



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

April 28, 2022

The Honorable Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street  
Maldon, MA 02148-4906

Dear Commissioner Riley:

I am writing in response to Massachusetts' request on March 7, 2022, to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to amend its approved consolidated State plan under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), using the COVID-19 State Plan Addendum (Addendum). Massachusetts requests these amendments to account for short-term changes to its system of annual meaningful differentiation in school year 2021-2022 due to extraordinary circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to the waivers the Department granted Massachusetts from the accountability requirements of the ESEA for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and the assessment requirements for the 2019-2020 school year.

Specifically, Massachusetts requested the amendments to:

- Modify the school quality or student success (SQSS) indicator to alter the State's definition of chronic absenteeism. A student will be chronically absent if the student missed 20 percent of the school year (rather than the prior definition of 10 percent).
- Modify the State's system of annual meaningful differentiation to report school identification status rather than an overall performance score for each school.
- Clarify that the State will use data from the 2018-2019 and the 2021-2022 school years to identify schools for targeted support and improvement (TSI) in fall 2022.
- Exclude the 2019-2020 school year from the number of years in which a comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) school must meet the exit criteria in order to exit CSI status.
- Modify the exit criteria for schools that are eligible to exit CSI-Lowest Performing status in fall 2022 such that the CSI school will exit if meets the following criteria:
  - Not re-identified for CSI in fall 2022 and demonstrates improvement in academic achievement or growth since the year that the school was initially identified;
  - Demonstrates that systems are in place to sustain progress in academic outcomes for students; and
  - Maintains a 95 percent participation rate on the spring 2022 statewide assessments.
- Modify the exit criteria for schools that are eligible to exit additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI) status in fall 2022 such that the ATSI school will exit if it meets the following criteria:
  - The student subgroup leading to ATSI identification demonstrates improvement in academic achievement or growth since the year that the school was initially identified;

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- The identified subgroup(s) no longer demonstrates performance below that of the 5th percentile of Title I schools;
- Demonstrates that systems are in place to sustain progress in academic outcomes for students; and
- Maintains a 95 percent participation rate on the spring 2022 statewide assessments.

I am approving Massachusetts' changes to its ESEA consolidated State plan. This letter and Massachusetts' approved Addendum for school year 2021-2022 will be posted on the Department's website along with the currently approved version of Massachusetts' ESEA consolidated State plan (available at: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/essa-consolidated-state-plans/>).

Please be aware that approval of this amendment to Massachusetts' consolidated State plan is not a determination that all the information and data included in the amended State plan comply 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. It is Massachusetts' responsibility to comply with these civil rights requirements.

I know that you are doing all in your power to support your districts and schools to ensure the health and well-being of students and educators. Thank you for your dedication to this effort. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at [OESE.TitleI-a@ed.gov](mailto:OESE.TitleI-a@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

/s/

James F. Lane, Ed. D.  
Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary  
Delegated the Authority to Perform the  
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Erica Gonzalez, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Rob Curtin, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education