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January 5, 2016

Monique Chism, Ph.D.  
Director of the Office of State Support  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Dr. Chism:

I am writing in response to your letter of concern following the release of Colorado's 2014-2015 statewide assessment participation rate data. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) fully recognizes the importance of a high quality state assessment system in helping to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in school and in life, as well as its obligation as a recipient of Title I, Part A funding to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in the assessments.

As you know, assessment participation was a topic of discussion during the review of Colorado's ESEA flexibility renewal application. As part of the review process, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) asked CDE to incorporate a plan to address low assessment participation rates into its flex request. A plan was incorporated and Colorado's ESEA flexibility plan was approved by ED on November 20, 2015.

In its plan to help ensure that all students participate in state-administered assessments, CDE stated it will:

- Calculate disaggregated state assessment participation rates for *all* schools and districts *and* disaggregated groups of students.
- Report state-administered assessment participation rates and assessment results for *all* schools and districts *and* disaggregated groups.
- Require schools and districts that fall below 95% participation in one or more of the state-administered English Language Arts or Math assessments to address their low participation rates as part of their Unified Improvement Plan, including actions that schools and districts will take in response to their low participation rates.
- Include low participation rates as an indicator in ESEA Program Effectiveness Reviews conducted with districts that have priority schools, focus schools, and other Title I schools with participation rates below 95%.



- Provide information regarding the state assessments, the reasons for administering the assessments, and how the assessment results are used to all schools and districts to share with their communities, including schools and districts that have low participation rates.

Colorado is currently gearing up for the administration of its 2015-2016 statewide assessments and will begin implementation of the above strategies with this administration cycle. Should assessment participation rates remain low, we understand that, as a state agency, we have additional actions that we can take to help remedy the situation.

As you may know, Colorado's Board of Education recently named a single finalist for the position of Commissioner of Education. His name is Richard Crandall and he is expected to assume the position during the month of January. I want you to know that I have enjoyed working with you and your colleagues and will do all I can to ensure a smooth transition with regard to all things federal.

Speaking of transitions - congratulations on your new position at the Department. I wish you well and I am certain that Patrick will do a fine job as your replacement. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff if you need additional information or clarification regarding our plans. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Elliott Asp, Ph.D  
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