

March 13, 2017

Dear Chief State School Officers:

Thank you for your continued work with State and local stakeholders to develop thoughtful consolidated State plans in order to implement the new requirements in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In my letter of February 10, 2017, I indicated that the U.S. Department of Education (Department) planned to develop a revised consolidated State plan template that would require only descriptions, information, assurances and other materials that were “absolutely necessary” for consideration of such a plan, consistent with ESEA section 8302(b)(3). I also noted that I wanted to ensure that regulations comply with the requirements of the law, provide the State and local flexibility that Congress intended and do not impose unnecessary burdens. Today, I am pleased to provide you with the revised template for the consolidated State plan that promotes innovation, flexibility, transparency and accountability, and reduces burden to help ensure every child has a chance to learn and succeed. [Note: The revised template and other attachments will also be posted on the Department’s ESSA resources web page at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html>.]

States, along with local educators and parents, are the most critical actors working to ensure that every child has access to a quality education. I am committed to supporting this work by faithfully implementing the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, which will help ensure that all students have access to excellent teachers and positive, safe learning environments with necessary supports to prepare them for success in college, a career and life. Consistent with section 8302(b)(1) of ESEA, the Department collaborated with State educational agencies (SEAs), as well as other State and local stakeholders, in developing the revised consolidated State plan template, which includes only those descriptions and information that are absolutely necessary for the Department’s consideration of each State’s plan. The streamlined State plan template provides flexibility for State and local education leaders to do what is best for children, while also maintaining essential protections for subgroups of students, including economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English learners. Each State plan will provide parents with quality, transparent information about how the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, will be implemented in their State so that all children can reach their full potential. Parents may use this information to help choose the right educational environment for their child and to help their schools and their educational programs grow and improve.

I recognize the tremendous work each State, including SEAs and Governors in concert with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA), already has done in developing its consolidated State plan and want to ensure that each State has the opportunity to submit a consolidated State plan that reflects its needs. Therefore, an SEA may either submit a consolidated State plan using the revised consolidated State plan template or an alternative template that addresses each requirement in the revised template and that is developed by the State working with CCSSO. For any program not included in a consolidated State plan, the SEA must submit individual program State plans that meet the statutory and regulatory requirements of each respective program.

An SEA may choose to submit its consolidated State plan or individual program State plans by either **April 3, 2017**, or **September 18, 2017**. The Department will conduct two peer review processes – one following each submission deadline. To prioritize State flexibility, the Department will engage with Chief State School Officers and their staffs and with Governors and their staffs as State plans proceed through the peer review and Secretarial review process.

Thank you for the important work that you, your staffs, governors, and other stakeholders are doing to transition to the ESSA, which was passed in 2015 with bipartisan support. The Department looks forward to working with all State stakeholders, districts, schools, educators and parents to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.

Sincerely,

Betsy DeVos

Enclosure

cc: Chris Minnich, CCSSO
Scott Pattison, NGA
State Title I Directors
State Title II Directors
State Title III Directors
State Title IV Directors
State Assessment Directors
State 21st Century Community Learning Center Directors
State Directors for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless
Children and Youths Program