



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

SEP 18 2008

Honorable Kathy Cox
Superintendent of Education
Georgia Department of Education
2066 Twin Towers East
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Superintendent Cox:

I am writing regarding our review of Georgia's science standards and assessments under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), as amended by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB).

As outlined in my letter of February 28, 2008, States had to meet four basic requirements in science for the 2007–08 school year. In particular, each State was required to: (1) have approved content standards in science; (2) administer a regular and alternate science assessment in each of three grade spans; (3) include all students in those assessments; and (4) report the results of the regular and alternate science assessments. After reviewing the evidence submitted, I am pleased to inform you that Georgia meets these requirements for 2007–08.

In 2008–09, Georgia must provide evidence for peer review that demonstrates full compliance of its science standards and assessments. In anticipation of that required peer review, Georgia chose to participate in an optional technical assistance peer review in May 2008. I appreciate the efforts that were required to prepare for the technical assistance peer review and hope that the process provides useful feedback that will support Georgia's efforts to monitor student progress toward meeting challenging science standards.

Based on the evidence received from Georgia regarding its general science assessments, which was reviewed by the peers and U.S. Department of Education (Department) staff, we have concluded that Georgia's science standards and assessments, including the alternate assessment for science, do not yet meet all the statutory and regulatory requirements of section 1111(b)(1) and (3) of the ESEA. Specifically, we have concerns regarding the completion of the technical quality information on the spring 2008 administration of the science assessments and the completion of an independent alignment study for all the science assessments. The complete list of evidence needed to address these concerns is enclosed with this letter. We have scheduled peer reviews for States' science assessments for the weeks of October 25 through November 2, 2008 and March 23 through 27, 2009. All materials for review must be provided to the Department three weeks before the scheduled peer review.

Please keep in mind that science assessments represent one piece of a State's complete standards and assessment system, which also includes general and alternate assessments for reading and mathematics. As stated in my letter to you on October 5, 2007, Georgia's standards and assessment system is currently Fully Approved. To remain fully approved, Georgia must demonstrate that all components of its standards and assessment system, including general and alternate assessments for reading, mathematics, and science, comply with all ESEA requirements for standards and assessment systems as administered in 2008–09.

400 MARYLAND AVE. S.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20202
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We look forward to working with Georgia to support a high-quality standards and assessment system, of which science standards and assessments are an integral part. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Grace Ross (Grace.Ross@ed.gov) or Patrick Rooney (Patrick.Rooney@ed.gov) of my staff.

Sincerely,



Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

Enclosure

cc: Governor Sonny Perdue
Jeff Gagne
Melissa Fincher

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE THAT GEORGIA MUST SUBMIT TO MEET ESEA REQUIREMENTS FOR ITS SCIENCE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

2.0 – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Report separately the number and percentage of students with disabilities assessed against alternate achievement standards, those assessed on an alternate assessment against grade-level standards, and those included in the regular assessment (including those administered with appropriate accommodations).

3.0 – FULL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

1. Documentation that the assessments measure higher-order thinking skills and student understanding of challenging content.

4.0 – TECHNICAL QUALITY

Criterion Reference Competency Test and Georgia High School Graduation Test):

1. A 2008 technical report for the assessment system that contains information on the spring 2008 administration of the science tests (grade 8 and GHSGT), including validity, reliability, conditional standard error of measurement, generalizability information, and standards-setting information for grade 8.
2. Evidence that the science tests produce the intended results and whether there are unintended results that the state needs to take into consideration.
3. Evidence that test results are weakly correlated or not correlated with other subject tests and irrelevant characteristics such as demographics.

Georgia alternate Assessment

4. Evidence of race/ethnicity and/or gender bias for the population taking this assessment.

5.0 – ALIGNMENT

1. An independent alignment study to show the alignment between the CRCT and the GHSGT and the state's academic content and achievement standards.
2. A plan and a time line to address any gaps noted in the alignment study for the CRCT and the GHSGT.
3. An independent alignment study to show the alignment between the content standards, alternate academic achievement standards, and student work on the GAA.
4. A plan and a timeline to address any gaps noted in the alignment study for the GAA.

6.0 – INCLUSION

1. Participation data for the CRCT, GHSGT, and the GAA that show that all students enrolled in the grades tested participated in the science assessment.