

December 20, 2017

Jason Botel  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Assistant Secretary Botel,

With the adoption of the Next-Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in 2013, Delaware initiated efforts to design, develop, and implement the innovative NGSS-aligned science assessments to replace the legacy Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) science assessment. To support a full implementation of the NGSS, Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has been formulating effective and broad communications to districts, schools, educators, Delaware Science Coalition, and various stakeholders regarding the plan for the NGSS-aligned science assessment system. This letter is a formal request for a one-year waiver, pursuant to section 8401(b) of the Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA) in the following statutory provisions:

- Sections 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(II)(aa) and 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(II)(bb) that require states to test all students in science not less than one time during Grades 3 through 5 and Grades 6 through 8; and once in high school, and
- Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(x) that requires reporting results for students, schools and districts.

The DDOE is planning the full-census field test of the NGSS-aligned summative assessment for all students in spring 2018 at grades 5 and 8 and at the high-school level to prepare for test administration in 2018-2019. The approval of this waiver will help Delaware students and educators in the following ways:

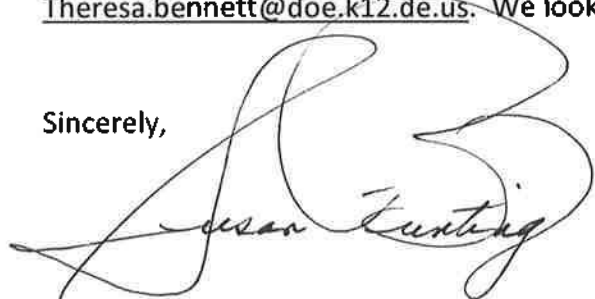
- It will effectively reduce testing time in public schools for eligible students in grades 5 and 8 and at the high-school level.
- It will suspend the legacy science assessment based on previous content standards and send a transparent signal to Delaware educators, students, parents, and general public about the transition to the NGSS in curriculum and classroom instruction, as well as the state assessment system.

- It will provide students and teachers an opportunity to experience NGSS-aligned test items and become familiar with innovative item types, which will have positive impacts on curriculum and instruction.
- The authentic field test will prepare students and educators for both the technical and academic expectations of this assessment for 2018-19 and beyond.

The DDOE will not issue any test scores from the field test for students, schools or districts. The DDOE expects all students to participate in the science field test, as such, Delaware will provide the participation rates to the U. S. Department of Education (DOE). Delaware hereby assures that with the approval of this request, DDOE will communicate with teachers, students, parents, policy makers, and the general public about the objective of the field test and related requirements and inform all LEAs of the required participation in the science field test. The state's superintendents are fully supportive of this request and as evidenced by the feedback provided as part of this request.

I sincerely hope that the U.S. DOE will continue to support the Delaware's commitment to improve public education for all its students. Please direct questions regarding this request to Theresa Bennett [Theresa.bennett@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:Theresa.bennett@doe.k12.de.us). We look forward to a favorable response to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Bunting", with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Susan S. Bunting, Secretary of Education  
Delaware Department of Education

cc: Michael Watson, Chief Academic Officer, Associate Secretary  
Donald Peasley, Office of State Support, USED  
Tiffany Forrester, Office of State Support, USED