Dear Superintendent:

The Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) is a statewide alternate assessment intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate meaningfully in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) even with accommodations. These students require substantial modifications of the general education curriculum and are instructed using the alternate eligible content aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards. To participate in the PASA, students must meet specific criteria established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education (BSE). Participation in the statewide alternate assessment is an IEP team decision based on these eligibility criteria.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to ensure that the total number of students assessed in each subject, using the alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities, does not exceed one percent of the total number of all students in the state assessed on the PSSA (grades 3-8), Keystone Exams (grade 11), and PASA (grades 3-8 and 11).

While all LEAs that exceed the one percent threshold will be required to implement appropriate training to staff regarding eligibility determinations, LEAs that exceed the threshold by over 4% will be subject to additional oversight by the BSE.

Your LEA has been identified as requiring additional oversight. This determination was made by review of data that indicates the LEA exceeded the threshold for two consecutive testing years, with a rate over 4% for the 2016-17 testing year. Consideration was also given to the projected rate of PASA participation for the 2017-18 test administration. As a result, your LEA is required to complete the enclosed “Intensive Needs LEA Review” document. The BSE will also review a minimum of two Individualized Education Program documents. Results of this review will determine if further training will be required regarding appropriate eligibility decisions for students who participate in the statewide alternate assessment in accordance with ESSA.

Questions regarding this information may be directed to Lisa Hampe, Special Education Adviser at lihampe@pa.gov or Lynda Lupp, Statewide Special Education Assessment Coordinator at llupp@pattan.net .

Sincerely,

Ann Hinkson-Herrmann

Director

Enclosure