UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

OCT 2 2 2015

The Honorable Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Department 201
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Superintendent Baesler:

Thank you for submitting North Dakota's State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (State Plan). I know you agree that all children – regardless of their race, zip code, or family income – need and deserve effective, engaging educators. All teachers and principals deserve the resources and support they need to help students reach their full potential. Unfortunately, family income and race continue to dictate too often a student's likelihood of attending a great school staffed by exceptional educators. This inequity is simply unacceptable, and I look forward to continuing to work with you and your team to make working in high-need schools more attractive and sustainable. North Dakota's State Plan represents an important step toward these goals and to ensuring that all students have access to excellent, well-supported educators.

I have reviewed North Dakota's State Plan and determined that it meets the requirements of sections 1111(a)(1), 1111(b)(8)(C), and 9304(a)(3)(B) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). The U.S. Department of Education (ED) appreciates and shares North Dakota's commitment to ensuring that all North Dakota students have access to excellent educators as described in its State Plan. North Dakota has described the steps that it will take to ensure that students from low-income families and students of color are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, and the measures that North Dakota will use to evaluate and publicly report progress with respect to such steps in accordance with ESEA requirements. I appreciate the consultation that North Dakota conducted with stakeholder groups to inform the analysis and development of its State Plan, as well as your commitment to continuing to include these stakeholders in the implementation of your State Plan.

I am confident that North Dakota will implement the strategies described in its State Plan and advance its efforts to ensure that all children have access to the excellent educators they deserve. ED looks forward to providing assistance and support through our ongoing performance management and monitoring activities as North Dakota moves forward with implementation of its State Plan. As stated in ESEA section 1111(f)(1)(B), North Dakota must review and revise its State Plan as necessary to reflect changes in its strategies and programs. Additionally, ED is pleased to continue to provide technical assistance to support implementation of State Plans through partnerships with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL) and the Equitable Access Support Network (EASN).

Through GTL, EASN, and ED's network of Regional Comprehensive Centers, Regional Education Labs, and Equity Assistance Centers, States can access technical assistance to support implementing State Plans including:

- Regional meetings to support implementation planning and provide opportunities for States to discuss approaches to ensuring equitable access to effective educators;
- Topical communities of practice to explore common implementation challenges and share best practices on data use and analysis, rural access issues, stakeholder engagement, and policies and programs;
- Tools and resources to support implementation planning, ongoing stakeholder engagement and communication, supporting local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing local strategies, and monitoring and reporting progress; and
- State specific support.

North Dakota continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its LEAs are in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in their implementation of this State Plan. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. North Dakota and its LEAs' obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are further explained in ED's Dear Colleague Letter of October 1, 2014, which, in the context of providing equitable educational resources, makes clear that recipients of Federal funds are prohibited from intentionally discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as well as from implementing facially neutral policies that have the unjustified effect of discriminating against students on the basis of race, color, or national origin (http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-resourcecomp-201410.pdf).

If you need any additional assistance to implement your State Plan, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Oberst of my staff at: OSS.NorthDakota@ed.gov. Thank you for your continued efforts and engagement in this important work to ensure that all North Dakota's students have access to excellent educators.

Sincerely,

Ann Whalen
Delegated the authority to perform the functions and duties of Assistant Secretary of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Laurie Matzke