From: Dana Haring
To: OPI Waivers
Date: Tuesday, October 01, 2013 8:36:12 AM

I write to support the waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education from Superintendent Denise Juneau to allow Montana students to participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) field test in the spring of 2014. The approved waiver would permit students to take the new online assessment rather than the Montana Criterion Referenced Test (CRT). Eliminating the requirement for the CRT would provide the following benefits to education in Montana:

1. Add instructional time for students by eliminating double testing of students. Those people not working in the schools perhaps do not understand that it takes a week of instructional time in both math and English classes to administer the CRT. This doesn't even count the additional time spent by teachers in preparation and organization for the assessment.

2. Test computer hardware and network infrastructure to determine gaps and needs. As the new SBAC test is completely digital, this will provide essential information for districts to guide their technology development before the test "counts" in 2015.

3. Provide professional development for teachers as they review the delivery, content, vocabulary, and structure of the SBAC assessment;

4. Provide a more effective and efficient transition to the 2014-2015 assessment; and

5. Students will be assessed on the standards being taught in Montana classrooms, not the standards set ten years ago. The SBAC will, for example, cover almost all 41 English Language Arts standards, whereas the CRT only tested 4 of the previous set of standards.

Not only will approval of this waiver benefit Montana students, it will benefit the other 25 member states of the SBAC as statisticians and educators can examine the administration and results to improve the process for the 2014-2015 school year.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration.

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Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. ~John Dewey