



**BILL HASLAM**  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

**CANDICE MCQUEEN**  
COMMISSIONER

October 5, 2018

Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education  
US Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

The adoption of the Tennessee Academic Standards for Science in October 2016 initiated the complete overhaul of science education in Tennessee to replace the former tests with a new assessment aligned to these new standards. In the 2018-19 school year, Tennessee plans to implement a new, computer-based assessment for science that is aligned with these new standards. This will be done through a full-scale field test of the new TNReady science assessments, involving all eligible Tennessee students. This plan is in the best interests of our students, teachers, and schools statewide and is consistent with the successful implementation of the Tennessee Academic Standards for Science.

As described in Section 8401 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) and the State Board of Education (SBE) are requesting a one year waiver which will allow Tennessee to not double test or report student scores during the 2018-19 school year during the administration of the field test for the TNReady science assessments. The approval of the waiver request will allow Tennessee to do the following:

- Field test the new TNReady science assessments without double testing students in grades 3-8 and high school students enrolled in Biology.
- Suspend the former science tests, which are aligned to outdated standards, and provide a signal to Tennessee educators to transition their classroom instruction to the new science standards.
- Temporarily suspend the required reporting of individual student scores for the 2018-19 school year for the TNReady science field test. Tennessee still intends to provide participation rates at school and district levels for the field test to the US Department of Education.

This waiver will ensure that students will not lose valuable instructional time in preparation for tests aligned to outdated standards. It will also avoid the unnecessary stress of double testing students, especially since there is no educationally useful purpose for administering a test aligned to outdated standards.

Tennessee plans to follow the guidelines set forth by the American Educational Research Association and the National Council on Measurement in Education in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (Standards)*. The TDOE will document all assessment development activities in accordance with these guidelines, as well as with peer review guidelines, and will provide all necessary documentation for peer review. Tennessee's plan for the new TNReady science assessments will:

- Provide students, schools, and districts with the opportunity to gain exposure to this new, more rigorous and well-aligned assessment.
- Meet the federally required participation rate of 95 percent in state science assessments.
- Provide valuable feedback on the quality of the newly developed TNReady science assessment items.

The timeline for the implementation of the TNReady science assessment is such that 2018-19 will be a field test year, while 2019-20 and beyond will be operational test years.

Tennessee assures that if granted the waiver:

- Tennessee and its local education agencies (LEAs) will ensure that all eligible students participate in the TNReady science field test.
- TDOE will properly notify all LEAs and schools of their required participation in the TNReady science field test.
- TDOE will work with LEAs to notify parents and guardians of students will be notified of the school's participation in the field tests, in compliance with Sections 8401(b)(3)(A)(i) and (iii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by ESSA.

With Tennessee's move toward implementation of the new TNReady science assessments, the TDOE hopes the ED will continue to support our commitment to improve educational opportunities for all of Tennessee's students.

Please direct questions regarding this request to Heather Peltier, Chief Assessment Officer, by phone at 615-626-0391 or by email at [heather.peltier@tn.gov](mailto:heather.peltier@tn.gov). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Candice McQueen  
Commissioner  
Tennessee Department of Education