



Missouri's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Flexibility Waiver Approval Accountability Frequently Asked Questions

Timeline for Proficiency

1. Is Missouri still held accountable for ensuring 100 percent proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 school year?

Missouri has established new ambitious, but achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for English language arts and mathematics that align with the state's ultimate goal of ensuring all students graduate college- and career-ready.

2. What are Missouri's AMO's?

Missouri's AMOs reflect the goal of increasing proficiency rates by approximately 25 percent by 2020 and cutting the proficiency gap in half for historically disadvantaged students. The AMOs are aligned with the state's plan for achieving a top 10 ranking among states on national assessments of academic achievement and will be revisited every three years and/or when new assessments are introduced.

Subgroup Populations

3. How does Missouri's plan to use a Super Subgroup continue to protect all students, especially those most at risk?

Missouri's accountability system pays close attention to all of the ESEA subgroups and uses a group of the state's historically lowest-performing subgroups in accountability determinations. This group, the Student Gap Group, is comprised of five subgroups; black students, Hispanic students, low-income students, students with disabilities and English language learners. Use of a Super Subgroup allows for inclusion of students otherwise missed due to a low number of students in a single subgroup, eliminates a duplicated count of an individual student who may fall into numerous subgroups, and holds all districts accountable for the same number of subgroups.

4. Is there a minimum n size for the Student Gap Group?

Yes, the minimum in size for the Student Gap Group is 30.

5. How will ESEA flexibility ensure low-performing schools improve and close achievement gaps?

Under ESEA flexibility, Missouri will continue to disaggregate data to highlight the achievement gap and will require schools with the largest gaps to adopt research-based interventions to close the gap while also increasing overall student achievement. With the combined goal of creating academic growth and closing achievement gaps, schools will be rewarded for ensuring the success of all students, especially those who are farthest behind.

At the same time, the flexibility will end the one-size-fits-all interventions in schools. Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), all schools that did not meet proficiency goals were prescribed the same interventions, including mandatory school choice or tutoring. Now, the state will identify our lowest-performing schools, and schools will create aggressive plans that best address their

individual needs, as well as identify and intervene in their schools with the largest achievement gaps.

School Improvement Requirements

6. Will Missouri still identify a school for improvement, corrective action or restructuring under this flexibility?

No, the ESEA Flexibility Waiver frees the state of the requirement to identify schools in school improvement, corrective action or restructuring. As such, schools will not be required to implement the sanctions that were required by such identification as required by NCLB.

7. Will there be flexibility in the utilization of federal funds as part of the ESEA Waiver?

A Local Education Agency (LEA) will be relieved from the requirement to spend an amount equal to 20 percent of its Title I, Part A allocation on choice-related transportation, Supplemental Education Services (SES), and the requirement to spend an amount equal to 10 percent of its Title I, Part A allocation on professional development. An LEA has the flexibility to spend these funds on any activity allowable under Title I, Part A that is designed to improve student achievement or support teacher and leader effectiveness.

LEAs with priority and focus schools, as identified through the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, will be required to set aside up to 20 percent of their Title I, Part A funds previously set aside for choice-related transportation, SES and professional development to ensure their priority and focus schools receive sufficient resources and support to implement the meaningful interventions aligned with the school's needs and articulated in the school's improvement plan.

8. Since school choice is no longer a requirement in the ESEA Waiver, would a student in Missouri who has participated in school choice in the past stay at the choice school through the highest grade in the school?

A student exercising school choice may remain in the chosen school through the highest grade available in the school. Local Education Agencies have the option but are not required to pay the transportation expense using Title I funds.

LEA Improvement Requirements

9. Will Missouri still identify an LEA for improvement or corrective action under this flexibility?

The ESEA Flexibility Waiver does not require the state to identify LEAs in district improvement or corrective action. As such, LEAs will not be required to perform the sanctions that accompanied such identification. The state will continue to use the Missouri School Improvement Program's Annual Performance Report (APR) to hold all LEAs accountable for student performance.

Highly Qualified Teacher Improvement Plan Requirements

10. What requirements remain under the ESEA Flexibility Waiver for highly qualified teachers?

The ESEA Flexibility Waiver does not require an LEA to develop an improvement plan or restrict the use of federal education funds pursuant to such a plan. All other requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) remain.

Identification of Schools

11. When will LEAs be notified of priority and focus school status?

Local Education Agencies will be notified of priority and focus school status by early fall 2012.

Reward Schools

12. What is a reward school?

A reward school is a Title I school that has demonstrated high performance, high progress, or both, on measures of academic achievement over the last three years.

13. How are reward schools identified?

- High-performing reward schools are those Title I schools with the highest proficiency rates in English language arts and mathematics as measured by state assessments over three consecutive years. In order to earn this designation, schools must meet their AMOs, cannot have a proficiency gap of 20 percent or more between their highest-performing and lowest-performing subgroups, and, if applicable, must have a graduation rate of at least 90 percent.
- High-progress reward schools are those Title I schools demonstrating the most pronounced increases in proficiency rates in English language arts and mathematics on state assessments over the past three years. Additionally, high-progress reward schools cannot have a proficiency gap of 20 percent or more between their highest-performing and lowest-performing subgroups, and, at the high school level, must also demonstrate significant improvement in graduation rates over time.

Priority Schools

14. What are priority schools?

A priority school is among the lowest-performing Title I schools in the state for overall student achievement in English language arts and mathematics on state assessments over the past three years. The total number of priority schools is at least 5 percent of all Title I schools in the state.

15. How are priority schools identified?

Priority schools can be identified for one or more of the following reasons:

- The school is a currently-served Tier I or Tier II School Improvement Grant (SIG) school
- The school is Title I-participating or eligible and has had a graduation rate below 60 percent for at least three consecutive years
- The school is Title I-participating and is among the lowest-achieving in the state according to state assessment results over the past three years

16. What interventions must be implemented in priority schools?

Local Education Agencies with schools that are identified as priority schools will be required at a minimum to implement the following intervention strategies:

- Review the performance of the current principal to determine effectiveness, ability to be successful in the turnaround effort, prior history and track record of improving students' achievement, and grant the principal with flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staffing, curriculum and budget
- Improve classroom instruction (rigor, engagement, classroom management, differentiated instructional practice, alignment to the state's academic content standards and assessment practices) as evidenced by ongoing observations conducted by the Statewide System of Support (SSOS)
- Ensure that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by:
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of teachers using an evaluation system that adheres to the state's seven essential principles of effective evaluation
 - Preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and
 - Providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support system, and tied to teacher and student needs
- Increase staff effectiveness in using data to inform and improve instruction:
 - Participate in data team training

- Use data in monthly meetings with the SSOS to document progress
- Establish a culture of professional collaboration that focuses on a school climate that is conducive to high expectations and provides a safe environment for learning
- Redesign the school day, week or year to provide increased time for learning and professional collaboration
- Establish and implement family and community engagement that includes consultation with parents

17. When must an LEA begin implementing these interventions in each of its priority schools?

Currently served SIG priority schools will continue implementing their already approved plans. The planning phase for newly identified non-SIG priority schools will begin upon identification, with implementation starting at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year.

18. When will a school be eligible to exit priority status?

A school may exit priority status when the school no longer meets the definition of a priority school for three consecutive years and has reduced the number of non-proficient students by 25 percent in both English language arts and mathematics over a period of three years for all student groups.

Focus Schools

19. What are focus schools?

Focus schools are Title I schools whose Student Gap Groups are among the lowest-performing in the state over the past three years according to state assessment results.

20. How are they identified?

Focus schools are identified by ranking Title I schools in the state according to the average of their three-year English language arts proficiency rate for the Student Gap Group and their three-year mathematics proficiency rate for the Student Gap Group. The number identified must equal or exceed 10 percent of the state’s Title I schools. Priority schools are automatically excluded from focus school identification.

21. What intervention must be implemented in focus schools?

Focus schools will, at a minimum, be required to focus on the following interventions:

- Improve classroom instruction
- Develop and implement appropriate, evidence-based instructional strategies found to be effective for all students and subgroups
- Develop common formative and summative assessments
- Establish a culture of professional collaboration that focuses on a school climate that is conducive to high expectations and provides a safe environment for learning
- Increase staff effectiveness in using data to inform and improve instruction
 - Participate in data team training
 - Use data to document progress and inform instructional practices
- Provide increased time for professional collaboration
- Utilize mapping to support continuous development of all adults (teachers and leaders)
- Implement Missouri’s leader standards
- Implement with fidelity the strategies identified in the LEA and school improvement plans
- Maintain and report monthly on leading indicators
- Utilize feedback from regional partners to improve instruction, learning and leadership

22. When must an LEA begin implementing interventions in its focus schools?

The planning phase for focus schools will begin upon identification, and focus schools must begin implementation of the plan no later than the end of the first semester of the 2012-2013 school year.

23. When will a focus school be eligible to exit?

Schools will be exited from focus status when the school no longer meets the definition of a focus school for three consecutive years and demonstrates that the Student Gap Group that caused the school to be identified as a focus school has decreased the number of non-proficient students by 25 percent over a period of three years in both English language arts and mathematics.