November 25, 2014

Secretary Arne Duncan  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I am writing to obtain clarification from the U.S. Department of Education regarding Elementary and Secondary Education Act assessment requirements as we continue to respond to questions from the field in Illinois.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) interprets ESEA Section 1111(b)(3) to require a State educational agency that receives funds under Title I, Part A of ESEA to implement in each local educational agency in the State a set of high-quality, yearly academic assessments that includes, at a minimum, assessments in mathematics, reading or language arts, and science. Under ESEA Section 111(b)(3)(C)(i), these must be the same academic assessments used to measure the achievement of all children in the State.

I request USED’s affirmation of ISBE’s interpretation of these provisions. Please inform me as soon as possible if the following interpretations are incorrect:

1) Under ESEA, it is not allowable for a local educational agency to “take a year off” from assessing students.

2) It would be inconsistent with ESEA requirements for a State to offer a “menu of assessments” from which local school districts could select to administer to students.

Your prompt consideration of this request for clarification would be appreciated. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

cc: Deb Delisle, USDE