



Wyoming Department of Education

Dr. Jim McBride, Superintendent of Public Instruction

2020 Grand Avenue, Suite 500

Laramie, WY 82070

Phone 307-777-5296

Fax 307-777-6719

Website www.k12.wy.us

MEMORANDUM NO. 2010-199

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Jim McBride, Ed.D. 

DATE: November 5, 2010

SUBJECT: Banking 10th grade PAWS scores

IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO SHARE

Districts are understandably concerned with news that PAWS results for tests taken by 10th graders in 2010 may not be eligible for “banking” in 2011. We have asked districts to plan on testing all 11th graders in 2011.

In April 2010, the Wyoming Department of Education sought a waiver from using PAWS results for all federally required accountability decisions. This was done following extensive conversations with the state’s school district superintendents. The district superintendents were unanimous in their resolve that 2010 results should not be used for accountability decisions such as AYP.

Following conversations with USED, we have moved with the assurance of a waiver. Districts are well aware that as a result of the 2010 administration problems, results were delayed. Obviously, AYP determinations have not yet been made. USED has not given any indication that Wyoming will be able to implement a partial waiver, selecting some results but not others.

However, in light of district concerns related to the 10th grade banking issues, we have written USED with a request that Wyoming be allowed to use the 10th grade results for our 2011 students. A copy of that letter is attached.

As previously advised, all districts should make plans to test all 11th grade students in 2011. Should we receive approval for the 10th grade banking, we will advise districts accordingly.

JM/MKH/wk

Attachment



Wyoming Department of Education

Dr. Jim McBride, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Hathaway Building, 2nd Floor, 2300 Capitol Avenue

Cheyenne, WY 82002-0050

Phone 307-777-7673 Fax 307-777-6234 Website www.k12.wy.us

November 4, 2010

Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana
Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-6100

Dear Assistant Secretary Meléndez de Santa Ana:

Thank you for your letter of November 5, 2010, in response to my July 9, 2010 request for a waiver of certain requirements of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), Title I, Part A statutory and regulatory requirements.

You are probably aware that Wyoming's approved system for calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) includes the option for banking of 10th grade assessment results to be applied to the following year. In other words, students may take the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) in their 10th grade year, and these scores may be banked to count for 11th grade AYP in the following year. Students have the option to take the test as 11th graders in the following year, but most do not if they scored Proficient or Advanced Proficient. As you can easily imagine, the prospect of not needing to take the PAWS assessment in their junior year, if they score Proficient or Advanced Proficient in their sophomore year, is a powerful incentive for 10th grade students to try to do their best on PAWS.

When I requested a waiver of requirements to use 2010 PAWS scores as a basis for 2010 AYP decisions, there was great concern that schools and districts would be unfairly held responsible for low PAWS scores of an unknown number of students whose scores were adversely affected by the substantial administration difficulties this year. I still believe strongly that the basis of the AYP waiver request was a sound one for schools and districts.

However, as we have been communicating with our school districts about the impending waiver of AYP based on 2010 PAWS results, the Wyoming Department of Education has received earnest and pointed requests that students who scored Proficient or Advanced be allowed to bank their scores from 2010. The requests are based on the rationale that if students scored Proficient or Advanced Proficient in spite of difficulties they may have experienced with the online administration of the test, they surely have demonstrated their proficiency on the PAWS assessment.

Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana
November 4, 2010
Page 2

Our Technical Advisory Committee, along with our local school districts, are deeply concerned that delivering the message to these students that they will be required to take the test again in 2011, even if they have already demonstrated proficiency, will be extremely difficult. Further, they believe that students who were promised that their scores as sophomores would suffice to demonstrate their proficiency on the PAWS will lose complete faith in the importance of the PAWS assessment in 2011. Thus, schools and districts would suffer a double effect on their AYP designations in 2011. Not only would they lose “credit” for students who were Proficient or Advanced Proficient in 2010, but when students take the test in 2011, their antipathy toward the test could very well depress their performance, and schools would be held accountable for scores that are downwardly biased due to low student motivation.

Therefore, I request that 10th grade students whose scores were Proficient or Advanced on the 2010 PAWS be allowed to “bank” their scores toward AYP determinations for schools and districts in 2011. Granting this request would go a long way toward putting behind us the adverse effects of the malfunction of the online testing software provided to Wyoming by its assessment vendor, NCS Pearson, Inc.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Dr. Alan Moore, our Standards and Assessment Division Director, at amoore@educ.state.wy.us or 307-721-1930

Sincerely,



Jim McBride, Ed.D.

JM:AM:rew