



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY K. WEBB Ed.D.
COMMISSIONER

November 10, 2009

Arne Duncan, Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
(add address)

Dear Secretary Duncan:

The State of Tennessee has made great strides in improving its public schools under Governor Bredesen's leadership. From establishing a robust state pre-k program to ratcheting up the State's academic content and achievement standards, Tennessee has taken bold steps to reform its educational system so that our students are prepared for post-secondary education and the world of work.

But we know that with all these important changes, we will have little success in our ultimate goal of improved student achievement without addressing the preparation of our state's teachers. We have instituted innovative alternative licensure programs, such as our state-funded Teach Tennessee initiative, and have recruited national programs, such as Teach for America and the National Teachers' Project, to improve our teaching force. However, most of our teachers are graduating from traditional teacher education programs within the State before they enter our classrooms. Because of this, Tennessee has taken two bold steps to fundamentally reform our institutes of higher education teacher preparation programs.

- Tennessee provides the public with information about the quality of its teacher education preparation programs annually. This information links teacher effectiveness scores derived from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System from novice teachers to the programs that prepared them. These reports are available on our website at <http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/>.
- Tennessee Board of Regents, which oversees six state-funded higher education institutions that prepare almost 50% of Tennessee teachers, is implementing a year-long residency program in which college seniors preparing to be teachers will have both hands-on experience in P-12 schools while they participate in coursework directly related to that experience.

This latter initiative was recognized in your speech on October 22, 2009 at Columbia Teachers College. But, to implement this innovative senior residency program,

important structures need to be put in place that effectively link these residents and their programs with participating schools for the benefit of both the schools and the residency teachers. To accomplish this, the Tennessee Board of Regents and Tennessee Department of Education want to ensure that these programs are supported by effective, experienced teachers currently employed in our districts. These teachers would not only provide a link from the districts and schools to the participating residents and their professors, but they would also be responsible for ensuring that these residency teachers provide benefits to the schools in which they are placed. Unfortunately, with Tennessee’s current state budget, funds to support this necessary link are not available in either the budget for higher education or the budget for P – 12. Because of this, we are requesting the following waiver related to Title IIA of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act so that this important initiative can be effectively implemented.

Waiver:

Tennessee requests a waiver of Sections 2123(a)(2) and 2113(c)(1) so that IIA funds at the state and local levels may be used to hire veteran teachers who would be assigned to districts and schools where senior residency teachers are placed to: 1) support both the professional development of current highly qualified teachers and the residency teachers in the schools where such residency teachers are placed; and, 2) to serve as liaisons between the participating districts and schools and the teacher education preparation programs. These veteran teachers would not replace the supervising faculty members employed by the institute of higher education (IHE) to directly supervise and evaluate the residency teachers’ progress.

Tennessee will measure the impact of this structure in a variety of ways, including measuring the specific impact of participating schools and districts in accordance with section 1111(b) as delineated in the chart below.

Measurable Outcomes for Schools in Districts Participating in the Waiver for the Use of IIA Funds

School Year	Measurable Outcomes for Schools with Residency Teachers Supported by this Waiver
2010-11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schools with grades with grades 3-8 will increase the percentage of students testing proficient or above and make gains on value-added in both reading/language arts and math from the school year 2009-10 2. Secondary schools will increase the percentage of students testing proficient or above and make gains on value-added in both English II and math from the school year 2009-10
2011-12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schools with grades with grades 3-8 will increase the percentage of students testing proficient or above and

	<p>make gains on value-added in both reading/language arts and math from the school year 2010-11</p> <p>2. Secondary schools will increase the percentage of students testing proficient or above and make gains on value-added in both English II and math from the school year 2010-11</p>
2012-13	<p>3. Schools with grades with grades 3-8 will increase the percentage of students testing proficient or above and make gains on value-added in both reading/language arts and math from the school year 2011-12</p> <p>4. Secondary schools will increase the percentage of students testing proficient or above and make gains on value-added in both English II and math from the school year 2011-12</p>

The approval of Tennessee’s request for this waiver of the Title II statute will:

1. *increase the quality of instruction for students* by ensuring that Tennessee’s new teachers entering its classrooms are prepared for the challenge by providing the support to the residency teachers, their teacher education preparation programs, and the participating schools to successfully implement a “strong and substantial field-based program in local public schools that drives much of the course work in classroom management and student learning and prepares students to teach diverse pupils in high-needs setting,” as referred to in your October 22nd speech;
2. *improve the academic achievement of students* by ensuring that new Tennessee teachers are prepared adequately and by ensuring that the field work they do their senior year helps to support the academic achievement of the schools in which they are placed ;
3. *assist the State and its local educational agencies reach the measurable goals*, in accordance to Section 1111(b), by ensuring that residency teachers are not only learning fundamental teaching skills but are also contributing to, instead of interfering with, the schools’ ability to meet their students’ academic needs ; and,
4. *ensure that schools continue to provide assistance to the same populations served by Title II* by ensuring that participating districts will still be allowed to use any remaining Title IIA funds for other allowable Title IIA activities. In addition, through the approval of this waiver, participating districts and schools will be able to directly impact the training of prospective teachers that they will have the potential to hire after the completion of their senior residency program.

As required under Section 9401, Tennessee Department of Education has provided all local educational agencies with notice of this waiver request. The State will submit any comments received about this request to the Secretary after the local educational agencies have had a reasonable opportunity to comment. In addition, the State will post this waiver request on its website so that public is informed.

We appreciate your consideration of these requests. Enclosed with this request are documents that provide more information about the Tennessee Board of Regents Program, including recent press releases to the public. If you have any questions about these requests, please contact Dr. Julie P. McCargar at 615-532-6297 or email Julie.McCargar@tn.gov

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy K. Webb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Timothy K. Webb, Ed.D.

c: J. Conaty
E. Witt

Enclosure