



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

DEC - 8 2014

The Honorable John White
State Superintendent of Education
Louisiana Department of Education
PO Box 94064
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Superintendent White:

This letter is in response to Louisiana's September 26, 2014, request for a one-year extension of flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA flexibility), so that Louisiana may continue to implement ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. Because Louisiana was able to address significant concerns raised by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) review team about its extension request in a revision submitted on November 19, 2014, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am extending Louisiana's ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, subject to the conditions described below. My decision to grant this one-year extension is also based on my determination that ESEA flexibility has been effective in enabling Louisiana to carry out important reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest.

Louisiana's extension request includes a number of proposed amendments to the State's work under Principles 1 and 2 that need additional review by ED. Because the request was submitted later than requested by ED, and having been submitted well after the beginning of 2014–2015 school year, ED staff has not had sufficient time to work with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) staff on certain amendments. I am extending Louisiana's request on the condition that LDOE address these unresolved amendments, which ED has identified for LDOE staff, through the ESEA flexibility amendment process prior to submitting its request for renewal on or before March 31, 2015.

This letter does, however, mark my approval of some of Louisiana's proposed amendments to Principles 1 and 2 of its ESEA flexibility request. A summary of approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and Louisiana's amended request, including the approved amendments, will be posted on ED's website.

While Louisiana's monitoring next steps have been addressed sufficiently to warrant extension, LDOE must continue to work with ED during the ESEA flexibility renewal process to improve the planning and implementation of its ESEA flexibility request in the following areas:

- Improving its high-quality plan to ensure effective outreach to the English Learner community throughout Louisiana, including outreach to teachers, students, parents and advocates.

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<http://www.ed.gov/>

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

- Improving its implementation and monitoring plans for focus schools to ensure that these schools receive interventions that address the reason(s) they were so identified, specifically interventions focused on closing gaps between the highest-achieving subgroup or subgroups and the lowest-achieving subgroup or subgroups or, at the high school level, gaps in graduation rates.
- Improving its implementation and monitoring plans for other Title I schools to ensure that these schools receive interventions and supports that assist them in improving low-achieving students' performance against annual measurable objectives (AMOs) and/or graduation targets.

This extension is further subject to LDOE's commitment to continue working with ED on LDOE's proposed amendments to its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, which may require additional flexibility. LDOE's continued work with ED during the 2014–2015 school year on its proposed amendments to Principle 3, as well as its progress in implementing its Principles 1 and 2 plans and its high-quality plans to address next steps identified during Part B monitoring will inform ED's decision regarding renewal of Louisiana's ESEA flexibility beyond the 2014–2015 school year.

Louisiana continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its districts 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 pleased with the progress that Louisiana is making in a number of areas in which ED requested clarification, and the promise of more progress being made, and I am confident that Louisiana will continue to implement the reforms described in its approved ESEA flexibility request and advance its efforts to hold schools and school districts 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 Elizabeth Witt at: elizabeth.witt@ed.gov.

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

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Bridget Devlin, Louisiana Department of Education

APPROVED AMENDMENTS TO LOUISIANA’S ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

The following is a summary of approved amendments to Louisiana’s ESEA flexibility request. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) approves these amendments because Louisiana’s ESEA flexibility request, as amended, continues to be aligned with the principles of ESEA flexibility. Please refer to ED’s flexibility website (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/map/la.html>) for Louisiana’s complete ESEA flexibility request.

Transition to College and Career Ready Standards (1.B)

Revision: Replacement of discontinued strategies with revised strategies, as per recommendations in Part B monitoring report.

Develop and Implement a State-Based System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support (2.A)

Revision: To ensure stability during the transition to new standards and assessments, school and district letter grades will be aligned to the distribution of letter grades in 2013-2014 such that the distribution of school and district letter grades stays the same or better until a new baseline is set in 2015–2016.

Revision: Deletion of non-required elements from reporting.

Reward Schools (2.C)

Revision: Elimination of guaranteed financial awards for reward schools.

Priority Schools (2.D)

Revision: Revisions indicating that all priority schools are now charter schools and that none remain under the direct management of the Recovery School District.

Focus Schools (2.E)

Revision: Clarification that a school that was designated as a focus school because it earned a grade of F remains on the focus school list, even if its school grade improves. A school must earn a grade above an F for two consecutive years in order to exit focus status.

Revision: Removal of some originally planned focus school interventions, replacing them with updated interventions.

Other Title I Schools (2.F)

Revision: Removal of some originally planned school interventions, replacing them with updated interventions.

Building SEA, LEA and School Capacity to Improve Student Learning (2.G)

Revision: Removal of some originally planned activities, replacing them with updated activities.