

## Summary of State ESEA Flexibility Request

### STATE: Kentucky

**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]

Kentucky presents a comprehensive vision and strategy for achieving college and career-readiness for all students that fundamentally rethinks school and district accountability with an innovative and broad approach. The Unbridled Learning agenda encompasses a transition to college and career-ready standards and assessments, a significantly more robust school and district accountability system, and a plan to implement a rigorous new educator evaluation system. While the plan is complex, there is a clear underlying theory of change and a goal of raising college and career-readiness rates by 50 percent by 2015.

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

Kentucky has defined college-readiness via cut-off scores on the ACT or two alternate college placement tests which indicate that a student does not require remediation at the post-secondary level. The career-readiness definition includes both an academic requirement as well as a technical component that can be met via an occupational skills assessment or industry certification. The state has developed a strong partnership with the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), which helped define what college readiness means in the state and achieve consensus on the definition and measures of college-readiness from all public universities in the state.

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]

The Kentucky approach is extremely innovative and far different from previous federal (or most state) accountability systems. This system is innovative for many reasons, notably in its breadth, its clear anchor and link to college and career-readiness, and its focus on continuous improvement for schools. Within student outcome accountability measures, there are a variety of new measures including achievement in five subjects, growth in reading and math, a non-duplicated gap group to capture low-performing subgroups in five subject matter areas, and measures of college and career-readiness that are aligned with assessments across all tested grades. In addition to these measures, the state intends to add a measure of the quality of instructional programs in several non-tested subjects and grades, and a measure of educator effectiveness.

The accountability and education evaluation systems are new systems that do not have strong baseline data, but the state has committed to ongoing monitoring, research, and adjustments to address issues that arise and has articulated a set of specific research questions it intends to evaluate over the coming years. The state intends to recalibrate the accountability targets for schools after five years (and in ongoing five-year cycles moving forward). Also, it notes that it intends the educator evaluation statewide pilot to provide extensive data and information to inform full state-wide implementation.

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]

Kentucky has many existing state structures that it intends to leverage in implementing its proposed request which provide strong capacity. The state intends to use the existing Regional Leadership Networks (RLNs) to support implementation of new standards and assessments. The state is also using regional Special Education Cooperatives to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the same rigorous content as their non-disabled peers. Kentucky also has a financial commitment to CCSS implementation of both state and private resources. Additionally, the state has established a strong partnership with the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE) which was a leader in developing a definition of college-readiness in the state and continues to play an important role in the implementation of CCSS and aligned assessments. This partnership provides additional capacity and alignment across the P-20 system.

The state also appears to have strong capacity to implement school turnaround through the Office of District 180 and the associated Centers for Learning Excellence (CLE), which provide direct and embedded support to schools and districts. The state’s request speaks to its successful history in implementing interventions to improve low-achieving schools and the depth and quality of human capital that it has available for this work. Finally, the request notes that the pilot year for teacher and leader evaluation will be used to develop and ensure LEA capacity for implementation.

### **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]

The state has a robust and comprehensive plan to transition to CCSS and assessments that has been thoughtfully developed and has been underway since 2010. As the first state to adopt CCSS, Kentucky has been a leader in this area. The state’s CCSS implementation strategy has a focus on capacity-building through the Regional Leadership Networks. Professional development for teachers has been strategic, with an initial focus on learning about and understanding the new standards, and a subsequent focus on implementation in the classroom.

The request also presents a clear system for analyzing and addressing the needs of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. The state has developed an online professional learning community around successful instructional and assessment practices for ELLs as well professional development on differentiating instruction to enhance student learning. Additionally, the state is leveraging regional Special Education Cooperatives to provide direct on the ground support to teachers working with students with disabilities.

The state is undertaking numerous efforts to aid teachers with shifting their instructional practice to facilitate successful implementation. To support development of aligned curriculum, the state has developed a Model Curriculum Framework (MCF) that is a resource to facilitate local curriculum development. Additionally, the state is currently developing an online technology platform with access to exemplar lessons, strategies, and instructional materials. Further, to facilitate public awareness and engagement, the state has developed online learning modules for parents and other stakeholders to learn more about the new standards and assessments.

Finally, Kentucky has undertaken an ambitious initiative to develop aligned assessments across the grade 3-12 spectrum anchored in the college-ready measure (and associated

cut scores) of ACT. The work to develop aligned and linked assessments that provide an annual measure of whether a student is on or off-track for college-readiness is notable.

## **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]

Kentucky proposes to use accountability measures across three categories: Next Generation Learners, Next Generation Instructional Programs, and Next Generation Professionals. While only Next Generation Learners will be implemented in 2011-2012, by 2013-14 the state will weight each component as follows: Learners (70%), Instructional Programs (20%), and Professionals (10%). Within the Learners (student outcomes) category, there are five key areas of measurement: achievement, gap reduction, growth, graduation rate, and college and career-readiness. All schools are evaluated on achievement, gap reduction, and growth. Middle and high schools are also evaluated on college and career-readiness, and high schools are also evaluated on graduation rate. The Instructional Program Review will cover non-tested grades and subjects including arts & humanities, writing, world language, practical living/career studies, and K-3. Teacher evaluation ratings are still in the design process but will ultimately be weighted in overall school scores.

The methodology for calculating overall school and district AMOs is based on a model of continuous improvement in which all schools and districts must demonstrate improvement each year. This system is predicated on the need for lower-performing schools to demonstrate greater improvement than higher-performing schools. The state will calculate an average accountability state score and standard deviation as well as the distribution of scores. Proficiency will be defined at the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile, and distinguished will be set at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. Schools scoring below proficient will be required to achieve a standard deviation of growth within five years (or 1/5 standard deviation each year) to meet their AMO. **(Note: The amount of required growth is a point still under discussion with the U.S. Department of Education.)** Schools at or above proficient are required to reach ½ of this goal. If a school meets its AMO, it is considered to have made AYP. At the end of each five year cycle, each school will have a new set of targets to drive improvement.

The state also plans to set AMOs for each subgroup at the state, district, and school level that will be based on student outcome data. These AMOs will be annually reported in the school/district report card. The state has established a goal of reducing in half the percentage of students in each subgroup who are not proficient.

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]

The state plans to measure growth in reading and math for grades 4-8, as well as measuring growth between the 10<sup>th</sup> grade ACT PLAN and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade ACT administration. The growth model for student learning outcomes uses a student growth percentile that gives credit to schools and districts for students who demonstrate typical or higher levels of growth. While overall the growth model supports continued improvement, the individual growth measure is based on normative growth rather than growth to standard.

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

While the state will report disaggregated data for all subgroups as per prior federal requirements, the new accountability system proposes a new way to address subgroup accountability through the creation of a non-duplicated gap group of students from traditionally lower-performing NCLB subgroups. All of these students will be included, but each student will count only once. This will lead to many more schools reaching the “n” size threshold to be held accountable for these students, and this “gap” variable is heavily weighted in the overall school performance score. Schools receive credit for the percentage of students in this group who perform at or above proficient.

Additionally, there will be a check performed to ensure that the overall gap group performance does not mask the performance of any particularly low-achieving subgroups through an analysis of whether any individual subgroup falls more than three standard deviations below the mean of all students. If so, the school is also identified as a Focus school. Finally, the state through its Delivery Model will report performance data for each individual subgroup and set AMOs at the school, district, and state level to provide additional focus on these groups.

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]

The state has a robust process for school and district analysis and improvement planning to support improved performance. The state has proposed a diagnostic review process through which the school/district (in collaboration with parents, students, and members of the community) is able to analyze data and root causes and then prioritize these and map them to strategies and supports in an improvement plan. The state also

has an additional layer of support built in through review of school and district improvement plans at the SEA to assess weaknesses and levels of implementation. The goal for these plans is to provide individualized support and intervention based on school needs. The improvement plans will drive the actions of the school and district to drive improvements in instruction and student achievement.

Priority and Focus schools will receive access to on-the-ground Educational Recovery Specialists and Leaders to provide intensive professional development and coaching. These schools may implement extended learning time and will have access to Reward schools as demonstration sites for promising practices.

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

Kentucky plans to require Focus and Priority schools and districts to implement comprehensive improvement plans to foster school turnaround. Priority and Focus schools that are repeatedly identified must initially submit improvement plans to the SEA and subsequently must participate in improvement strategies from an accreditation process, accept the assignment of a mentor/partner, or accept ongoing resources from the SEA. These intensive interventions are designed to support more comprehensive school turnaround in schools that are chronically underperforming and have the largest achievement gaps.

The state also articulates strong capacity in supporting school turnaround in Priority schools. Through the Office of District 180 and associated regional centers, leaders and coaches are dispatched to work directly with staff in persistently low-performing schools. Through this office, the school receives targeted professional development, short-term data cycle monitoring, and access to an online planning tool through AdvancED.

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

Kentucky describes plans to build school and district capacity to improve student achievement, particularly with regard to Priority schools through the support of the Office of District 180. The types of embedded support this office will provide include professional development, teacher and leader coaching, and data monitoring and analysis. Kentucky also plans to use the school and district improvement planning process with electronic monitoring and support tools to build capacity.

### **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]

Kentucky is in the process of developing guidelines for its educator evaluation system. Over the past year, the state has worked collaboratively with stakeholders to develop teacher and leader effectiveness frameworks that provide a baseline for a strong statewide evaluation system. These frameworks measure educators across the domains of instruction, learning climate, leadership and professionalism, and student growth. The state is currently working to validate these frameworks and will then send them to the Kentucky Board of Education for adoption. This year, the state is working with a set of fifty pilot districts to implement the new frameworks and define an evaluation system that includes multiples measures including student growth, professional growth, artifacts, parent/student voice, teacher self-reflection, and potential third-party observations.

In addition to incorporating teacher effectiveness into school accountability ratings, Kentucky plans to link teacher and principal evaluation outcomes to preparation programs to support continuous improvement. The state's planned data system will also allow it to gather effectiveness data to inform efforts to enhance equitable distribution.

### **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]

Kentucky is working to decrease the time and burden on schools and districts in submitting improvement plans through use of an automated process through AdvancED. The state also notes the intent to better align state and federal data collection and institute a more comprehensive system for tracking resources and results of improvement plans.