

## **IMPROVEMENTS MADE BY MINNESOTA TO ITS ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST**

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Based on feedback from peer reviewers and U.S. Department of Education staff, Minnesota made the following changes to its original request in order to meet the principles of ESEA flexibility.

### **PRINCIPLE 1: COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

- Minnesota added more detail to its plans to ensure that students with disabilities and English Learners have access to rigorous content aligned with college- and career-ready standards, including how the State will work with all teachers to help them deliver content aligned to the standards.

### **PRINCIPLE 2: STATE-DEVELOPED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT**

- Minnesota’s original request used two growth models, one for measuring student proficiency and one specifically measuring student growth. In its revised request, Minnesota strengthened its accountability system by separating these calculations and committed to reporting actual student proficiency rates. In addition, for reporting purposes, Minnesota will no longer allow schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress using another measure of school-wide growth known as “safe harbor.”
- Minnesota strengthened accountability for graduation rates by ensuring that schools and subgroups can only earn points in its accountability index if they fully reach, as opposed to partially meet, the 85 percent graduation rate target set by the state.
- Minnesota analyzed student test scores from 2007 to 2011 to determine how much growth it took for students who scored below proficient in 2007 to make it four years later. The State then used this information to set annual growth targets for students, so that students who meet the new growth expectations will be on track to proficiency within four years.
- Minnesota demonstrated that its standard for exiting priority or focus school status is rigorous. Schools will have to rise to at least the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on the State’s accountability system and maintain that rating for two consecutive years. For example, the average elementary priority school meets 40 percent of its performance targets. They would need to increase that rate to 93 percent and maintain that level for two years in order to exit status.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP**

- Minnesota clarified that it is in the process of developing guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. By the 2014–15 school year, districts must have evaluation models that are agreed upon through collective bargaining or adopt the State’s model. The State has established work groups that will review these district models.
- Minnesota provided a detailed timeline for selecting evaluation rubrics, designing training for observers, measuring growth, and ensuring inter-rater reliability.
- Minnesota’s ongoing work groups will be asked to provide guidance on the personnel decisions that will result from the evaluations.