JUL 10 2017

David L. Evans
Executive Director
National Science Teachers Association

James F. Brown
Executive Director
STEM Education Coalition

Via email: ipeterson@nsta.org

Dear Mr. Evans and Mr. Brown:

Thank you for your letter of June 23, 2017, regarding concerns about the feedback the U.S. Department of Education (Department) gave to Delaware regarding student performance on science assessments in its Academic Achievement indicator. You noted your belief that our feedback may discourage a State from including such performance in its accountability system and you emphasized the importance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in ensuring our nation's competitiveness in the global economy and technological leadership. You also noted that both President Donald Trump and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos have made statements about the importance of STEM education. First, let me begin by agreeing with you on the importance of science. I can assure you that the Department is not discouraging States from including student performance on science assessments in their accountability systems. One highlight of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), is a focus on emphasizing the importance of a well-rounded education.

As you are aware, under the ESEA each State is required to submit a plan to the Department for our review and approval regarding how it will implement key aspects of the ESEA. An important component of the State plan is the State's description of its accountability system under Title I, Part A. The ESEA requires that the accountability system include five indicators: Academic Achievement, Graduation Rate, Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency, Other Academic Indicator for Schools that are not High Schools, and School Quality and Student Success. States have discretion for how they define each of these indicators, provided they meet the requirements outlined in the ESEA. For the Academic Achievement Indicator required under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B)(i)(I), the statute specifies that States can only include proficiency on the annual assessments required under ESEA subsection (b)(2)(B)(v)(I); thus, States may only include the performance of students on assessments in mathematics and reading/language arts in its Academic Achievement indicators. This does not mean that States may not include science in the State accountability system. On the contrary, States have discretion to include science results elsewhere in the State's accountability system. For example, a State may

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choose to include performance on science in the indicator for public elementary and secondary schools that are not high schools as required under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(b)(ii) (i.e., the Other Academic indicator). A State may also choose to include student performance on science assessments in the School Quality or Student Success indicator for all schools, including high schools.

I appreciate your commitment to educating and empowering students, and I hope this letter addresses your concerns. I look forward to your continued efforts to promote educational opportunities for all of our nation’s students.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jason Botel
Acting Assistant Secretary

cc: The Honorable Susan Bunting, Secretary of Education, Delaware Department of Education