State to remove writing assessment from federal AYP calculation

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The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has decided to remove the on-demand writing performance assessments in the calculation of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This issue recently surfaced during our federal peer review when we were told by the U.S. Department of Education that most states exclude writing in their AYP designations. Teachers have commonly referred to the writing assessment as one of the best tools available to assist in instruction, but adding the writing results to AYP calculations is a different matter. It entails a complicated process that requires studies and extensive documentation prior to approval by the U.S. Department of Education. Although Oregon submitted approximately 1500 double-sided pages of additional material to the U.S Department of Education, it would likely be insufficient to receive approval for our assessment system in July 2007 if writing remained in the calculation of AYP. Without getting that approval next month, our entire federal funding amount would be in jeopardy. The change will affect AYP based on only the 2005-06 and 2006-07 test data. In other words, we will not go back and recalculate AYP for past years after removing writing results. But the AYP results calculated for 2006-07 will delete both the 2005-06 and 2006-07 writing scores from the formula. ODE will focus its resources on obtaining approval for its multiple-choice assessments in reading/literature, mathematics, and science, as well as its newly revised extended assessments for students with special needs. Writing results will continue to be included in the calculation of the school and district report card ratings, and writing will remain an essential component of Oregon's statewide assessment system. Further, the State Board of Education has identified writing as one of the essential skills that will be required for high school graduation. ODE will continue to study what it would take to meet the rigorous federal requirements to allow writing to be added back into our definition of AYP, and we will work with schools, districts and its partners to determine whether or not it should be included in future AYP designations.