

**OFFICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL ENHANCEMENT AND INTERNAL OPERATIONS**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**October 17-18, 2013**

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT**

05. Approval to submit an additional waiver to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request for double testing flexibility for the Mississippi Alternate Assessment of Extended Curriculum Frameworks (MAAECF)

**Executive Summary**

As part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Mississippi is required to assess all students including those with significant cognitive disabilities and report scores in the Mississippi Accountability System. On June 18, 2013, Secretary Arne Duncan of the U.S. Department of Education sent a letter indicating that the Department would consider requests for flexibility waivers related to relief from “double testing” of students in 2013-2014 if the State administers a new assessment field test aligned to college and career-ready standards.

This flexibility waiver allows districts to participate in the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) field test for students with significant cognitive disabilities for the 2013-2014 school year and not give the Mississippi Alternate Assessment of Extended Curriculum Frameworks (MAAECF) in English Language Arts and Mathematics unless the student’s IEP requires accommodations that are not available on the DLM field test.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached



## Double Testing Flexibility Waiver Rationale

### Key Points:

- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) will replace the MAAECF as the alternate assessment for English Language Arts and Mathematics for 2014-2015. Students will continue to take the MAAECF for science.
- The DLM field test will be conducted over three testing windows:
  - January 15-31, 2014
  - March 17-April 11, 2014
  - May 1, 2014-the end of the academic year
- All districts and schools will be given the option to participate in the DLM field test for students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD). Because of the limited functionality in the field test delivery mode, the following students are **not** eligible to participate:
  - Students with hearing impairments who require read-aloud translated into sign language.
  - Students with visual impairments that cannot be accommodated with magnification.
- Advantageous to students, schools, and districts
  - Experience with the testing process prior to the operational year in 2014-2015
  - DLM will provide test items aligned to the standards which will reduce the amount of preparation that the current MAAECF requires.
  - Students will be instructed on a single set of standards rather than both the DLM Essential Elements and the Mississippi Extended Curriculum Frameworks (MECF).
  - Reduction in costs because DLM is computer scored and MAAECF is hand scored. The chart below reflects the students assessed in 2012-2013 and an estimation of how many of these students would be eligible to participate in the DLM field test.

Potentially Impacted Students	Language Arts	Mathematics	Science
Estimated Totals (based on 2012-2013 data)	<b>3,368</b>	<b>3,367</b>	<b>1,417</b>
DLM-Eligible	<b>3,165</b>	<b>3,164</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Ineligible Students	<b>203</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>1,417</b>

### References:

- Student Assessment web site: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/osa>
- MDE Dynamic Learning Maps web site: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/dlm>
- Dynamic Learning Maps web site: <http://www.dynamiclearningmaps.org>

### Contact:

- James Mason, State Assessment Director, 601.359.3052, [jmason@mde.k12.ms.us](mailto:jmason@mde.k12.ms.us)
- Gretchen Cagle, Educator in Residence, 601-359-2135, [gcagle@mde.k12.ms.us](mailto:gcagle@mde.k12.ms.us)

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Date to be determined

Dear Assistant Secretary:

I am writing on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to request approval to amend the State’s approved ESEA flexibility request. The relevant information, outlined in the *ESEA Flexibility Amendment Submission Process* document, is provided in the table below.

<b>Flexibility Element Affected by the Amendment</b>	<b>Brief Description of Element as Originally Approved</b>	<b>Brief Description of Requested Amendment</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Process for Consulting with Stakeholders, Summary of Comments, and Changes Made as a Result</b>
2.A.ii Option B	Mississippi’s differentiated accountability system includes performance for students with significant disabilities on the statewide alternate assessment. (Page 64)	Mississippi proposes to reduce the testing burden on schools by allowing districts to choose if a student with a significant cognitive disability participates in either the Dynamic Learning Maps field test or the statewide alternate assessment noted in the approved Request for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Because the field test will not produce individual student scores, participation will be recorded, but other student data will not be included for the 2013-2014 school year for field test participants. All eligible students will continue to take the statewide alternate assessment for Science.	Reducing the time taking statewide assessments and/or field tests will allow more time for classroom instruction, providing students with more opportunity to learn the challenging college- and career-ready alternate content standards.	<p>MDE spoke at the Quarterly Special Education Director Meeting, hosted a webinar on September 30, 2013 for superintendents &amp; principals, and hosted a webinar October 1, 2013 for special education teachers in which application for the double testing waiver was discussed. A survey was given after the September 30<sup>th</sup> webinar where LEAs could give comments, and an email survey was sent to district special education directors to determine their desire to participate in the DLM field Test. Discussion at an open portion of a State Board meeting also occurred.</p> <p>Seventy percent of comments received were in support of the amendment; others expressed concern at changing assessments mid- year. Still other comments expressed concern that a waiver was not being requested for the general assessment. As a result, we will emphasize to our LEAs the need to make appropriate transitions that are in the best interest of students and explain the reasoning behind the waiver request to LEAs.</p> <p>Attached are LEA comments submitted in response to the invitation to comment.</p>

If the Department approves the amendment request, MDE will provide an updated ESEA flexibility request that reflects the amendment with additional details on its high-quality plan,

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timeline, and activities related to this amendment as part of the process for requesting renewal of ESEA flexibility. Please contact Dr. Kim Benton, State ESEA Contact, at [kbenton@mde.k12.ms.us](mailto:kbenton@mde.k12.ms.us) or by phone at 601/359-3077 if you have any questions regarding these proposed amendments.

MDE acknowledges that the U.S. Department of Education may request supplementary information to inform consideration of this request.

Sincerely,  
MDE Superintendent






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## Waiver for “double testing” flexibility for students with significant cognitive disabilities taking an alternate assessment

MDE began sharing information regarding the amendment and the pending waiver at multiple stakeholder meetings during September and October. September 11, 2013 special education directors were informed of the possibility of the waiver at the Quarterly Special Education Director Meeting. On September 30<sup>th</sup>, MDE hosted a webinar for superintendents and other LEA officials. A survey was then completed by those who attended the meeting live and by those who watched via webinar asking for comment on MDE’s intention to request the double testing webinar for students with significant cognitive disabilities. An email to all superintendents, special education directors, and district test coordinators was then sent to invite all districts interested in participating in the Dynamic Learning Maps field test. The next day, October 1, 2013, the monthly alternate assessment webinar was conducted to explain to special education directors and special education teachers the nature of the waiver and the implications of the DLM field test. The final step is the discussion during the State Board of Education’s working meeting on October 17, 2013. The comments garnered from all of these meetings will be summarized as supporting documentation to the October 21, 2013, amendment request.

To date, seventy percent of the comments received are in support of the amendment; however, a few expressed concern that only students with significant cognitive disabilities would be included and that changing assessments mid-year could be difficult. As a result, MDE will emphasize to our LEAs the reasoning behind the decision to not include students taking the general assessment, that DLM participation is voluntary, and provide guidance for professional development transition. Below is a summary of LEA comments submitted in response to the appeal for public comment.

### Summary of feedback gained from the September 30, 2013 webinar

Which of the following best describes your thoughts about the proposed "Double-Testing Flexibility" Waiver for SCD students participating in the DLM field test?		
Very Positive (2 Points)		23%
Positive (1 Points)		47%
Neutral (0 Points)		24%
Negative (-1 Points)		4%
Very Negative (-2 Points)		1%
<b>Total Respondents</b>		<b>100%</b>

Comments regarding the “Double Testing” Flexibility Waiver:





- I think that's only fair.
- We want to volunteer and don’t care if we double up.
- Entirely too many tests required
- Need more information.
- This should be an improvement of the current alternative assessment.
- Due to the fact that many school districts have already begun the MAAECF process this year, participation is extremely limited. Information regarding this proposal was distributed too late. As for future participation it is determinant on the decision if Dynamic Learning Maps will replace MAAECF regardless of a decision to remain with CCSS and PARCC assessments.

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Students should not have to participate in extra testing.

- No double testing waiver should be requested for ALL students.....
- Any school or district double-testing should automatically receive a waiver.
- A waiver needs to be in place to ensure teachers can remain focused on the teaching and learning process and not wasting too much time on testing.
- Thank you
- I like the proposal not to double test SCD students.
- My belief is that the SCD assessment process is counter-productive as it has been for several years. We certainly do not need to assess those students twice. Once is stressful enough for both student and teacher.

## **Results of the survey asking for Dynamic Learning Maps Field Test participants**

ALL eligible SCD students will take the DLM field test.		<b>92</b>	<b>68%</b>
MOST eligible SCD students will take the DLM field test.		<b>14</b>	<b>10%</b>
SOME eligible SCD students will take the DLM field test.		<b>13</b>	<b>10%</b>
NO eligible SCD students will take the DLM field test.		<b>16</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b> (For this Question)		<b>135</b>	<b>100%</b>

One hundred and thirty-five of 151 responded to the survey with 88% of respondents indicating they wanted to participate in the DLM field test in some form. The 16 districts who did not respond were contacted by phone by MDE personnel.