



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

October 27, 2023

The Honorable Willie Jett
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113

Dear Commissioner Jett:

We are writing regarding the Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE's) percentage of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities taking an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) limits the percentage of students that a State may assess with an AA-AAAS to no more than 1.0 percent of all assessed students in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. On February 4, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) placed a condition on MDE's Title I, Part A grant award after Minnesota exceeded the 1.0 percent threshold for the 2018-2019 school year in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science, based on data submitted to the Department via the *EDFacts* reporting system.

The Department recognizes that this was a new requirement starting in the 2017-2018 school year and that most States previously assessed more than 1.0 percent of students with the AA-AAAS. We further understand that States needed time to adjust their systems to reduce AA-AAAS participation rates and that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted many plans in States in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years.

For the 2021-2022 school year, MDE submitted information to the Department via *EDFacts* that showed the following AA-AAAS rates:

Reading/language arts: 1.30% **Mathematics:** 1.33% **Science:** 1.28%

In reviewing MDE's 2021-2022 data, the AA-AAAS participation rates for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science are still well above the 1.0 percent threshold. While the AA-AAAS participation rate for science declined by more than 0.1 percentage points, the rates for reading/language arts and mathematics declined only slightly from 2018-2019. As a result, the grant condition will continue on MDE's fiscal year 2023 Title I, Part A grant award.

In order to satisfy this condition, MDE must:

1. Submit, within 30 calendar days of the date of this letter, a revised plan for how the State will come into compliance with the requirement to assess no more than 1.0 percent of students with an AA-AAAS.

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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.

2. Participate in joint monitoring calls with the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of Special Education Programs while the State works to meet the requirement. Our staff will be in touch with your team to organize these calls.
3. Demonstrate that the AA-AAAS rates in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science are below 1.0 percent.

The Department also notes that the State had low rates of overall assessment participation in 2021-2022 (i.e., 91 percent in reading/language arts, 90 percent in mathematics, and 74 percent in science). The Department strongly encourages the State to take appropriate actions to increase the overall rates of assessment participation in the State.

If the State continues to have an AA-AAAS participation rate over 1.0 percent in future years, the Department may take additional action. This is particularly true if the State is unable to demonstrate that it is making significant progress reducing the percentage of students taking the AA-AAAS.

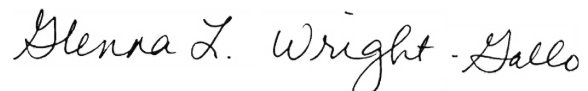
The Department continues to support Minnesota and all States in meeting this critical ESEA requirement. In September, the Department hosted a conference on State assessments that focused, in part, on helping States further address this issue. We shared lessons learned from States that have been successful reducing their overall AA-AAAS rates. Materials from the conference are available at: <https://apps1.seiservices.com/2023SSA/Materials.aspx>.

We appreciate the work you are doing to improve your schools and provide a high-quality education for students. If you have any questions, please contact Department staff at ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov.

Sincerely,



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



Glenna Wright-Gallo
Assistant Secretary
Office of Special Education and
Rehabilitative Services

cc: Jennifer Dugan, MDE
Sonia R. Smith, MDE