

Summary of State ESEA Flexibility Request

STATE: New Mexico

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]

New Mexico's request is comprehensive and identifies a clear plan to increase college and career-readiness in the state. The state is in the planning stages of implementation of Common Core state standards (CCSS) and educator evaluation, but has articulated a clear timeline for implementation of those elements. The state has already passed legislation and is in process of implementing its new A-F school grading accountability system. Additionally, the state is seeking legislation to codify its proposed educator evaluation system.

New Mexico's request shows a high level of integration with clear connections across its proposed accountability and education evaluation systems. There is a consistent focus on improving instruction to ensure that all students are college and career-ready and the state provides strong evidence that it is significantly increasing expectations across all areas of the request.

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

New Mexico's application speaks to a goal of ensuring that students are highly marketable and able to complete in the global economy, but does not expressly define college and career-readiness.

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]

New Mexico's accountability system is predicated on a continuous improvement model to drive increased student achievement. The state requires schools to select and implement targeted interventions and then measure the impact of those interventions. Results are used to recalibrate plans as needed to ensure that interventions are highly effective. The state has also chosen to focus on the lowest quartile of students in each school in its accountability measures to incentivize all schools to continuously improve.

The state's work on its educator evaluation system is also driven by the goal of continuous improvement with actionable data and feedback that educators can use to improve instruction.

The state also expressly commits to providing Reward schools with autonomy to further innovate to advance student achievement and seeks to provide principals of Focus and Priority schools with additional flexibility in budget, staffing, and use of time in order to drive improvement.

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]

New Mexico intends to leverage several internal and external entities to boost its capacity to implement the proposed CCSS implementation, accountability system, and educator evaluation. The state received a planning grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support its CCSS implementation plan and has sought external support from the Southwest Comprehensive Center in designing its CCSS implementation plan, and designing a tool to evaluate the capacity of LEAs to drive school improvement.

The state has also restructured its state agency to include a Priority School Bureau to provide targeted onsite assistance to schools with the greatest needs. Further, the state plans to utilize its Regional Education Centers (RECs) to provide additional support in building internal school and district capacity.

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]

New Mexico is currently in the planning stages for its transition to CCSS in 2014-15. The state has contracted for an alignment study to compare existing New Mexico standards with new CCSS. The state intends to use the results of this study to refine its planning and have a specific plan in place by the end of January 2012. This plan will include a specific timeline and budget, as well as plans for communication, professional development, curriculum and instruction, and evaluation of implementation. The state is receiving support from a planning grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and has also established a Planning Committee and Framework Development Team of stakeholders to help advise on effective CCSS implementation. These teams include educators with experience in bilingual and Indian education to ensure that the plan will meet the needs of those subgroups.

The state has also administered a survey to districts to assess their needs in terms of implementation of new standards and assessments. This survey will also include an analysis of districts technical needs to administer the anticipated PARCC computer-based assessments.

Beginning in spring 2012, the state education agency will use conferences, websites, and other tools to raise awareness about the new standards. Professional development for K-3 teachers will occur in summer 2012 with implementation of the CCSS in those grades occurring in fall 2012. Grades 4-8 will follow in 2013, with grades 9-12 in 2014.

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]

New Mexico passed state legislation in 2011 implementing a differentiated accountability system for schools based on A-F grading. The state is currently working on regulations for this law and intends to provide grades to schools at the end of the 2011-12 school year, with baseline grades released in December 2011. The state's system is based on the goals of being coherent, comprehensive, unbiased, and fair and creates a unitary system for evaluating all schools, calculating AMOs, and identifying categories of schools. The system relies on considerable research to create a consistent methodology across the accountability and educator evaluation systems in terms of their approach to measuring student achievement.

The state's proposed accountability system includes measures of status (proficiency and conditioned status based on a value-added model), conditioned growth based on value-added model (all students, 3 highest quartiles, and lowest quartile), attendance, opportunity to learn, and a bonus for student/parent engagement. High schools are also evaluated on 4-year and 5-year graduation rates and growth, and participation and success on college and career-ready measures including AP, ACT, PSAT, Dual Credit, and career preparation. Opportunity to learn is measured using a student survey (similar to those used in the MET study) which is used to help drive school improvement. Schools will receive separate grades for status and growth that will be averaged to determine the state's overall grade. (i.e. a school that receives an "A" in growth and a "C" in status would receive a "B" overall.)

The state specifically selected these measures to reduce the undue influence of student background characteristics in school grades and cites extensive research to support its decisions. The conditioned status and growth measures used are calculated using the difference between observed and expected outcomes to control for variations in student enrollment characteristics.

The state also specifically focused on ensuring the incentives were appropriate to motivate schools, educators, and students while avoiding unintended consequences. For example, the accountability system rewards schools for the percentage of students participating in college and career-ready activities but provides double points for success in those activities.

The state has developed AMOs (called School Growth Targets (SGTs)) that are benchmarked at the 90th percentile of current performance. This translates into a proficiency rate of approximately 75% with an additional 13% of students on track to being proficient within three years in math and all students being proficient or on track to proficiency in reading. For high schools, the 90th percentile would include a 4-year graduation rate of 92%, at attendance rate of 97.5%, 83% of students proficient or on track to proficient in 1 year in math, and all students proficient or on track to proficient in reading.

To calculate the SGT, New Mexico takes the difference in the 90th percentile target and the school's current performance across five areas (total school points, reading growth of top three quartiles, math growth of top three quartiles, reading growth of lowest quartile, math growth of lowest quartile) and divides by 10. The result defines the school's targets across these categories.

Reward schools will be defined as A/A (status/growth) ratings with consideration of schools in the A/B or B/A categories. The lowest 5% of schools will be designated Priority Schools (those with grades of F/F and a sufficient number of D/F or F/D schools to comprise 5%). At the high school level, the state will consider schools with the lowest graduation rates in this category as well. Focus schools will be those in the next decile above Priority schools and will generally encompass F/D and D/F schools. Focus and Priority schools have a two-year period for identification of entry to and exit from their categories.

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]

New Mexico has a strong focus on student growth and schools will receive a separate grade to evaluate this component. Growth is calculated for all students, for the highest 3 quartiles, and for the lowest quartile using a conditioned (value-added) model. These growth measures are weighted as 50% of a school's overall score at the elementary and middle level. At the high school level, school growth is measured for the highest 3 quartiles and lowest quartile and weighted as 20% of a school's overall score. While the state is not able to assess individual growth at the high school level with current assessments, it notes an intent to add this as additional assessments become available.

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

New Mexico chose to use the lowest quartile of students instead of specific demographic subgroups because that is the group that displays the largest performance gap and using traditional subgroups does not fully identify all schools with significant gaps. By choosing a quartile model, the state ensures that all schools are pushed towards continuous improvement and avoids the use of a deficit model that labels students as poor performers by their demographic characteristics. The state also maintains a focus on subgroup accountability that is used to identify appropriate interventions in Priority and Focus schools. If a subgroup is particularly low-performing, a school's selected interventions must be specifically targeted to improving performance among these students. Additionally, the state will publicly report results for all subgroups.

The state also explicitly focuses on the performance of the lowest quartile in its SGTs. Schools are evaluated on the reading and math growth of their lowest quartile as two specific components of the five SGTs.

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]

New Mexico has a detailed set of turnaround interventions that are required for Priority and focus Schools. Additionally, the state intends to leverage Reward schools as a model of reform by asking Reward school leaders to mentor leaders in lower achievement schools and help with replication of best practices.

In addition to Reward, Priority, and Focus schools, New Mexico plans to identify Strategic schools that are at risk for slipping down into the Priority or Focus category. These are schools that include a D on at least one measure for two years. The focus of support for these schools will be building their capacity to drive more effective instruction. Strategic schools will also be required to submit a school plan with aligned interventions to address the reasons for their low grades. The state will also review an LEA's budget to ensure that appropriate tools are being used to support proven strategies in Strategic schools.

New Mexico will hold LEAs accountable through the use of a Curriculum Audit Handbook which was developed in collaboration with the Southwest Comprehensive Center. This tool evaluates a districts control of programs, resource, and personnel and will be implemented in districts with significant numbers of Focus and Priority Schools.

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

Priority schools are required to work with their LEAs and the state education agency to develop a measurable intervention plan based on data that addresses all seven turnaround principles (Focus schools are required to select four of the turnaround principles). The state will also monitor implementation through approval of LEA budgets to ensure that funds spent in D and F schools are targeted towards proven programs and methods for increasing student achievement that align with student needs. As schools implement these interventions, the state will request data to support the selected interventions and will require schools to shift funding to tools that yield a better return on investment if performance does not improve. This will be part of a process of continuous improvement in which schools implement interventions and measure the impact of those interventions on an ongoing basis.

New principals at SIG schools receive significant flexibility to restructure time during and outside of the regular school day and have additional autonomy in budget and staffing.

The state is looking to expand these flexibilities to principals that agree to lead Priority or Focus schools.

Additionally, both Focus and Priority schools will undergo an instructional audit with state and district leaders in advance of site visits to examine systems to support teacher effectiveness. These schools will also be assigned a state support specialist to lead them through a self-evaluation process and provide technical assistance on research-based intervention strategies based on the results of these assessments.

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

The state is working to build the capacity of schools and districts through technical assistance on-site visits, professional development, and research-based progress monitoring tools. Professional development provided includes training in leadership, use of data, and a school self-assessment tool. The state will provide on-site progress monitoring visits every 4-6 weeks to Priority and Focus schools in collaboration with district and school leadership teams. These teams will review current data, analyze how data is used to improve instruction, observe classrooms, and observe professional learning communities.

Additionally, state support specialists will facilitate coordination with Regional Education Centers (RECs) that will be working with the state to build school and district 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]

New Mexico is still working to develop guidelines for a new educator evaluation system. In 2011, the Governor convened the New Mexico Effective Teaching Task Force to provide recommendations for teacher and leader evaluation. The task force recommended a differentiated evaluation system with student achievement as a critical component, as well as restructured compensation, recruitment, and retention policies to ensure that highly effective teachers and leaders serve high-need, low-income schools. The goal of the new evaluation system is to foster an environment of continuous improvement among teachers to increase student achievement.

The state intends to propose legislation in 2012 to move to a five-level rating system that links educator evaluation with professional development, employment decisions, and licensure. The legislation will include: multiple measures of student achievement, annual evaluations, aligned professional development, and a connection to personnel decisions. The state's strategy will be to rapidly develop a model for teachers in tested grades and subjects and a transitional model system for evaluating teachers in non-tested grades and subjects.

For teachers in tested areas, the state proposes an evaluation system based 50% on a value-added model using state tests, 25% based on observations, and 25% based on locally adopted (and state-approved) multiple measures. For teachers in non-tested areas, the state proposes evaluation based 25% on a school's A-F school grade, 25% based on observations, and 50% based on locally adopted (and state-approved) measures. This model will be used only until the state develops assessments in all areas by 2014. The state proposes principal evaluations based 50% on a school's A-F school grade, 25% on fidelity of teacher observations and evaluations, and 25% on other locally determined (and state-approved) measures.

The state further plans to define an evaluation system that includes at least 4 observations per year (including at least two by principals), use of a uniform statewide observation tool with state approved training, use of a matrix design to include qualitative and quantitative data in determining a summative rating, and an in-depth post-observation conference to provide teachers with actionable feedback.

The state notes that it plans to use outcomes of the evaluation to inform the match between teacher assignments and student and school needs.

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]

Beyond the required assurance, New Mexico does not expressly address the issue of reducing administrative/reporting burdens.