UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

June 23, 2015

The Honorable Margie Vandeven
Commissioner of Education
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
205 Jefferson Street
PO Box 840
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Commissioner Vandeven:

I am writing in response to Missouri's request for renewal of flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), so that Missouri may continue to implement ESEA flexibility.

Our team, including my staff and other senior leaders at the U.S. Department of Education (ED), reviewed Missouri's request dated June 8, 2015. Pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to renew approval of Missouri's ESEA flexibility request for three years, through the end of the 2017–2018 school year.

My decision to renew approval of Missouri's ESEA flexibility request is based on my determination that ESEA flexibility has been effective in enabling Missouri to carry out important reforms to improve student achievement and that this renewal is in the public interest. With this renewal, Missouri will be able to continue implementing its plans to promote innovative, locally tailored strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. Missouri's approved request will be posted on ED's website.

This letter also provides my approval of Missouri's proposed amendments to Principle 1 and Principle 2 of its ESEA flexibility request. A summary of Missouri's significant approved amendments is enclosed with this letter. I have also determined that Missouri's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems meet the requirements for Principle 3 articulated in ED's June 7, 2012 document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.

This renewal is subject to Missouri's commitment to:

- Demonstrate, during ED's monitoring and follow-up of ESEA flexibility implementation, that Missouri is executing the plan set forth in its ESEA flexibility request, including timeline and milestones, that will lead to: (1) incorporation of student growth in the teacher and principal

evaluation and support systems no later than the 2015–2016 school year and each year thereafter; and (2) the use of summative ratings, no later than the 2016–2017 school year and each year thereafter, to inform personnel decisions.

- Provide to ED, by December 31, 2015, a summary of progress the State educational agency (SEA) is making on its proposed changes to existing assessments and a timeline for the process that will be used to implement the assessments in spring 2016.

Missouri continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its local educational agencies (LEAs) are in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in their implementation of ESEA flexibility. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

I am confident that Missouri will continue to implement the reforms described in its approved ESEA flexibility request and advance its efforts to hold schools and LEAs accountable for the achievement of all students. If you need any additional assistance to implement your ESEA flexibility request, please do not hesitate to contact Laura Thomas of my staff at OSS.Missouri@ed.gov.

Thank you for your commitment and continued focus on enhancing education for all of Missouri's students.

Sincerely,

Heather Rieman
Acting Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Stacey Preis, Deputy Commissioner
Dr. Sharon Helwig, Assistant Commissioner
Dr. Paul Katnik, Assistant Commissioner
Robin Coffman, Chief of Staff and Acting Assistant Commissioner
TJ Spalty, Director, School Improvement
Jocelyn Strand, Coordinator, School Improvement
Craig Rector, Director, Federal Programs

Approved Amendments to Missouri's ESEA Flexibility Request

The following is a summary of significant approved amendments to Missouri's ESEA flexibility request. ED approves these amendments because Missouri's ESEA flexibility request, as amended, continues to be aligned with the principles of ESEA flexibility. Please refer to ED's website (http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/map/mo.html) for Missouri's complete ESEA flexibility request.

- **Transition to College- and Career-Ready Standards (1.B)**
  Revision: Missouri amended its request to add a description of its Diverse Learner Amplification Project, which is designed to provide more support to teachers of English Learners and students with disabilities in transitioning to the new standards.

- **Transition to College- and Career-Ready Standards (1.B)**
  Revision: Missouri amended its request to add a more detailed description of being part of the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment Systems Consortium.

- **State-Developed Recognition, Accountability, and Support System (2.A.i)**
  Revision: Missouri amended its request to reflect updates to its accountability index, including removing the "core score."

- **Criteria to Exit Priority Status (2.D.v)**
  Revision: Missouri amended the criteria the State educational agency (SEA) will use to determine when a school exits priority status. To exit priority status, a school will need to demonstrate that it has not been identified as a priority school for three consecutive years and has shown an improvement of at least three percent in combined English language arts and mathematics proficiency between the initial identification year and the most recent year of plan implementation.

- **Criteria to Exit Focus Status (2.E.iv)**
  Revision: Missouri amended the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school exits focus status. To exit focus status, a school will need to demonstrate that it has not been identified as a focus school for three consecutive years and has shown an improvement of at least three percent in combined English/language arts and mathematics proficiency between the initial identification year and the most recent year of plan implementation.