



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

September 25, 2020

The Honorable Sherri Ybarra
Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Department of Education
650 W. State Street
Boise, ID 83720-0027

Ms. Debbie Critchfield
President
Idaho State Board of Education
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0037

Dear Superintendent Ybarra and State Board President Critchfield:

I am writing in response to the Idaho State Department of Education's (ISDE's) request on June 30, 2020, for an extension of the waiver to permit ISDE to field test the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) in science in grades 5, 8 and 11 in school year (SY) 2020-2021.

On February 21, 2020 ISDE received a one-year waiver of certain Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) requirements to support its development of ISAT-science to replace the prior assessments in science, which were not aligned with new Idaho science content standards. Idaho proposed to administer a census field test of the ISAT-science in spring 2020 for all eligible students enrolled in grades 5, 8 and 11. Subsequently, on March 27, 2020, ISDE received a one-year waiver of all ESEA assessment requirements (including the science assessment requirements) due to widespread school closures related to the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). As a result, on June 30, 2020, ISDE requested that the waiver be extended to the 2020-2021 school year. ISDE proposed to not administer the current general science assessments and not report assessment field test results to parents, educators or the public in the 2020-2021 school year. However, ISDE will hold districts and schools accountable for participation in the field test.

After reviewing ISDE's request, I find that the waiver will benefit school children in Idaho, so I am approving an extension of ISDE's request for the 2020-2021 school year and waiving the following statutory requirements of the ESEA, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act:

- Sections 1111(b)(1)(A) and (C) and 1111(b)(2)(B)(ii) and (v)(II), which require the State to establish student academic achievement standards in science and implement high-quality, yearly student academic assessments in science that are aligned with those standards to measure student achievement and to inform instruction.
- Sections 1111(b)(2)(B)(x) and (xii) and 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) and (2)(C), which require the State and local educational agencies to provide individual student reports to parents, teachers and principals and to include the results of science assessments on State and local report cards.

400 MARYLAND AVE., SW, WASHINGTON, DC 20202
<http://www.ed.gov/>

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Please note that this waiver is only applicable for the 2020-2021 school year during the administration of the statewide field test of the ISAT-science. Failure to administer general science assessments in the 2021-2022 school year that meet all requirements would result in ISDE being out of compliance with Title I of the ESEA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which could result in a number of enforcement actions, including withholding of funds.

We appreciate our continued relationship with ISDE and remain committed to working with you. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.

Sincerely,

/s/

Frank T. Brogan
Assistant Secretary
for Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Kevin Whitman, Director of Assessment and Accountability