 3 based on assessments administered in the 2014–2015 school year and report this information publicly, in addition to reporting the results of the assessments.

Thank you again for your commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. I look forward to our continued partnership in this critical work. If you have any questions, please contact your OSS program officers.

Sincerely,

/s/

Monique C. Chism, Ph.D.
Director
Office of State Support