

## Summary of State ESEA Flexibility Request

### STATE: Georgia

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of key aspects of state waiver requests made under the U.S. Department of Education's ESEA Flexibility initiative. This summary recognizes that states continue to work to refine and enhance these systems which will continue to evolve and improve over time.

**Introduction. This section summarizes some overarching issues important to the state's overall NCLB waiver request.**

1. What is the state's **clear vision and comprehensive integrated plan** to raise the bar on college and career-readiness? [See Overview; 2A-Summary of Accountability System; full request]

Georgia's request presents a clear and compelling vision for movement to a state system that is truly grounded in a definition of college and career-readiness. The central focus is the institution of an accountability and support system that will provide actors at every level with meaningful and actionable information. The state has articulated and built its request around its definition of what it means to be career-ready (as a co-equal element of college and career-readiness).

The state's request includes: a clear plan for the continued implementation of the Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments; a completely new accountability and support system that is complex yet a deliberate break from the narrow focus of NCLB; and a detailed plan for the continued development of teacher and leader evaluation systems.

The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is the accountability and improvement system that is at the core of the state's request. In its narratives on standards implementation and accountability and supports, the state's request elaborates on the vision for college and career-readiness, including through examples of the foundation that has already been established, the buy-in that has been achieved, the ways in which its CCRPI and report card will focus attention on the measures that matter most for students, and its plans for following through on that vision.

2. How does the state **define college and career-readiness**? [See Overview; full request]

Georgia defines college and career-readiness as "the level of achievement required in order for a student to enroll in two or four year colleges and universities and technical colleges without remediation, fully prepared for college level work and careers, including the United States military." The state's request is built around the vision of ensuring that "the K-12 experience provides students with the academic preparation to compete globally with career development skills aligned to the evolving requirements" of the state's workforce. (p. 13-14) It goes on to note that this means "that all students graduate from high school with both rigorous content knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge through higher-order skills including, but not limited to, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, and student agency." (p. 14) It includes a focus on global competency and competitiveness, the application of knowledge, and world language mastery.

Strategies for achieving this vision are detailed in several core aspects of the state's request. For example: student mastery of knowledge and skills is a focus of the state's current work on and future plans for the implementation of the CCSS. This includes "strengthening teacher content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and contextualized student tasks that effectively engage the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners..." (p. 20) In addition, the CCRPI includes an array of measures that are intended, at least in part, to assess student mastery of both rigorous content knowledge and the ability to apply , such as AP and IB course taking and performance; SAT and ACT scores, and course pathway completion.

3. How does the state's request articulate a commitment to **innovation, evaluation, and continuous improvement**? [See Overview; 2A-Summary of Accountability System; full request]

Georgia's request provides several examples of its commitment to innovation, evaluation and the continuous improvement of its systems. There are some examples of how the state has ensured this in the past, such as by learning from the weaknesses of its train-the trainer model that were exposed during its last round of standards implementation, and the external validation and refinement of its School Keys tool for school improvement. Now and moving forward, the state's 37 RTTT LEAs (which serve 40% of the state's total student enrollment) play an important role in innovation, evaluation and continuous improvement. These LEAs are piloting several key aspects of the state's systems and their efforts will inform further changes. For example, the RTTT LEAs are using the new guidelines for reviewing and revising principal induction programs before these guidelines will be made applicable to all other LEAs. RTTT LEAs

have piloted district-level early warning criteria and interventions. They will also serve as the pilot districts for the Teacher Keys Evaluation and Leader Keys Evaluation system guidelines.

In its standards implementation plan, the state's request notes a partnership with SEDL for the design of a database for collecting professional learning participation and feedback. The feedback will be used to better address the needs of teachers over time.

In its request, the state also notes it plans to pilot its CCRPI accountability system in 2011-12, and to make any necessary adjustments before moving from this "hold harmless" year to full implementation. At the local level, the state notes that LEAs will be given room to innovate by tailoring the Factors for Success measures of the CCRPI to focus on things that are local priorities.

4. How does the state's request provide evidence to indicate the state has the **capacity to implement** its proposed policies within the given timelines? [See Overview; 2A-Summary of Accountability System; full request]

Georgia's request builds on a number of efforts that are already underway – most importantly the state's CCSS implantation and its development of guidelines for a teacher and leader evaluation system under RTTT. Both of these projects began more than a year ago and have included significant stakeholder engagement. This history, plus the state's inclusion of detailed plans for completing this work, is evidence of the state's capacity to implement the systems that make up its request.

Moreover, the state's request anticipates the continuation of a few key partnerships that strengthen the state's capacity. In its plan for standards implementation, the state notes the role that the sixteen Georgia Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) will play in orientation and instructional leader training. The RESAs appear to be an important element of the state's capacity and are participating in literacy and formative assessment training to support the standards implementation. In addition, the RESAs, along with colleges, universities and regional labs, are collaborating with the GaDOE on its statewide system of support.

The plan also evidences partnerships with other entities, like Georgia Public Broadcasting, through which the GaDOE is augmenting its capacity to implement its standards and other aspects of its system.

## **Principle 1: Standards and Assessments**

1. Describe the state's plan for transitioning to and implementing **college and career-ready standards and assessments**. [See Section 1B]

Georgia's request includes some information on the CCSS implementation work that has already been completed, along with its plan for additional implementation support over the next two years. The Georgia State Board of Education adopted the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in July 2010 and implementation efforts began immediately thereafter. Full implementation will be achieved in 2012-13. In 2014-15 the state will transition to the PARCC assessments.

Georgia's request provides some history on its transition to college and career-ready standards and assessments, including movement from old standards to the Georgia Performance Standards, and now to the CCGPS. The request details a number of ways through which the state expects the CCGPS to help all students achieve college and career-readiness, along with some information on specific actions that were taken to develop the standards (including IHE participation) and in implementing them to date.

Georgia began its CCGPS implementation with extensive training for district and school level administrators, RESA curriculum staff, and 5,000 instructional leaders across the state. Others were introduced to the CCGPS through presentations, conferences, and curriculum meetings. This was followed in September 2011, by a "Common Core Orientation" that was broadcast statewide, through a partnership with Georgia Public Broadcasting. Through this broadcast, the state was able to reach administrators, teachers, counselors, postsecondary educators, parents and community members. There is a particular focus on training for instruction and supports to students with disabilities and English language learners. This includes a statewide professional development campaign with educator training on standards-based instruction for English learners, data mining workshops, and other targeted activities.

Moving forward, in the winter and spring, the state will offer professional learning sessions for administrators, teachers, and instructional leaders. These will be offered in person as well as through webinars and video conferencing. CCGPS ELA training will include a focus on the state's literacy standards for history/social studies, science and technical subjects. Text complexity and integrated instructional units will be two areas of focus. Math training will include reasoning and explaining; modeling and using tools; and seeing structure and generalizing. A major focus will be on the CCGPS skills and concepts that are now going to be covered in a different grade than they were under the state's former standards.

The request also highlights the alignment of the World-Class Instruction, Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and the CCSS. Georgia will incorporate the amplified WIDA standards for ELP students, to be released in spring 2012, into its efforts.

With regard to its transition to college and career-ready assessments, the state's request provides high level detail on its shift from End-of-Course Exams (which are now being aligned to the CCGPS) to Common Core Assessments in 2014-15. The state notes that its Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests are aligned to the CCGPS in LEA and Mathematics.

## **Principle 2: Differentiated Accountability and Supports**

1. Describe the **measures and metrics** the state proposes to use to make accountability determinations (including AMOs) to drive college and career-readiness. [See 2A and B]

Georgia's request is bold in its vision for a truly new and more rigorous, multi-faceted accountability and support system designed to get all students to college and career-readiness. This system meets (and goes beyond in several ways) the ESEA Flexibility Principles and also closely tracks the CCSSO Principles. Under its request, the state seeks to use the CCRPI for school and district accountability determinations made based on 2011-12 data, though 2011 AYP determinations will be used to determine supports and interventions. This "hold harmless" year will allow for the state to test the new system, get feedback on it, and make any necessary revisions before it takes full effect in July 2013.

This new system includes multiple categories of indicators for each of three school configurations – high schools (grades 9-12) middle schools (grades 6-8) and elementary schools (grades K-5). It puts real emphasis on both content mastery and career readiness, along with other measures. The state provides a detailed list of each category and measure as Appendix A. These include the following:

- High School – Graduation Rate; Student Attendance; Post High School Readiness (course pathway completion; industry-recognized credentials earned; work ready certificates earned; college enrollment not requiring remediation; credit for accelerated enrollment in AP, IB, Early College and other similar programs; world language credits earned; scores on AP/IB courses and the ACT, SAT and Georgia High School Writing Test); and Content Mastery (scores on eight state end-of-course tests).

- Middle School – Content Mastery and Preparation for High School (state assessments in ELA, reading, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as on the Grade Eight Writing Assessment; students in grade eight achieving a state-established Lexile measure); Student Attendance; Support and Intervention (ELL students with positive Performance Band movement; SWD served in the general education environment greater than 80% of the school day; and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students passing at least four core content area courses); and Career Exploration (8<sup>th</sup> grade students completing an Individual Graduation Plan; students completing three or more Career Interest Inventories).
- Elementary School – Content Mastery and Preparation for Middle School (state assessments in ELA, reading, mathematics, social studies, science, as well as on the Grade Five Writing Assessment; students in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade achieving a state-established Lexile measure); Student Attendance; Supports and Intervention (ELL students with positive Performance Band movement; SWD served in the general education environment greater than 80% of the school day; and Career Awareness (5<sup>th</sup> grade students completing ten Career Awareness Modules; and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students with a Career Portfolio).

Each school will get a separate score for each of the following areas of focus: Achievement, Achievement Gap Closure, and Progress. These three scores will be weighted and combined to produce an initial Overall CCRPI Score. This score may then be adjusted upward on the basis of bonus points earned on an array of other measures described as Factors for Success.

The state's school and district report cards (a draft template of the report card/score report is included as Appendix K, p. 242) will also include an array of colored flags (Green, Yellow, and Red) indicating the performance of each subgroup. Green Flags indicate subgroup performance "highlights". Red Flags indicate subgroup performance "challenges". Yellow Flags indicate the failure of a subgroup to meet Performance Targets on statewide assessments, but with significant growth under the statewide growth model. (p. 17) These flags carry no weight in the index, however, Red Flags serve as early warning indicators and must be specifically addressed through improvement strategies and actions spelled out in an improvement plan.

Schools will also receive a Financial Efficiency rating and a School Climate rating (including teacher and leader effectiveness data), both of which will also be taken into consideration in improvement planning. Neither of these ratings, however, is factored into the combined CCRPI score for a school.

With regard to the establishment of AMOs or performance targets, the state has opted to base its targets on the goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the "all students" group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years. Through its use of a student growth component, the state will set high expectations for all students while also recognizing those who do not yet meet performance targets but make significant gains. The state does not propose to use different AMOs for different subgroups of students.

For the Achievement Score, the state established targets for the "all students" group based on the goal of 100% proficiency. One of the three pillars of the CCRPI is the Achievement Gap Closure Score; the goal is to decrease the percentage of all students and students in the High Needs Students group not meeting proficiency by 50% by 2016-2017. The Progress Score is based on progress toward 100% proficiency using a tiered approach and Individualized Progress Goals (IPGs) for schools performing below the target. Student growth will be infused into the Progress Score once the statewide growth model is implemented, allowing for both school level progress and student level growth.

2. To what extent is **student growth** included in the accountability system? How is it used to advance college and career-readiness? [See 2A and B]

Georgia's request notes that the state is developing a statewide growth model, under its RTTT grant, for implementation during the 2011-2012 year. A steering committee is working on the design and the selection of a model is anticipated to be made before the end of the calendar year. The state's request indicates that the model will utilize norm and criterion referenced data in making growth predictions. Once completed, as noted above, this growth measure will be factored into the CCRPI Progress Score for schools.

Student growth is also reflected as part of the subgroup Performance Flags that are to be reflected on the school and district report cards/score reports. Whereas Green Flags indicate subgroup performance "highlights" and Red Flags indicate subgroup performance "challenges," Yellow Flags are displayed where the subgroup demonstrated significant growth under the statewide growth model yet failed to meet the Performance Target. (p. 17)

3. How is the state including and advancing **subgroup accountability and closing achievement gaps**? [See 2A, B, and E]

Georgia is addressing subgroup accountability and closing achievement gaps through the Achievement Gap Closure Score of the CCRPI. It is used to compare the annual

progress toward gap closure by 2019-20 both "within a school" and "school to state", focusing on the performance of the lowest quartile of learners (High Needs Students or HNS) across all subgroups in the school. The "within a school" comparison will look at HNS performance in comparison with the school's 75<sup>th</sup> percentile score (Non High Needs Students). The goal is to decrease the percentage of all students and students in each subgroup not meeting proficiency by 50% by 2016-2017.

In addition, the state's school and district report cards will also include an array of colored flags (Green, Yellow, and Red) indicating the performance of each subgroup. These flags carry no weight in the index, however, Red Flags serve as early warning indicators and must be specifically addressed through subgroup specific improvement strategies and actions spelled out in an improvement plan.

The state's belief that "quality implementation of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards CCGPS is the most effective way to address equity for students" leads to a focus on the standards as a key element of school improvement with particular emphasis on underperforming groups. (p. 34)

4. Describe the state's general system of **supports and interventions** for all schools and those designated as priority, focus or reward schools. How does the state incorporate deeper analysis of school performance such as through diagnostic review? [See 2A, D, E, F, G]

Georgia's request presents a clear and comprehensive plan for the transition to a system of supports and interventions that flows directly from the CCRPI. The state will continue to serve schools and districts on the basis of its 2011 AYP determinations for the initial year under the CCRPI. This "hold harmless" transition year will allow for the use of CCRPI data in determining how best to support and intervene in schools and districts even as the state tests and refines its index. The CCRPI will take full effect with the annual determinations made in July 2013.

As background, the state notes that a weakness of the NCLB accountability system was that it did not lead to school improvement or even meaningful gains in student achievement, particularly among high schools. The state's request describes the lessons it has learned through SIG school identification and years of NCLB supports and interventions and, more importantly, how it plans to draw from those lessons under its new system to identify issues sooner and provide more efficient supports.

Under the state's request, each year every school and district will receive a CCRPI score sheet with an overall CCRPI score and other data. On the basis of this data, the state

will identify Reward Schools and Focus Schools. Reward schools are those Title I and non-Title I schools with highest performance on statewide assessments, gap closure, the CCRPI overall score and CCRPI gap closure. Focus schools are those with the largest "school to state" achievement gap. The state may also identify other schools for improvement support. In addition, a wide array of resources, tools and other supports have been developed to promote the continuous improvement of all schools and districts.

Through its request, Georgia seeks to waive the NCLB public school choice and Supplemental Educational Services requirements. These will be replaced by a state law choice requirement and a new state-defined Flexible Learning Program (FLP). Focus schools must offer FLP.

With regard to other schools and LEAs identified by the state, school improvement specialists will provide on-site support (aligned with standards for school performance and informed by subgroup Performance Flags). These specialists will also work with schools on data analysis, the determination of root causes, the development of goals and improvement actions and more.

Beyond these "targeted" supports, the state has made a number of resources universally available. Training is made available to the extent possible. The Georgia School Keys is an externally validated tool with standards for schools (with strands that include curriculum, assessment, instruction, leadership school culture, and more) and descriptors of the expected practice. This tool is a guide for school improvement efforts statewide. Two companion tools - Implementation Resources and the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) Analysis – are among the other improvement resources that the state has developed and disseminated.

5. Describe how the state will address priority schools utilizing the USED **turnaround principles**. [See 2D]

Georgia's request includes a clear plan for the identification of and intervention in Priority Schools that includes a focus on both the USED turnaround principles and the CCSSO next-generation accountability principles. In particular, Priority Schools will be identified on the performance of the "all students" group statewide assessments that are part of the CCRPI (this includes assessments in other subjects such as science and social studies.) or a graduation rate of less than 60 percent. Once identified, they will receive state support and oversight for their implementation of turnaround strategies for at least three years.

Priority Schools will be served directly by the GaDOE School Improvement Division, though the state does not propose to actually take over the management or operation of any schools. A school improvement specialist and other SEA staff will work with LEAs in providing support to Priority Schools and to develop and monitor the implementation of a short-term action plan.

The LEA and SEA must work collaboratively "to analyze data and root causes to identify actions, strategies and interventions for the school improvement plan." (p. 55) Other data, such as student attendance, teacher attendance, and student discipline referrals, must also be analyzed. This analysis is to inform the development of a plan for improvement.

An agreement between the SEA and each LEA with an identified school will outline "the expectations of the LEA, school and the GaDOE." (p. 33) The state presents an array of "non-negotiable actions and interventions" that must be taken with regard to Priority Schools and that are to be incorporated in memorandum of agreement. They align closely with the Turnaround Principles and include actions such as: assessing the performance of the current principal and replacing the principal if necessary; working with the state to screen teachers that are transferred to the school; analyzing data and root causes; requiring collaborative planning; participation in required professional learning; implementation of the CCSS ELA and math frameworks; and the identification and support of students at risk of not graduating.

Priority Schools (like Focus Schools and all other schools in the state) will be subject to a new state law on school choice and a new SEA-developed Flexible Learning Program (FLP). They must also set-aside 10% of the school's Title I allocation for professional development.

6. How will the state build **capacity of schools and districts** to improve student achievement? [See 2G]

Georgia is undertaking significant steps to build the capacity of schools and districts. In addition to the support that is to be provided to schools identified as Focus and Priority, the state has and will continue to make a number of resources widely available for the purpose of supporting continuous improvement and building capacity. These include: Georgia's School Keys (an externally validated tool with tools for improving curriculum, assessment, instruction, planning and organization, professional learning, and more) Implementation Resources, and the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) Analysis. School improvement specialists will provide on-site support (aligned with the standards for school performance and informed by the

subgroup Performance Flags) to identified LEAs and schools. These specialists will also work with schools on data analysis, determination of root causes, development of goals and improvement actions and more.

The state's request also includes a focus on building capacity for CCSS implementation as a core school improvement strategy. Within its CCSS implementation plan, the state highlights its partnership with higher education for pre-service work on the CCSS, and Induction Task Force working on induction guidelines for new teachers and principals with a focus on CCSS. (p. 26)

### **Principle 3: Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support**

1. Describe the state's plan for development of **guidelines** or, if the state is further along in development, the state's **plan and system for educator evaluation** and the extent to which it advances student achievement. [See 3 A and B]

Georgia began implementing its plan for educator evaluation in 2010-11 under its RTTT grant. The state's request describes its plan for the continued development and implementation of this evaluation system that meets USED requirements. The state has completed the development of guidelines for teacher and principal evaluations and is beginning a six-month pilot in 26 RTTT districts in January 2012. These districts will move to full implementation by the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. Although the request incorporates a letter from the Governor expressing his support for this effort, the narrative does not specifically address the fact that state legislative action is likely needed to ensure statewide implementation.

The teacher and leader evaluations systems are being designed to place a primary focus on student achievement gains (at least 50% of ratings will be based on student progress) among other measures such as rubric-based observations of practice and process and surveys. The measures will be part of an annual evaluation and are to be implemented statewide in 2014-2015.

Georgia's request expresses a clear commitment to ensuring fidelity of implementation by LEAs. The request touches briefly on the communication, training, coaching and feedback opportunities that will be provided. Among them, the state will use an electronic platform (embedded within the longitudinal data system) for collecting data from rubric-based observations, surveys, and other data sources. RTTT district leaders will also receive training and coaching from a team of specialists. With this support, both in terms of data accessibility and coaching, the state has confidence that full implementation can be achieved.

Once in place, educator effectiveness ratings will be factors that make up the School Climate Rating component of the CCRPI. The evaluation system will also be used in making personnel decisions including compensation, promotion/career advancement, and dismissal. A "more rigorous and quantitatively-based evaluation system" will be developed and will be used as part of a performance-based compensation system that will be put in place for teachers in 2013-2014. (p. 76)

**Principle 4: Administrative/Reporting Burden**

1. Beyond an assurance, each state is required to examine and **reduce as appropriate administrative/reporting burdens** on LEAs. While it is not clearly included in USED's waiver application, does the state's request address this issue? [See full request]

Georgia's request indicates that "throughout the transition to this new system and beyond" the state will ensure that LEA and school leaders have opportunities to share ideas for reducing administrative and reporting burdens. (p. 18)