



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Honorable Rita H. Inos
Commissioner of Education
CNMI Public School System
Post Office Box 50130 CK
Saipan, MP 96950

MAR 29 2006

Dear Commissioner Inos:

Thank you for your timely submission of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' (CNMI) State Performance Plan (SPP) for review under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Section 616(b) of the Act requires States and territories to submit, within one year after the date of enactment of the reauthorized IDEA, an SPP that evaluates the State's or territory's effort to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA, and describes how the State or territory will improve implementation. We appreciate CNMI's efforts in preparing the SPP under a short timeline and in the face of many other competing priorities. In the SPPs, due by December 2, 2005, States and territories were to include: (1) baseline data that reflect the State's or territory's efforts to implement Part B of the IDEA; (2) measurable and rigorous targets for the next six years for each of the indicators established by the Secretary in the priority areas under section 616(a) of the IDEA; and (3) activities the State or territory will undertake to improve implementation of Part B.

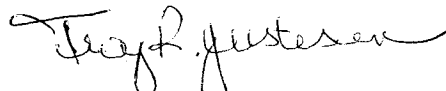
OSEP is pleased to inform you that CNMI's SPP under Part B meets the requirements of section 616(b) to include measurable and rigorous targets and improvement activities. CNMI must make its SPP available through public means, including posting on the CNMI educational agency's website, distribution to the media, and distribution through public agencies. (Section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(I)).

Under section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(II) of the Act, CNMI must annually report to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) on its performance under the SPP. CNMI's first Annual Performance Report (APR) on its progress in meeting its targets is due to OSEP by February 1, 2007. Attached to this letter, you will find Table A addressing issues identified during our review of the SPP that – while not requiring disapproval of your plan – will affect our annual determination of CNMI's performance and compliance based on data presented in CNMI's APR. As a result, CNMI needs to provide additional information as part of its February 2007 APR submission. Table B includes OSEP's analysis of your submission related to previously-identified noncompliance or other issues included in our November 21, 2005 letter that responded to CNMI's FFY 2003 APR and our November 16, 2005 letter regarding OSEP's verification visit to CNMI in March 2005.

We hope that CNMI found the August 5, 2005 guidance on submission of the SPPs and the technical assistance that we provided through the August 11-12, 2005 Summer Institute, periodic conference calls, and the SPP Resources website helpful in this endeavor. If you have any feedback on our past technical assistance efforts or the needs of States and territories for guidance, we would be happy to hear from you as we work to develop further mechanisms to support State and territory improvement activities.

Thank you for your continued work to improve results for children and youth with disabilities and their families. We encourage you to work closely with your State Contact as you proceed in implementing improvement activities and developing your APR. If you have any questions regarding the SPP or the APR, please contact Lucille Sleger at (202) 245-7528.

Sincerely,



Troy R. Justesen
Acting Director
Office of Special Education
Programs

Enclosures

Table A
Table B

cc: Joanne Nicholls
State Director of Special Education