

January 5, 2012

Mr. Michael Yudin
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Mr. Yudin:

I am writing on behalf of Missouri to request a waiver of the requirement in Section I.A.2(d)(1)(i)(B) of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, which requires a local educational agency (LEA) to develop and implement teacher and principal evaluation systems that meet certain requirements during the first year a school is implementing the transformation model. Those systems must be rigorous, transparent, and equitable and take into account data on student academic growth as a significant factor as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance, ongoing collections of information on professional practice reflective of student achievement, and increased high school graduation rates. This waiver would permit the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE), in accordance with criteria Missouri develops, to permit an LEA that is implementing the transformation model in one or more schools to take additional time to develop and implement high-quality evaluation systems that meet these requirements.

I understand that this waiver would apply only to evaluation systems for cohort 1 and cohort 2 SIG schools as follows:

- A school that began implementing the transformation model during the 2010–2011 school year (cohort 1) and that was not able to complete the development and implementation of its evaluation systems during that year must develop them during the 2011–2012 school year and, at a minimum, pilot them for all teachers and principals no later than the 2012–2013 school year. The piloted systems should be capable of being used for decisions regarding, for example, retention, promotion, compensation, and rewards, no later than the 2013–2014 school year.
- A school that begins implementing the transformation model in the 2011–2012 school year (cohort 2) must develop its evaluation systems during that year, pilot them for all teachers and principals during the 2012–2013 school year, and use the system in the school, including on decisions regarding, for example, retention, promotion, compensation, and rewards, no later than the 2013–2014 school year.

Missouri seeks this waiver to implement the teacher/leader evaluation requirements of the transformation model. The state was in the process of developing the new teacher/leader standards in the 2010-2011 school year. LEAs were notified of the approval of the teacher/leader standards in March of 2011. The Offices of Educator Quality and Quality Schools provided technical assistance to all buildings implementing the transformation model in the fall of 2011. Several LEAs had begun the development of local teacher/leader evaluation systems that met the requirements of 1003(g) SIG prior to this notification and technical assistance.

Additionally, the state's receipt of a late notification of award and subsequent award to districts did not allow recipients the time necessary to focus resources on the development and completion of a teacher/leader evaluation system that would meet the requirements of the 1003(g) SIG grant. While many of the LEAs began development of the required teacher/leader evaluation systems, the majority of the first school year was spent addressing school climate and establishing a culture of high expectations.

Missouri believes that the additional time will enable qualifying LEAs to meet the SIG final requirements while encouraging the development and implementation of high-quality teacher and principal evaluation systems that will increase the quality of instruction for students and improve the academic achievement of students.

Missouri has set the following annual measurable objectives in reading and mathematics for the 2011–2012 school year:

Content Area	AMO
Communication Arts/Reading	83.7
Mathematics	81.7

Missouri will determine adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on assessments administered in the 2011–2012 school year in accordance with the requirements of section 1111(b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and in accordance with the growth model approved by the Department. Missouri believes that affording an LEA more time to develop and implement teacher and principal evaluation systems for a school that is implementing the transformation model will improve teaching and learning in the school and increase student achievement by providing necessary time to ensure that the evaluation systems will meet the SIG final requirements.

If granted a waiver of the implementation timeline for the evaluation systems requirements of the transformation model, MODESE assures it will:

- Develop criteria that:
 - ❖ Missouri will use to evaluate LEA requests for timeline extensions, including by evaluating whether an LEA has demonstrated sufficient commitment to, and progress in, implementing principal and teacher evaluation systems for its cohort 1 or cohort 2 schools to justify the receipt of a timeline extension and whether, if an extension is granted, the LEA will be able to meet the timelines described above for developing and implementing evaluation systems; and
 - ❖ Enable Missouri to distinguish among LEAs that have met the requirements, those that are making sufficient progress toward meeting the requirements, and those that have not made a good-faith effort to meet the requirements.
- Approve an LEA request to implement the waiver only if MODESE determines, based on its criteria, that the LEA warrants an extension of the evaluation systems timeline.
- Develop a technical assistance and support plan that outlines how MODESE will differentiate support to LEAs based on their current level of implementation and will provide LEAs with the assistance they need to meet the evaluation system requirements (*e.g.*, by assisting LEAs in selecting observational rubrics, developing student growth metrics, disseminating guidance for developing student learning outcomes, and training raters).
- Develop a monitoring plan for the 2011–2012 school year, specifically for the LEAs that receive timeline extensions, that will help ensure that the LEAs are on track to pilot the required evaluation

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systems no later than the 2012–2013 school year (cohorts 1 and 2) and fully implement the evaluation systems no later than the 2013–2014 school year (cohort 2), as required.

- Within 30 days of receiving the waiver from the U.S. Department of Education, post on its public Web site the criteria, process, and timeline for reviewing an LEA’s extension request.
- Within 30 days of MODESE approving LEA extension requests, post on its public Web site and submit to the Department (via e-mail to school.improvement.grants@ed.gov) the names of the LEAs (including their NCES District Identification Number) for which it has approved a timeline extension and the schools (including their NCES School Identification Number) within those LEAs that will benefit from the extension, including an indication of the cohort to which each school belongs.
- Determine what action it will take with respect to LEAs that have not made a good-faith effort to meet the evaluation system requirements.

MODESE assures that it provided all LEAs in the State that are eligible to receive a SIG grant with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on this request and has attached a copy of that notice. To expedite its waiver request, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will submit subsequently copies of any comments it receives from LEAs. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also assures that it provided notice and information regarding this waiver request to the public in the manner in which the State customarily provides such notice and information to the public (*e.g.*, by publishing a notice in the newspaper; by posting information on its Web site) and has attached a copy of, or link to, that notice.

Please feel free to contact Craig Rector a (573) 526-1594/craig.rector@dese.mo.gov) or Jocelyn Strand at (573) 751-1014/jocelyn.strand@dese.mo.gov) if you have any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris L. Nicastro
Commissioner of Education

c: Carlas McCauley
Christopher Tate
Margie Vandeven
Craig Rector
Jocelyn Strand