



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

# EDUCATION

Dear LEA Leaders,

Yesterday, the US Department of Education published federal guidance around assessment, accountability and reporting requirements for the 2020-21 school year. While the Department reiterated the importance of assessments and did not provide a blanket waiver process, it did commit to working with individual states based on their specific circumstances and differing needs. **We are writing to inform you that after careful consideration of this guidance, OSSE plans to seek a one-year waiver from federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements around assessments, in order to suspend statewide summative assessments for students this spring, including Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in English Language Arts and Math, Multi-State Alternate Assessments (MSAA), ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and Alternate ACCESS.** As you know, earlier in the year we announced that both the DC Science assessment and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) science alternate assessment were also cancelled and that STAR Framework Scores and Ratings would not be calculated for the 2020-21 school year.

Since making the original commitment in fall 2020 to assess students, we have been closely monitoring the public health emergency and its impact on school communities in DC and across the nation. As part of this decision, we considered our ability to ensure equitable distribution of the assessments; to responsibly report out on comparable results; the impact on limited instructional time for our students; and bandwidth of our teachers and administrators. Ultimately, we decided that moving to cancel these assessments in the 2020-21 school year was the best course of action for our education community.

We value the use of comparable student performance data and recognize how important it is, particularly now. Our statewide assessment systems provide us critical information on academic performance across the city and we will be on track to resume administration in spring 2022. We are committed to working with our stakeholders to be able to provide information that is meaningful and useful in improving programs and supports for all students and schools. No other tool can take the place of statewide summative assessments in providing comparable data on student performance and growth. However, given the unique circumstances DC is facing this year, we do not believe our summative assessments would yield the reliable and comparable data needed to inform targeting of resources and supports for students who need it the most. We do believe in the power of statewide summative assessments and remain committed to understanding where our students are. Therefore, we plan on requiring LEAs to submit information to OSSE about student progress based on school-level assessments and invest in city-wide research to understand the state of unfinished learning across the state. In the coming weeks, we will provide more information about the data that we will collect.

We appreciate your partnership and hard work in previously preparing to administer these statewide assessments in these circumstances, and for your flexibility now with these changes. We wanted to be sure to communicate this information as soon as possible. We will be working closely with the US



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Department of Education over the next few weeks to develop the waiver and will keep you informed on the process.

If you have questions, please contact OSSE's Director of Assessments Danielle Branson at [Danielle.Branson@dc.gov](mailto:Danielle.Branson@dc.gov) or OSSE's Director of Accountability Donna Johnson at [DonnaR.Johnson@dc.gov](mailto:DonnaR.Johnson@dc.gov).

Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

Shana Young  
Interim State Superintendent of Education