



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JAN 8 2009

The Honorable Paul G. Pastorek
Superintendent of Education
Louisiana Department of Education
PO Box 94064
1201 North 3rd Street, 5th Floor
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9064

Dear Superintendent Pastorek:

I am pleased to approve Louisiana's standards and assessment system under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). I congratulate you on meeting this important NCLB requirement. My decision is based on input from peer reviewers external to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) and Department staff who reviewed and carefully considered the evidence submitted by Louisiana.

As my letter of June 29, 2007 indicated, Louisiana's general standards and assessments in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science met all statutory and regulatory requirements of the ESEA; however, Louisiana's alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the Louisiana Alternate Assessment, Level 1 (LAA1), did not yet meet all regulatory requirements. On December 4, 2008, peer reviewers and Department staff evaluated additional evidence that Louisiana submitted regarding the LAA1 in reading, mathematics, and science. That evidence indicates that the LAA1 administered by Louisiana in 2007-08 meets all applicable regulatory requirements. As a result, Louisiana's approved standards and assessment system includes academic content standards in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science; student academic achievement standards in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science; alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science; and general assessments and alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards administered in each of grades 3 through 8 and one grade in high school for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. Accordingly, Louisiana's system warrants Full Approval.

Please be aware that approval of Louisiana's standards and assessment system under the ESEA is not a determination that the system complies with Federal civil rights requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Finally, please remember that if Louisiana makes significant

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changes to its standards and assessment system, the State must submit information about those changes to the Department for review and approval.

Additionally, in March 2008, Louisiana, along with six other states, submitted for peer review evidence of its alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards (AA-MAAS) for certain students with disabilities as authorized under 34 C.F.R. §§ 200.1(e) and 200.6(a)(3). Louisiana's leadership in developing and implementing an AA-MAAS is commendable, and I appreciate Louisiana's commitment to instruction and assessment based on challenging academic achievement standards for all students with disabilities. As noted in the September 30, 2008 letter from Don Watson, Louisiana's AA-MAAS, the Louisiana Alternate Assessment, Level 2 (LAA2), does not yet meet all regulatory requirements for an AA-MAAS. However, we are optimistic that Louisiana's planned submission of additional evidence for review in March 2009 will indicate progress in meeting those requirements. As explained in my letter of January 8, 2009 which accompanied the January 2009 Assessment Fact Sheet, a State's AA-MAAS does not at this time factor into the status assigned to its standards and assessment system. Thus, the need for Louisiana to submit additional evidence regarding the LAA2 does not impact the approval status of Louisiana's standards and assessment system.

We have found it a pleasure working with your staff on this review. Please accept my congratulations for Louisiana's approved standards and assessment system under the ESEA. I wish you well in your continued efforts to improve student achievement in Louisiana. We look forward to receiving materials from you for the March peer review of the LAA2, and we remain available to provide technical assistance regarding issues that you identify. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sue Rigney (Sue.Rigney@ed.gov) or Jessica Morffi (Jessica.Morffi@ed.gov) of my staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerri L. Briggs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

cc: Governor Bobby Jindal
Scott Norton
Thomas Spencer