



Missouri's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Flexibility Waiver
Priority/Focus/Reward Schools
Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Districts/LEAs will receive information on buildings identified as reward, priority or focus schools this fall. Will the district/LEA and school be required to develop and implement an accountability plan prior to the end of the first semester?**

Missouri's flexibility waiver will go into effect immediately for the 2012-2013 school year, although there will be some implementation and phase-in throughout the year. Currently served 1003(g) SIG priority schools will continue implementing their previously approved plans. The planning phase for newly identified **priority** schools will begin upon identification, with implementation starting no later than the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. 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.

- 2. What is SIG?**

SIG, as it is referenced in the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, refers to the 1003(g) School Improvement Grant Program (SIG) designed to provide funds for rapid turnaround of persistently low achieving schools. There are currently 41 buildings that are recipients of the grant.

- 3. Does the flexibility waiver impact school districts that are unaccredited?**

Districts that are currently unaccredited will be required to comply with the provisions of the waiver. The flexibility waiver does not impact the classification status of a school district.

- 4. Will the gap measure for reward schools use the Student Gap Group against the group of Total?**

The gap measure for reward schools is measured by a significant achievement gap between its lowest-performing subgroup and its highest-performing subgroup within that building. A significant gap is defined as a difference of at least 20 percent between high highest and lowest subgroups in a given school in a given subject area among groups that meet the minimum cell size requirement of 30.

- 5. Will buildings have to continue with School Improvement plans even if they're not in "improvement" anymore?**

As part of the process standards MSIP 5 will require all districts to have a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). Focus and priority schools will have to submit their CSIP for approval from the Department.

- 6. Are those focus and priority school plans entered in ePeGs in the same format or do we have flexibility on what those plans look like?**

After schools are identified as either focus or priority, they will be required to submit a CSIP for approval by the Department. At the point of identification, the CSIP becomes the accountability plan and must incorporate all required components as outlined in the waiver request

7. Did I understand all schools, Title and non-Title, must still have a school plan (Schoolwide/Targeted Assistance/CSIP) in addition to the accountability plan for focus & priority schools?

The ESEA Flexibility Waiver still requires schools that are Schoolwide Title I to submit a Schoolwide Plan and to complete the required planning period. Focus and priority schools will ~~need to submit~~ be required to submit a CSIP for approval by the Department. For additional information see question 5 above.

8. Is it still a requirement to equitably distribute funds (as has been done based on enrollment in the past) to support the focus and priority schools in the development of their accountability plans?

1003(a) and 1003(g) funds will be utilized to provide services to buildings that have been identified as priority and or focus schools. Section 1116(b)(10) requires that, unless a lesser amount is needed, an LEA spend an amount equal to 20 percent of its Title I, Part A allocation for this purpose. LEAs must ensure sufficient support for implementation of interventions in priority and focus schools by leveraging the funds it would have otherwise have obligated for Public School Choice (PSC) and SES. Outside of the 20 percent leveraged for plan implementation, the LEA shall allocate funds in rank order to eligible schools.

9. As part of their turnaround plan, will focus and priority schools be able to contract with providers to perform afterschool tutoring?

Priority and focus schools may contract with outside providers for the services necessary to implement their accountability plan. The ESEA Flexibility Waiver does not require districts to contract with outside provides for services.

10. Are non-Title I buildings required to put CSIP plans into ePeGs?

No. Non-Title I buildings are not required to CSIP plans into ePeGs.

11. Where will we find the "benchmarks" as to what kind of improvement or levels we must meet to be a reward school?

Missouri will recognize two types of reward schools, highest performing and high progress. The process utilized for identifying a reward school is located on pages 71-73 of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver: <http://www.dese.mo.gov/qs/documents/qs-esea-waiver-mo-flexibility-request.pdf>.

12. Will a district that has been identified as a 'district in need of improvement' be affected and if so, how?

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 districts accountable for student performance.

13. Will non-Title 1 schools be identified as reward, focus or priority schools? Will districts/LEAs be identified as reward, focus or priority?

Non-Title 1 schools will **not** be identified as reward, focus or priority schools. Identification for purposes of federal accountability will continue to take place at the building level. The state will continue to use the Missouri School Improvement Program's APR to hold all districts accountable for student performance.

14. Are building CSIPs only for priority/focus or does every Title 1 building need to have a building CSIP?

See question 4.

Funds

1. Is the 10% Title I PD set-aside and 1% parental involvement set-aside requirement eliminated along with the 20% SES?

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 Parent Outreach. The requirement to spend an amount equal to 10 percent of its Title I, Part A allocation on professional development is also waived. The 1 percent Parent Involvement for LEAs with an allocation of greater than \$500,000 is not waived. 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 allocate up to 20 percent of their Title I, Part A funds previously set-aside for choice-related transportation and SES 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 comprehensive school improvement plan.

2. Can more than 20% of district allocation be set aside to support focus and priority schools prior to distributing funds to all Title buildings?

Section 1116(b)(10) requires that, unless a lesser amount is needed, an LEA spend an amount equal to 20 percent of its Title I, Part A allocation for this purpose. LEAs must ensure sufficient support for implementation of interventions in priority and focus schools by leveraging the funds it would have otherwise have obligated for Public School Choice (PSC) and SES. Outside of the 20 percent, the LEA shall allocate funds in rank order to eligible schools.

3. Is it still a recommendation that no more than 10% of district allocation be given to the administrative pool when more district support is needed for focus and priority schools?

The Department recommends that 8 percent or less be used for program administration.

4. The 10 percent professional development requirement has been beneficial for districts/buildings. Is that set-aside still allowable even if the school has not been identified as priority/focus?

A District/LEA will not be required to spend an amount equal to 10 percent of its Title I, Part A allocation on professional development at the district or building level. If you should choose to provide professional with your Title I funds, it must be for Title I buildings only. Districts/LEAs would not set-aside professional development funds on Step 3 of your BOA. You would continue to budget building level professional development to Function Code 2200 Professional Development.

5. How is all this affected by sequestration of funds?

Sequestration is a procedure in which automatic spending cuts are triggered. It affect the amount of funds available for allocation to LEAs.

6. If the district chooses to provide a tutoring program for all Title I schools, is it allowable to leave funds in the SES Set-Aside and then filter the rest of the funds to the buildings or must all of the funds be filtered to the buildings?

LEAs may choose to continue to contract with an outside agency to provide afterschool tutoring. However, DESE will not provide an approved list of SES providers.

If an LEA chooses to contract with an outside agency, services could only be provided in approved Title I buildings and funds for services would come directly from those building budgets.

Afterschool tutoring would not be considered a district wide expenditure and funds would not need to be set aside on Step 3 of the BOA.

7. How can we staff our Title I positions for the 2012-13 school year without knowing whether we have a focus or priority school and will need to set-aside 20 percent of our funds for second semester?

The Department is recommending that districts not allocate or spend the 20 percent that needs to be leveraged to serve priority and/or focus schools until after the release of the list in early fall.

8. Will you provide additional clarity on the allocation of funding for focus and priority schools?

The Department will utilize 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds that are not currently committed to schools recognized as Tier I and Tier II buildings for purposes of providing targeted technical assistance to buildings identified for priority schools.

The Department will provide 1003(a) School Improvement funds to assist identified Focus schools implement the interventions outlined in the waiver.

9. Are Title III.A funds eligible for transfer?

Title III.A funds are not eligible for transfer.

SES

1. If we were unable to retain a reading intervention position for the upcoming school year due to the SES set-aside, will we now be permitted to do a revised budget application and rehire that teacher, or do we have to wait to see if we are on the list of priority and focus schools?

District will be permitted to revise their budgets; however, LEAs with focus and/or priority schools may need to leverage Title I.A funds to implement the Accountability Plan. The list of focus and priority schools will be available after the 2011-2012 data is released. Consequently, districts may want to wait before making revisions.

2. Is there a role that previous SES providers will have in the new state model?

SES providers have no official role in the new state model. LEAs have the option of using title funds to support tutoring services, but they are not required to do so.

3. It is not our intent to utilize SES providers but want to provide internal services. Can the funds that support tutoring be left in the set aside or do we need to filter to the buildings and budget a tutoring amount?

If you choose to continue to contract with an outside agency to provide after school tutoring you could only provide services in approved Title I buildings therefore; there would be no need to set aside those funds on Step 3 of the breakdown of allocations, you would budget this activity on Function Code 1200 Supplemental Instruction

HQT

1. Are the requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) waived?

All requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) remain. However, 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.

Charter Schools

1. Do the requirements and provisions of the waiver apply to the Charter schools as well?

Charter schools are held accountable, for purposes of federal accountability, to the same requirements and provisions outlined in the waiver as a traditional building or LEA.

Evaluation System

1. **Will the new MU Teacher Evaluation System going to meet the evaluation system requirements?**

The MU Teacher Evaluation initiative is an electronic tool available for districts to use which creates online capability for managing the evaluation process. This tool is offered by the University of Missouri and focuses on Missouri's teacher standards and highlights the importance of tracking data on performance.

2. **If a district hires staff in March, how does the teacher's test scores factor in on their evaluation when scores do not get back to the districts until August?**

The use of data on growth in student learning, as a part of the evaluation process, addresses the professional impact frame of Missouri's Educator Evaluation System. Student data should come from a wide variety of sources including, but not limited to, common, benchmark and formative district-generated assessments; peer-reviewed performance assessments; mutually developed student learning objectives by evaluator and teacher; student work samples such as presentations, papers, projects, and portfolios; individualized student growth objectives defined by the teacher; and valid, reliable, timely, and meaningful information from standardized testing. By using a wide variety of measures, the evaluation process is not limited to certain kinds of data and its availability.

3. **Are the weekly August webinars to address different waiver components only and/or other DESE expectations with MSIP 5, MO Ed Eval, etc.?**

The weekly webinars in August will be to provide further information about the state's new model evaluation system, the 2012-2013 pilot project, and the essential principles of effective evaluation.

4. **Are there additional descriptors and guidelines available on Missouri's Educator Evaluation System?**

Additional information about Missouri's Educator Evaluation System is available on our educator evaluation webpage at: <http://www.dese.mo.gov/eq/ees.htm>

5. **By what date must District/LEA evaluation systems be aligned to the principles?**

As articulated in Missouri's Flexibility Waiver Request, evaluation processes, statewide, are to be aligned to the essential principles of effective evaluation by the 2014-2015 school year.

6. **Are there any suggestions for measuring growth for teachers in areas such as physical education, art, and music?**

Growth in student learning is defined as a positive change in student learning across two points in time. An example might be a physical education teacher with data that shows a student went from doing 10 pushups in September to doing 20 pushups in October. This would demonstrate a growth in student performance. For music, it could be an increase in a student's knowledge of the music scale or for art an increase in a student's knowledge of famous painters. The learning objectives in physical education, art and music should come from the district curriculum and the data should demonstrate that a student's mastery has increased across two points in time.

7. **Will there be local flexibility in determining those measures we will use to determine growth?**

There is flexibility in the determination of measures used as long as there is alignment to the essential principles of effective evaluation. This principle states that the evaluation process "uses measures of growth in student learning as a significant part of the evaluation of professional practice at all levels and ensures that a proficient or distinguished rating cannot be received in educator performance if student growth is low".

8. When using student growth as a significant part of the evaluation, what percentage constitutes significant amount?

The state of Missouri has not designated a specific percentage of student growth to be used in the evaluation process in order to ensure it is significant. Rather, in the 2012-2013 pilot project, the state of Missouri will test the requirement that an educator may not receive a rating of proficient or distinguished with low student growth.

General Questions

1. Will the past 2 years test data be utilized in the "Student Gap Group"?

The Student Gap Group will be based on three consecutive year's results: the current year and the two years preceding the current year.

2. Can you clarify who/what is the SSOS?

Missouri's Statewide System of Support (SSOS) is the primary mechanism employed by the Department to hold LEAs and schools accountable for achievement and to provide differentiated recognition, accountability and support to all LEAs. The SSOS is comprised of the Department's regional staff including Area Supervisors and Federal Instructional Supervisors and staff in the regional centers.

3. Are Districts/LEAs required to send notification letters to parents about being in school improvement?

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 send notification letters to parents about their buildings improvement status.

4. How do you compute graduation rate for a Title I elementary school?

Graduation rates are computed only at the high school level.

5. Will the new rating system (Reward, Priority and Focus) only apply to schools or will it apply to districts as well?

Only buildings will be identified as Reward, Priority or Focus status. Districts will continue to be held accountable through the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). Classification statuses (Accreditation level) for districts include: Accredited with Distinction, Accredited, Provisionally Accredited or Unaccredited.

6. What will the status of the waiver be if a new President is elected in November?

Missouri's waiver will take effect for the 2012-2013 school year and remain in place for three years. At that point, the state may request an extension of the waiver. Once Congress passes the next reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) the reauthorized law would take priority over Missouri's waiver.

7. When will AYP results be released?

Under the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, Missouri is no longer required to report Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). For purposes of Federal accountability, Missouri will report percent proficient for English language arts and mathematics for the group of Total, the Student Gap Group and the Core Score. For Federal reporting purposes Missouri will report the percent proficient for the group of Total, the Student Gap Group and all of the traditional subgroups. This data, including the identification of reward, priority and focus schools will be released in the fall.

8. Is there a news release or other information available that we can provide to our local newspaper and constituents that explains the essential facts in the waiver?

Additional information related to the waiver may be found on the Department's website:

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/qs/esea-waiver.html>