



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

November 30, 2022

The Honorable Kim S. Benton
Interim State Superintendent of Education
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Dr. Benton:

Thank you for your participation in the U.S. Department of Education's (the Department's) assessment peer review process under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). I appreciate the efforts of the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to prepare for the peer review, which occurred in October 2022. Specifically, MDE submitted evidence regarding the use of the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) as a locally selected, nationally recognized high school assessment in the Corinth School District. A separate determination is forthcoming for MDE's general and alternate assessments in reading/language arts (R/LA), mathematics, and science, based on the peer review that was conducted in winter 2022.

State assessment systems provide essential information that States, districts, schools, and educators can use to identify the academic needs of students, target resources and supports toward students who need them most, evaluate school and program effectiveness, and close achievement gaps among students, including students with disabilities and English learners. A high-quality assessment system also provides useful information to parents about their children's advancement against and achievement of grade-level standards. The Department's peer review of State assessment systems is designed to provide feedback to States to support the development and administration of high-quality assessments.

External peer reviewers and Department staff carefully evaluated MDE's submission and the Department found, based on the evidence received, that this component of Mississippi's assessment system meets most, but not all, of the statutory and regulatory requirements of the ESEA. Based on the recommendations from this peer review and our own internal analysis of the State's submission, I have determined the following:

- Locally selected, nationally recognized high school assessments in reading/language arts (R/LA), mathematics, and science (Cambridge IGCSE): **Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.**

Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA means that this component of the State's academic assessments meets most of the requirements of the statute and regulations, but some additional information is required. The list of items required for MDE to meet all statutory and regulatory requirements of the ESEA is enclosed with this letter. The Department expects that MDE will likely be able to provide this additional information within one year. Because the IGCSE substantially meets requirements, and consistent with the information provided to States on May 17, 2017,¹ MDE may permit Corinth School District and any other local educational agency, to administer the IGCSE in place of the statewide assessment beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. In order to continue to administer the IGCSE in place of the statewide assessments beyond the

¹ <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/saa/locallyselected72117.pdf>

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

2022-23 school year, I want to highlight the specific information requested in critical elements 6.1 and 6.2, which must be provided to the Department by December 1, 2023.

The full peer review notes from the review are enclosed. These recommendations to the Department formed the basis of our determination. Please note that the peers' recommendations may differ from the Department's feedback; we encourage you to read the full peer notes for additional suggestions and recommendations for improving your assessment system beyond what is noted in the Department's feedback. Department staff will reach out to your assessment director in the next few days to discuss the peer notes and the Department's determination and to answer any questions you have.

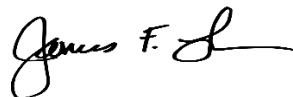
I request that MDE submit a plan within 30 days, outlining when it will submit all additional required documentation for peer review. Upon submission of the plan, the Department will reach out to MDE to schedule the next peer review. I also want to take this opportunity to review the peer review status of the other ESEA-required assessments administered by the State, based upon our current records:

- General assessments in mathematics and R/LA for grades 3-8 (MAAP): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.²
- General assessments in high school mathematics (MAAP EOC Algebra I) and R/LA (MAAP EOC English I): Substantially meets requirements of the ESEA.³
- General ELP assessment (LAS Links): Partially meets the requirements of the ESEA.⁴

We are currently planning assessment peer reviews for the summer of 2023 (submission of documentation by June 30, 2023). We look forward to a mutually agreeable time to schedule peer reviews for any of the State's assessment components where additional evidence is needed. Also, please remember that if MDE makes significant changes to any of its assessments, the State must submit information about those changes to the Department for review and approval.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. I appreciate the work you are doing to improve your schools and provide a high-quality education for your students. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosures

cc: Jackie Sampsell, Director of Assessment

² <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/06/Mississippi-6.pdf>

³ <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/06/Mississippi-6.pdf>

⁴ <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/04/Mississippi-5.pdf>