



COLORADO
Department of Education
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

August 25, 2017

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Directors,

I hope your school year is off to a great start. Thank you for all you do day-in and day-out for all the students of Colorado! I want to give you an update on our ESSA plan feedback from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and the process and timeline from here.

As most of you know, CDE received feedback from the USDOE regarding Colorado's submitted ESSA State Plan. USDOE officials communicated the feedback by phone on Aug. 9 and sent a [formal letter and peer review notes on Aug. 11](#). Some issues were resolved during the phone call and are not included in the formal letter from the USDOE as they only required simple clarification. In other cases, the USDOE has asked CDE to provide additional context or clarity or to describe our next steps to help the federal reviewers better understand Colorado's plans so they can determine if the plans meet ESSA's statutory requirements. The department was given a deadline of Aug. 24, 2017 to submit a revised version of Colorado's ESSA plan that addresses the feedback from the USDOE.

Most of the issues raised relate to Title I-Part A, specifically the accountability requirements (e.g., the use of mean scale scores, long term goals, growth in English language proficiency, and the academic achievement indicator). CDE believes that some of these concerns can be effectively addressed by providing additional context, clarity and information about Colorado's plans.

However, USDOE officials also provided feedback that can be best addressed after thoughtful consultation with you and other ESSA stakeholders as well as the State Board of Education and the USDOE in the coming weeks. The USDOE indicated that Colorado's approach to calculating the academic achievement indicator for the purpose of identifying schools for support and improvement under ESSA is not consistent with the requirements of the law. **Specifically, any assessment non-participant beyond 5 percent of the total population must be considered as a "non-proficient" score when calculating achievement to identify schools for improvement.** (For mean scale score calculations, the USDOE suggested that students should receive the lowest scale score, a 650).

As a result of follow-up conversations with the USDOE, CDE now has a greater understanding of the firm ESSA requirements related to accountability as well as the flexibility available to the state in meeting them. This additional understanding of ESSA requirements and flexibility will be helpful to us in addressing the feedback from the USDOE.

Consequently, on Aug. 24, CDE submitted a request to extend the timeline for the revised ESSA plan submission and indicated that we would likely submit our revised ESSA state plan to them



in late October. CDE will continue to work through the more difficult issues with the State Board, ESSA stakeholders, and USDOE in the coming weeks. It is our hope that, if we take the time to carefully consider the feedback provided and our options in addressing it, it will result in a better and more meaningful ESSA state plan for Colorado.

If you have feedback on how we should address the issue of participation in the accountability calculation to identify schools for improvement, please let me know.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Anthes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Katy Anthes, Ph.D.
Commissioner

