



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

March 15, 2024

The Honorable McKenzie Snow
Director
Iowa Department of Education
400 E. 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Director Snow:

I am writing in response to the Iowa Department of Education's (IDE's) February 2, 2024, request to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) for a waiver of the requirement to administer the annual, statewide assessments in the Perry Community School District (PCSD). IDE requested the waiver due to the school shooting that occurred at Perry High School on January 4, 2024. IDE requested that PCSD be permitted to forgo all statewide assessments in the 2023-2024 school year including the English language proficiency (ELP) assessment that would have been administered beginning in January 2024 and the reading/language arts (R/LA), mathematics, and science assessments that will be administered statewide this spring.

After careful review of IDE's request, pursuant to my authority under section 8401(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), I am approving IDE's request to waive the assessment requirements. As a result of this decision, I am also waiving related accountability and reporting requirements for the three schools in PCSD. Specifically, the Department is waiving the following statutory requirements with respect to PCSD for the 2023-2024 school year so that PCSD may forgo administration of the R/LA, mathematics, science, and ELP assessments:

- ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v), requiring the State to administer annual assessments in each required grade level in PCSD.
- Section 1111(b)(2)(G) of the ESEA, requiring the State to administer an annual assessment of ELP for English learners in PCSD.
- ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(C), requiring the State to include all public schools in the State in its system of annual meaningful differentiation. Under this waiver, IDE would be permitted, for one year, to exclude schools in PCSD from its system of annual meaningful differentiation based on data from the 2023-2024 school year.
- ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(C)(iii), requiring the State to identify schools with consistently underperforming student groups for targeted support and improvement based on data from the 2023-2024 school year. Under this waiver, IDE would be permitted to exclude schools in PCSD from identification for targeted support and improvement based on data from the 2023-2024 school year.

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- ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) and 1111(h)(2)(C), requiring the State to report assessment results for PCSD for the 2023-2024 school year on its State educational agency (SEA) and local educational agency (LEA) report cards.
- ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C)(iv) and 1111(h)(2)(C), requiring the State to report information on PCSD’s results of the ELP assessment for the 2023-2024 school year on its SEA and LEA report cards.
- ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C)(v) and 1111(h)(2)(C), requiring the State to report PCSD’s school and student group performance on the other academic indicator for the 2023-2024 school year on its SEA and LEA report cards.
- ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C)(vi) and 1111(h)(2)(C), requiring the State to report progress of PCSD’s students and student groups toward long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for academic achievement for the 2023-2024 school year on its SEA and LEA report cards.

IDE must continue to report all information that is not based on assessments, including the adjusted cohort graduation rate and performance on the school quality or student success indicators, via State and local report cards. This waiver is applicable only for the 2023-2024 school year for PCSD’s three schools, and reflects the unique, specific challenges following the tragedy and the proximity between resulting school closures and the planned assessment windows. In waiving these critical ESEA requirements—and recognizing the significant capacity constraints in a small school district and the intensive efforts involved in recovery—we urge IDE and PCSD to communicate with parents and families on alternative sources of information on student achievement and progress including results from any local assessments.

Thank you for your dedication to supporting PCSD’s students, especially as the community engages in their recovery efforts. If you have any questions, please reach out to our team at ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Adam Schott
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Delegated the Authority to Perform the
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Clark Wicks, Superintendent, Perry Community School District
Jay Pennington, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Information and Analysis Services, IDE