



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

SEP 23 2008

The Honorable D. Kent King
Commissioner of Education
Missouri Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education
P. O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480

Dear Commissioner King:

I am writing regarding our review of Missouri's science 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 on state and district report cards. My staff has reviewed the evidence you submitted and determined that, based on the evidence submitted to date, it appears that Missouri has met the basic requirements for administering science assessments in 2007–08. However, Missouri has not yet submitted data to the Department demonstrating that all students were included in the science assessments and that results from the science general and alternate assessments are included in the state- and district-level reports. Please let us know within 10 days of receipt of this letter when Missouri will have those data and reports available so that we can confirm that Missouri has, in fact, met the basic requirements for administering science assessments in 2007–08.

In 2008–09, Missouri must provide evidence for peer review that demonstrates full compliance of its science standards and assessments. In anticipation of that required peer review, Missouri 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 Missouri's efforts to monitor student progress toward meeting challenging science standards.

Based on the evidence received from Missouri, which was reviewed by the peers and Department staff, we have concluded that Missouri's science standards and assessments do not yet meet all the statutory and regulatory requirements of section 1111(b)(1) and (3) of the ESEA. Specifically, we have concerns with the technical quality and alignment of the science component of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) to Missouri's grade-level science content standards as well as the technical quality and alignment of Missouri's alternate assessment in science based on alternate academic achievement standards (Missouri Assessment Program-Alternate, or MAP-A), to grade-level science content standards. The enclosed list of evidence describes the

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information and documentation that Missouri will need to provide for peer review to be able to demonstrate that its science standards and assessments satisfy all relevant ESEA requirements.

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. States must submit evidence to the Department three weeks prior to either review.

Please keep in mind that science assessments represent one piece of a state's complete standards and assessment system, which also includes regular and alternate assessments for reading and mathematics. As stated in my letter to you on October 3, 2007, Missouri's standards and assessment system is currently fully approved. To remain fully approved, Missouri must demonstrate that all outstanding components of its standards and assessment system as administered in 2008-09 including the general and alternate assessments for science, comply with all ESEA requirements.

We look forward to working with Missouri 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 David Harmon (David.Harmon@ed.gov) or Jessica Morffi (Jessica.Morffi@ed.gov) of my staff.

Sincerely,



Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

Enclosure

cc: Governor Matt Blunt
Becky Odneal
Susan Newbolt

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE THAT MISSOURI MUST SUBMIT TO MEET ESEA REQUIREMENTS FOR MISSOURI'S SCIENCE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

2.0 – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Evidence of approved science academic achievement standards for science that show alignment to the state's grade level content standards and evidence of diverse stakeholder participation in the standard-setting process. .
2. Evidence of approved academic achievement standards that show alignment to the State's grade-level content standards Approved alternate academic achievement standards for science that are appropriately linked to Missouri's Show-Me Standards through alternate grade-level expectations and evidence of diverse stakeholder participation in the standard-setting process.
3. Data, reported separately for 2007-08, the number and percent of students with disabilities assessed against alternate academic achievement standards in science, and those included in the regular assessment (including those administered with appropriate accommodations).

4.0 – TECHNICAL QUALITY

1. The 2008 technical report for MAP and MAP-A, including analysis of science test validity, reliability, generalizability, scoring quality, and equating MAP science test forms from year to year.
2. The 2008 standards-setting reports for MAP and MAP-A.
3. Results of the accommodations study by CTB/McGraw-Hill.

5.0 – ALIGNMENT

1. A plan and timeline for addressing alignment issues that emerged from the science MAP alignment study.
2. Documentation that demonstrates science MAP-A alignment to Missouri's alternate achievement standards linked to science Grade Level Expectations.

6.0 – INCLUSION

1. Science assessment data report confirming that all students in the grades tested are included in the science assessments.

7.0 – REPORTING

1. Report for MAP and MAP-A science on participation and assessment results for all students and for each of the required subgroups at the school, district, and state levels.