



ESEA Flexibility

Renewal

MISSISSIPPI



Submitted: March 31, 2015; Revised July 23, 2015

OMB Number: 1810 0581

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 16 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to retain the benefits of ESEA flexibility, offered to State educational agencies under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, and voluntary. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20210 4537 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1810 0581. Note: Please do not return the completed ESEA Flexibility Renewal Request Form to this address.

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For each attachment included in the *ESEA Flexibility Request*, label the attachment with the corresponding number from the list of attachments below and indicate the page number where the attachment is located. If an attachment is not applicable to the SEA's request, indicate "N/A" instead of a page number. Reference relevant attachments in the narrative portions of the request.

LABEL	LIST OF ATTACHMENTS	PAGE
1.	Notice to LEAs (five documents)	
2	Comments on request received from LEAs (two documents)	
3	Notice and information provided to the public regarding the request (one document)	
4	Evidence that the State has formally adopted college and career ready content standards consistent with the State's standards adoption process (seven documents)	
5	Memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs) (if applicable)	
6	State's Race to the Top Assessment Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (one document)	
7.	Evidence that the SEA has submitted high quality assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review (if applicable)	
8	A copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010-2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the "all students" group and all subgroups.	
9	Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools List	
10	A copy of any guidelines that the SEA has already developed and adopted for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems (if applicable).(three documents)	
11.	Evidence that the SEA has adopted one or more guidelines of local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems (eight documents)	

COVER SHEET FOR ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

Legal Name of Requester: Mississippi Department of Education	Requester's Mailing Address: Post Office Box 771 Jackson, MS 39205-0771
State Contact for the ESEA Flexibility Request	
Name: Dr. Carey M. Wright	
Position and Office: State Superintendent	
Contact's Mailing Address: Mississippi Department of Education Post Office Box 771 Jackson, MS 39205-0771	
Telephone: 601/359-1750	
Fax: 601/359-3242	
Email address: cwright@mde.k12.ms.us	
Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Dr. Carey M. Wright	Telephone: 601/359-1750
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: X 	Date: July 23, 2015
The State, through its authorized representative, agrees to meet all principles of the ESEA Flexibility.	

WAIVERS

By submitting this updated ESEA flexibility request, the SEA renews its request for flexibility through waivers of the nine ESEA requirements listed below and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements, as well as any optional waivers the SEA has chosen to request under ESEA flexibility, by checking each of the boxes below. The provisions below represent the general areas of flexibility requested...

- 1. The requirements in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(E) (H) that prescribe how an SEA must establish annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) to ensure that all students meet or exceed the State's proficient level of academic achievement on the State's assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the end of the 2013–2014 school year. The SEA requests this waiver to develop new ambitious but achievable AMOs in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to provide meaningful goals that are used to guide support and improvement efforts for the State, LEAs, schools, and student subgroups.
- 2. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) for an LEA to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, a Title I school that fails, for two consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and for a school so identified and its LEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA and its Title I schools need not comply with these requirements.
- 3. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(c) for an SEA to identify for improvement or corrective action, as appropriate, an LEA that, for two consecutive years or more, fails to make AYP, and for an LEA so identified and its SEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that it need not comply with these requirements with respect to its LEAs.
- 4. The requirements in ESEA sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) that limit participation in, and use of funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low Income School (RLIS) programs based on whether an LEA has made AYP and is complying with the requirements in ESEA section 1116. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA that receives SRSA or RLIS funds may use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of whether the LEA makes AYP.
- 5. The requirement in ESEA section 1114(a)(1) that a school have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more in order to operate a school wide program. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA may implement interventions consistent with the turnaround principles or interventions that are based on the needs of the students in the school and designed to enhance the entire educational program in a school in any of its priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of "priority schools" and "focus schools," respectively, set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*, as appropriate, even if those schools do not have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more.
- 6. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved

under that section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs in order to serve any of the State's priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of "priority schools" and "focus schools," respectively, set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.

7. The provision in ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) that authorizes an SEA to reserve Title I, Part A funds to reward a Title I school that (1) significantly closed the achievement gap between subgroups in the school; or (2) has exceeded AYP for two or more consecutive years. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may use funds reserved under ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) for any of the State's reward schools that meet the definition of "reward schools" set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.

8. The requirements in ESEA section 2141(a), (b), and (c) for an LEA and SEA to comply with certain requirements for improvement plans regarding highly qualified teachers. The SEA requests this waiver to allow the SEA and its LEAs to focus on developing and implementing more meaningful evaluation and support systems.

9. The limitations in ESEA section 6123 that limit the amount of funds an SEA or LEA may transfer from certain ESEA programs to other ESEA programs. The SEA requests this waiver so that it and its LEAs may transfer up to 100 percent of the funds it receives under the authorized programs among those programs and into Title I, Part A.

Optional Flexibilities:

If an SEA chooses to request waivers of any of the following requirements, it should check the corresponding box(es) below:

10. The requirements in ESEA sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the Twenty First Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to activities provided only during non school hours or periods when school is not in session (*i.e.*, before and after school or during summer recess). The SEA requests this waiver so that 21st CCLC funds may be used to support expanded learning time during the school day in addition to activities during non school hours or periods when school is not in session.

11. The requirements in ESEA sections 1116(a)(1)(A) (B) and 1116(c)(1)(A) that require LEAs and SEAs to make determinations of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for schools and LEAs, respectively. The SEA requests this waiver because continuing to determine whether an LEA and its schools make AYP is inconsistent with the SEA's State developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system included in its ESEA flexibility request. The SEA and its LEAs must report on their report cards performance against the AMOs for all subgroups identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v), and use performance against the AMOs to support continuous improvement in Title I schools.

12. The requirements in ESEA section 1113(a)(3) (4) and (c)(1) that require an LEA

to serve eligible schools under Title I in rank order of poverty and to allocate Title I, Part A funds based on that rank ordering. The SEA requests this waiver in order to permit its LEAs to serve a Title I eligible high school with a graduation rate below 60 percent that the SEA has identified as a priority school even if that school does not otherwise rank sufficiently high to be served under ESEA section 1113.

13. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved under that section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver in addition to waiver #6 so that, when it has remaining section 1003(a) funds after ensuring that all priority and focus schools have sufficient funds to carry out interventions, it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs to provide interventions and supports for low achieving students in other Title I schools when one or more subgroups miss either AMOs or graduation rate targets or both over a number of years.

If the SEA is requesting waiver #13, the SEA must demonstrate in its renewal request that it has a process to ensure, on an annual basis, that all of its priority and focus schools will have sufficient funding to implement their required interventions prior to distributing ESEA section 1003(a) funds to other Title I schools.

See Pages 68 and 103.

14. The requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(1)(B) and 1111(b)(3)(C)(i) that, respectively, require the SEA to apply the same academic content and academic achievement standards to all public schools and public school children in the State and to administer the same academic assessments to measure the achievement of all students. The SEA requests this waiver so that it is not required to double test a student who is not yet enrolled in high school but who takes advanced, high school level, mathematics coursework. The SEA would assess such a student with the corresponding advanced, high school level assessment in place of the mathematics assessment the SEA would otherwise administer to the student for the grade in which the student is enrolled. For Federal accountability purposes, the SEA will use the results of the advanced, high school level, mathematics assessment in the year in which the assessment is administered and will administer one or more additional advanced, high school level, mathematics assessments to such students in high school, consistent with the State's mathematics content standards, and use the results in high school accountability determinations.

If the SEA is requesting waiver #14, the SEA must demonstrate in its renewal request how it will ensure that every student in the State has the opportunity to be prepared for and take courses at an advanced level prior to high school.

See Page 49.

ASSURANCES

By submitting this request, the SEA assures that:

- 1. It requests waivers of the above referenced requirements based on its agreement to meet Principles 1 through 4 of ESEA flexibility, as described throughout the remainder of this request.
- 2. It has adopted English language proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to the State's college and career ready standards, consistent with the requirement in ESEA section 3113(b)(2), and that reflect the academic language skills necessary to access and meet the State's college and career ready standards. (Principle 1)
- 3. It will administer no later than the 2014–2015 school year alternate assessments based on grade level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that are consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2) and are aligned with the State's college and career ready standards. (Principle 1)
- 4. It will develop and administer ELP assessments aligned with the State's ELP standards, consistent with the requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(7), 3113(b)(2), and 3122(a)(3)(A)(ii) no later than the 2015–2016 school year. (Principle 1)
- 5. It will report annually to the public on college going and college credit accumulation rates for all students and subgroups of students in each LEA and each public high school in the State. (Principle 1)
- 6. If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and uses achievement on those assessments to identify priority and focus schools, it has technical documentation, which can be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments are administered statewide; include all students, including by providing appropriate accommodations for English Learners and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on grade level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2); and are valid and reliable for use in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system. (Principle 2)
- 7. It will annually make public its lists of reward schools, priority schools, and focus schools prior to the start of the school year as well as publicly recognize its reward schools, and will update its lists of priority and focus schools at least every three years. (Principle 2)

MDE Note: Given the timing of assessments, annual notifications cannot always occur prior to the start of the school year. Beginning with school year 2015–16 designations, Mississippi can assure that the lists will be made public upon approval of the state

board, which traditionally occurs on the third Friday of September.

If the SEA is not submitting with its renewal request its updated list of priority and focus schools, based on the most recent available data, for implementation beginning in the 2015–2016 school year, it must also assure that:

8. It will provide to the Department, no later than **January 31, 2016**, an updated list of priority and focus schools, identified based on school year 2014–2015 data, for implementation beginning in the 2016–2017 school year.

MDE Note: Current information from the assessment vendor indicates that Mississippi will receive summative data files for high school on **September 14, 2015**, and for grades 3 through 8 on **October 9, 2015**. MDE will be able to provide the updated lists for priority, focus, and reward schools if these data are in place by October 9, 2015. If for any reason the statewide data files are not available by that date, or if something similarly unforeseen occurs, the **January 31, 2016**, submission date will be adjusted accordingly.

9. It will evaluate and, based on that evaluation, revise its own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on LEAs and schools. (Principle 4)

10. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its ESEA flexibility request.

11. Prior to submitting this request, it provided all LEAs with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request and has attached a copy of that notice (Attachment 1) as well as copies of any comments it received from LEAs. (Attachment 2)

12. Prior to submitting this request, it provided notice and information regarding the request to the public in the manner in which the SEA customarily provides such notice and information to the public (*e.g.*, by publishing a notice in the newspaper; by posting information on its website) and has attached a copy of, or link to, that notice. (Attachment 3)

13. It will provide to the Department, in a timely manner, all required reports, data, and evidence regarding its progress in implementing the plans contained throughout its ESEA flexibility request, and will ensure that all such reports, data, and evidence are accurate, reliable, and complete or, if it is aware of issues related to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of its reports, data, or evidence, it will disclose those issues.

14. It will report annually on its State report card and will ensure that its LEAs annually report on their local report cards, for the “all students” group, each subgroup described in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II), and for any combined subgroup (as applicable): information on student achievement at each proficiency level; data

comparing actual achievement levels to the State’s annual measurable objectives; the percentage of students not tested; performance on the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools; and graduation rates for high schools. In addition, it will annually report, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report, all other information and data required by ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C) and 1111(h)(2)(B), respectively. It will ensure that all reporting is consistent with *State and Local Report Cards Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended Non-Regulatory Guidance* (February 8, 2013).

Principle 3 Assurances

Each SEA must select the appropriate option and, in doing so, assures that:

Option A	Option B	Option C
<input type="checkbox"/> 15.a. The SEA is on track to fully implementing Principle 3, including incorporation of student growth based on State assessments into educator ratings for teachers of tested grades and subjects and principals.	<p>If an SEA that is administering new State assessments during the 2014–2015 school year is requesting one additional year to incorporate student growth based on these assessments, it will:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 15.b.i. Continue to ensure that its LEAs implement teacher and principal evaluation systems using multiple measures, and that the SEA or its LEAs will calculate student growth data based on State assessments administered during the 2014–2015 school year for all teachers of tested grades and subjects and principals; and</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 15.b.ii. Ensure that each teacher of a tested grade and subject and all principals will receive their student growth data based on State assessments administered during the 2014–2015 school year.</p>	<p>If the SEA is requesting modifications to its teacher and principal evaluation and support system guidelines or implementation timeline other than those described in Option B, which require additional flexibility from the guidance in the document titled <i>ESEA Flexibility</i> as well as the documents related to the additional flexibility offered by the Assistant Secretary in a letter dated August 2, 2013, it will:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 15.c. Provide a narrative response in its redlined ESEA flexibility request as described in Section II of the ESEA flexibility renewal guidance.</p>

CONSULTATION

An SEA must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders and communities in the development of its request. To demonstrate that an SEA has done so, the SEA must provide an assurance that it has consulted with the State's Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in the and provide the following:

1. *A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from teachers and their representatives.*

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has taken a variety of steps to engage input and support from teachers and their representatives while developing the ESEA Flexibility Request. As noted in Assurances 11 and 12 above, prior to submitting the Request, MDE provided all LEAs with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the Request and has attached a copy of that notice (**Attachment 1**) as well as copies of any comments received from LEAs (**Attachment 2**). Additionally, prior to submitting the request, MDE provided notice and information regarding the request to the public on MDE website and has attached a copy of that notice (**Attachment 3**). MDE has intentionally reached out to teachers, not only through their districts and schools, but also through the Mississippi Association of Educators and the Mississippi Professional Educators organizations, both of which includes teachers as their primary membership.

The information regarding the Request has been posted on MDE website at www.mde.k12.ms.us since mid November, with the documents in **Attachment 1** available for input and review. Additionally, at each of the regional ESEA Flexibility Request Stakeholder (Town Hall) Meetings, input was gathered on-site through presentations, discussion, and feedback forms. MDE has a dedicated email address for stakeholders to submit input (nclbwaiver@mde.k12.ms.us), which is checked on a daily basis.

In addition to the regional Stakeholder Meetings, MDE has taken every opportunity available to present the Request information to stakeholder groups that included teacher representatives. The first discussions on the Request with school superintendents and other district staff occurred through a webinar held October 6, 2011, and presentations at the Mississippi Association of School Administrators' Fall Conference on October 18, 2011. The first public dissemination of information began with the Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) Meeting on October 20, 2011, followed closely by other educational advocacy groups that included teachers in their membership. MDE garnered input with the following teacher inclusive stakeholder groups on the dates indicated below:

- Commission on School Accreditation, October 26, 2011, and February 2, 2012.
- Educator Licensure Commission, November 4, 2011
- Federal Programs Committee of Practitioners, November 9, 2011.
- Mississippi Professional Educators Advisory Board, November 10, 2011
- SBE Meeting, November 17, 2011.
- 21st Century Advisory Committee, December 1, 2011.
- Special Education Advisory Panel, December 7, 2011, and February 15, 2012
- ESEA Flexibility Request Stakeholder Meetings

November 15, 2011: Meridian, Riley Center
November 30, 2011: Biloxi, Biloxi High School
December 1, 2011: Ellisville, Ron Whitehead Tech Center
December 5, 2011: Oxford, Oxford Conference Center
December 6, 2011: Cleveland, DSU, Jobe Hall
December 8, 2011: Summit, Southwest CC (added after handout was posted)
December 13, 2011: Pearl, HCC, Muse Center

- Mississippi Association of School Superintendents/Alliance Winter Conference, January 23-25, 2012
- Statewide Teacher Appraisal System Focus Groups
January 31: Jackson, Universities Center
February 15: Meridian, MSU Meridian Campus
February 27: Oxford, Oxford Conference Center
March 6: Cleveland, DSU, Ewing Hall
March 20: Gulfport, Handsboro Community Center
March 26: Hattiesburg, PRCC Lowery Woodall Advanced Tech Center

Focus group meetings were held in February and March 2012 to gain input on the Principal Evaluation System.

Included in **Attachment 2** are all the comments and feedback received through these various meetings, emails, and the public comment process. The following changes were made to the request based on input from teachers and their representatives:

- Addressed ways to simplify teacher appraisal system
- Determined how to identify Reward schools and incentivize schools at all levels
- Included interventions that make lasting improvements for instruction and the resources needed to make quality improvements
- Increased transparency of accountability and made the system more understandable for all constituents

Other components of the Request were impacted by stakeholder feedback, primarily through affirmation of the plan.

2. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from other diverse communities, such as students, parents, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing students with disabilities and English Learners, business organizations, and Indian tribes.

MDE has engaged a variety of stakeholders in meaningful ways to garner perspectives, input, and commitment throughout the planning and implementation process.

MDE continues the ongoing effort to acquire meaningful input from all communities in the state. In addition to the presentations listed in item 1 above, MDE reached out to the community members at large through the following member groups:

- Regional Federal Programs Consortium, Gulfport, November 4, 2011
- Regional Federal Programs Consortium, Tupelo, November 18, 2011
- Regional Superintendent's Meetings
November 1, 2011, Jackson and Meridian
November 7, 2011, Biloxi and Hattiesburg
November 8, 2011, Tupelo

November 9, 2011, Senatobia and Cleveland

- Stakeholder Roundtable Discussion, December 9, 2011, and February 13, 2012
- Attachment 2** includes feedback from parents and community leaders who attended the Regional ESEA Request Stakeholder Meetings, hosted by Mississippi's six Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs).

The Special Education Advisory Panel is a standing panel for MDE Office of Special Education that includes parents of children with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, teachers, representatives of Institutions of Higher Education, and other key stakeholders. A complete list of the Advisory Panel Membership may be found on MDE website at http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/special_education/special_education_advisory_panels. MDE reached out to the group on two separate dates to receive feedback on the ESEA Flexibility Request.

MDE has been intentional in efforts to ensure active, quality engagement of the civil rights advocacy community. One such effort was the Request specific Roundtable Discussion held December 9, 2011, to which MDE invited representatives of various stakeholder groups, including the following:

- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (www.naaccp.org)
- Southern Echo (<http://www.southernecho.org>; a leadership development, education and training organization working to develop effective accountable grassroots leadership in the African American communities in rural Mississippi and the surrounding region)
- Mississippi Economic Council (www.msmecc.org; the State Chamber of Commerce)
- Children's Defense Fund Southern Regional Office Headquarters (<http://cdf.childrensdefense.org>; a non profit child advocacy organization working to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities)
- Southern Poverty Law Center (<http://splcenter.org/>)
- Mississippi Center for Education Innovation (<http://mscei.com>; an agent for sustainable change in communities where poverty, low educational attainment and a lack of infrastructure intersect thus, leading to a low quality of life; funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation to focus on improving education in Mississippi)
- Mississippi Association of Educators (<http://maetoday.nea.org/>)
- Parents for Public Schools (<http://www.parents4publicschools.com/sts.html>)
- Mississippi PTA (<http://www.misspta.org/>)

The Roundtable participants were so engaged in the Request process that MDE elected to host a follow up meeting on February 13, 2012, to provide the group with the opportunity to react to a completed draft of the ESEA Flexibility Request. Activity feedback was recorded from these Roundtable meetings and utilized in the development of the Request.

Dissemination of documents and requests for feedback included listservs for advocacy groups that reached literally thousands of stakeholders throughout the

state, including parents, community based organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders.

The Mississippi SBE reviewed the final draft of the Mississippi ESEA Flexibility Request on February 17, 2012. Prior to the review, MDE posted the Request to MDE's ESEA Request webpage on January 30, 2012, along with a request for public comment through February 10, 2012. All public comments were collected for State Board consideration. MDE recognizes the importance of including all stakeholders in the development of the Request. Additionally, stakeholder engagement will continue to play an important role in the implementation and refinement of the Request components. One way in which Mississippi will continue to take steps to engage stakeholders meaningfully is to reach out to organizations representing traditionally underserved populations, particularly English Learners (EL). Using not only the Mississippi Committee of Practitioners, which includes representation from EL advocacy groups, but also focus group meetings with our EL advisory panel, MDE will continue to ensure EL guidelines and other resources, including those from partnership organizations such as Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and Southeastern Equity Center, are in place and that the processes described through this Request will meet the special requirements of ELs.

Updates for Renewal 2015:

Through the Renewal period for Mississippi's ESEA Flexibility Request, MDE staff have continued to engage stakeholders in a variety of ways, including the following:

- ESEA Flexibility Website: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/OFP/ESEA>
- January 16, 2015: ESEA Flexibility Renewal Webinar (archived)
- January 23, 2015: MPES Advisory Board Meeting
- January 26, 2015: MASS/Alliance Winter Meeting
- February 3, 2015: Regional Secondary Principals' Meeting, Hattiesburg
- February 10, 2015: Regional Secondary Principals' Meeting, Meridian
- February 11, 2015: Regional Secondary Principals' Meeting, Oxford
- February 19, 2015: Mississippi State Board of Education Meeting and [Statewide Press Release](#)
- February 23: Regional Elementary Principals' Meeting, Meridian
- March 2, 2015: Regional Elementary Principals' Meeting, Oxford
- March 3, 2015: Regional Elementary Principals' Meeting, Hattiesburg
- March 18, 2015: Mississippi Accountability Task Force Meeting
- March 19, 2015: Mississippi State Board of Education Meeting
- March 20-28, 2015: ESEA Flexibility Renewal Submission Survey window

After submission and throughout the implementation period, MDE staff will continue to engage stakeholders on the various components of the plan and request amendments from ED as necessary.

EVALUATION

The Department encourages an SEA that receives approval to implement the flexibility to collaborate with the Department to evaluate at least one program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs implement under principle 1, 2, or 3. Upon receipt of approval of the flexibility, an interested SEA will need to nominate for evaluation a program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs will implement under principles 1, 2, or 3. The Department will work with the SEA to determine the feasibility and design of the evaluation and, if it is determined to be feasible and appropriate, will fund and conduct the evaluation in partnership with the SEA, ensuring that the implementation of the chosen program, practice, or strategy is consistent with the evaluation design.

Check here if you are interested in collaborating with the Department in this evaluation, if your request for the flexibility is approved.

OVERVIEW OF SEA'S REQUEST FOR THE ESEA FLEXIBILITY

Provide an overview (about 500 words) of the SEA's request for the flexibility that:

1. explains the SEA's comprehensive approach to implement the waivers and principles and describes the SEA's strategy to ensure this approach is coherent within and across the principles; and
2. describes how the implementation of the waivers and principles will enhance the SEA's and its LEAs' ability to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement.

Comprehensive Approach to Implementing the Waivers and Principles

Vision

The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) has as its vision "to create a world class education system that gives students the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be successful in college and the workforce and flourish as parents and citizens," with its mission statement indicating that SBE is "to provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community." With this vision and mission in mind, SBE selected Dr. Tom Burnham as the State Superintendent of Education in November 2009. In January 2010, Dr. Burnham began his tenure as State Superintendent of Education, and his goal was to systemically attack all barriers that impede success for every student in the state. Dr. Carey Wright, named superintendent in October 2013, continues that goal.

Further, Mississippi's Governor Phil Bryant adopted **Rising Together** as his 2012 inaugural theme. Through his inaugural address, he identified education as one of the four opportunities for his work in Mississippi:

... And if we are to rise together, we must do so with the inherent characteristics of Mississippi. We are a people of character who value hard work and treasure loyalty to our families, state and country.... every Mississippian should have the opportunity to actually learn from the best educational system we can offer...

For the first time in recent memory, policy makers across the state agree on the importance of education and the need to support comprehensive reform efforts. The unification of the legislative body, Governor's office, and the heads of the education

sectors has presented a unique opportunity for Mississippi to work toward a common goal: *Ensuring a bright future for every child.*

Barriers to Implementation

MDE began developing the Request by identifying and addressing barriers to learning across the state:

- strong, consistent leadership at the district and building level;
- completing high school ready for college and careers;
- sound literacy and numeracy for students by the end of third grade;
- instructional quality for all students; and
- safe and appropriate learning environments in all schools.

All of these barriers were focal points for the improvement strategies being implemented under Dr. Burnham's leadership. The educational leadership of decision makers at the school and district level is crucial to overcoming these barriers. To that end, MDE asked a variety of stakeholders, advocates, and educators to give input on these barriers and other areas of education that needed to be addressed through the Request. One way that current Superintendent Carey Wright continues to address these issues is through regular meetings with her Superintendent's Advisory Council.

Enhancing Quality Instruction through the Flexibility

Through the various areas of input and support, specific strategies emerged:

- Redesigning teacher and leader preparation programs and linking the redesign to the evaluation of practitioners;
- Devoting appropriate resources to implementation of the Mississippi's College and Career Readiness Standards, assessments, and multiple opportunities for high school completion;
- Identifying those schools with the greatest needs and then providing differentiated interventions to meet those needs; and
- Intentionally restructuring the services offered by MDE to ensure that accountability and improvement are at the forefront of expectations and to reduce duplication and redundancy.

Through the flexibility of the Request, MDE will hold schools more accountable for addressing learning gaps while providing high quality, differentiated, on going interventions, technical assistance, and support to ensure that practitioners have the knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of a growingly diverse student population. By increasing the focus on quality instruction through the redesign of practitioner preparation and the evaluation of implementation, while increasing content and performance standards to align with career and college ready standards, Mississippi will meet Governor Bryant's education goal: *every Mississippian will have the opportunity to actually learn from the best educational system we can offer.*

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

1A ADOPT COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option selected.

Option A	Option B
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The State has adopted college and career ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that are common to a significant number of States, consistent with part (1) of the definition of college and career ready standards.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The State has adopted college and career ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that have been approved and certified by a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs), consistent with part (2) of the definition of college and career ready standards.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)</p> <p>ii. Attach a copy of the memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of IHEs certifying that students who meet these standards will not need remedial coursework at the postsecondary level. (Attachment 5)</p>

Mississippi has adopted college and career ready standards, as evidenced by the June 2010 and August 2010 minutes of the Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE). **Attachment 4** includes minutes indicating the approval for immediate adoption and to begin the period of public comment for SBE to adopt fully the Common Core State Standards, or CCSS (June 2010–**Attachment 4a**). After the public comment process was completed, the CCSS received final approval with the August 2010 meeting of SBE (**Attachment 4b**), and the timeline for statewide training and implementation of the CCSS began (**Attachment 4c**).

In February 2014, the Mississippi State Board of Education reaffirmed its commitment to college and career ready standards by approving the *2014 Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for English Language Arts (Item 13)* and *2014 Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Mathematics (Item 14)*, as evidenced in the [board minutes](#). These documents combine elements of Common Core State Standards and the PARCC Model Content Frameworks to outline what students must know and be able to do by the end of each grade level and course. Upon completion of the 2014–2015 school term, the references in the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards to the PARCC assessments will be removed, as Mississippi withdrew from the PARCC consortium in January 2015.

1.B TRANSITION TO COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

Provide the SEA's plan to transition to and implement no later than the 2013–2014 school year college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for all students and schools and include an explanation of how this transition plan is likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with such standards. The Department encourages an SEA to include in its plan activities related to each of the italicized questions in the corresponding section of the document titled ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance, or to explain why one or more of those activities is not necessary to its plan.

General Information:

The CCSS initiative in Mississippi served to help students compete on a level playing field and to ensure that all students have the opportunity to meet internationally benchmarked standards that are clear, understandable, and consistent, as evidenced through aligned assessments. Mississippi recognizes the CCSS as college and career ready standards that will improve outcomes around college attendance and completion, as well as prepare students for success in the workplace. Mississippi's Education Achievement Council, established by the state legislature, encompasses representatives from the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, and the Mississippi Community College Board, as well as legislators. The Council's focus is on creating a state in which all students exit high school adequately prepared to be successful in college and careers. The results of the Council's work will be evidenced through data captured in the State wide Longitudinal Data System, as well as surveys to provide employer feedback regarding career readiness.

Adoption of the CCSS

The SBE in Mississippi took action for final adoption of the *CCSS for Mathematics* and the *CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* in August of 2010. This decision was a bold move that is consistent with SBE's vision and mission "to create a world class education system that gives students the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be successful in college and the workforce, compete in the global community, and flourish as parents and citizens." See **Attachment 4d** for SBE's vision, mission, and goals, as adopted in November 2009.

In 2014, the SBE [updated](#) the vision, mission, and goals to align to statewide strategic planning initiative. The revised mission reflects the SBE's role in providing leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so all students are prepared to compete in the global community.

Implementation of Mississippi's College and Career Readiness Standards

Since 2005, the state has been working to increase the rigor and relevance of standards and assessments, thus preparing practitioners for the transition to the CCSS. Mississippi began providing awareness sessions and training on the CCSS in October 2010, after SBE's final adoption of the standards. As a part of the initial awareness sessions, practitioners gave feedback on the quality of the standards,

timelines for implementation, and training needs for school staff. Feedback from awareness sessions and trainings indicated that educators are very receptive to the state's decision to adopt the CCSS; in fact, most teachers and administrators are enthused that Mississippi will be using a common set of rigorous standards.

Upon approval of the CCSS, MDE began statewide awareness and overview sessions for schools and districts to ensure that multiple constituencies were familiar with the CCSS and to garner input on the timeline for implementation. The K-2 grade band was selected as the initial implementation grade span for multiple reasons:

1. Participant feedback from overview sessions was highly favorable to begin with grades K-2.
2. 2011-2012 kindergarten students will be the first 3rd graders to participate in the CCSS Assessments for grades 3-11 during the 2014-2015 school year.
3. High stakes testing does not occur at the K-2 grade levels, which creates a more receptive environment for new initiatives.

The CCSS stakeholder group suggested that MDE implement grades 3-8 in the 2012-2013 school year because the CCSS for mathematics in the middle grades are much more rigorous than the current Mississippi standards for mathematics, thus providing middle school teachers with more time to prepare for implementation.

Through the feedback from the awareness sessions, the CCSS Suggested Implementation Timeline for Mississippi was created:

2011-2012	Grades K-2
2012-2013	Grades K-8
2013-2014	Grades K-12
2014-2015	Full Implementation of CCSS and First Year of Aligned Assessments

MDE staff members are helping school districts to think of implementation as a multi-year process of weaving the CCSS into the fabric of classroom instruction until the CCSS replaces the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks for mathematics and English language arts.

Practitioner's reception of the CCSS has been so great that educators are already making adjustments at the local level by examining existing resources and revising pacing guides to align with the CCSS. Several districts in the state are moving beyond implementing CCSS in the suggested grade levels K-2 during the 2011-2012 school year to beginning the implementation process in grades K-12.

In an effort to support school districts during the transition to the CCSS, MDE requested and received funding to employ curriculum content specialists, develop training materials, and conduct training sessions throughout the state. School districts are given many opportunities to provide input through a dedicated email address for Common Core, email to MDE staff, presentation feedback forms, and electronic surveys. MDE utilizes feedback and suggestions from educators to make improvements along the way. The response from other stakeholders such as higher

education, early childhood educators, etc., has also been very positive. As a result, MDE is working tirelessly to involve thousands of educators and stakeholders during the transitional period.

Mississippi has a high-quality plan to transition from the current Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks to college- and career-ready standards, as embraced in the CCSS.

Plan for Implementing College- and Career-Ready Standards

Key Milestone or Activity	Detailed Timeline	Party or Parties Responsible
Adopt the <i>CCSS for Mathematics</i> and the <i>CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects</i>	August 2010	SBE
Conduct awareness sessions and overview trainings in the CCSS via webinar and face to face at state meetings such as Town Hall Meetings, Special Education Advisory Panel, EL training, Administrator Training, Teacher Training, District Test Coordinator Meetings, etc.	October 2010 present	Office of Instructional Enhancement (IE), Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs)
Conduct alignment study	October 2010 March 2011	SEDL's Southeast Comprehensive Center
Meet with CCSS Stakeholder group to review alignment study, discuss high school courses, and identify standards that will be most difficult for teachers to implement	February 2011	IE
Secure funding to employ curriculum specialists to assist with developing and delivering training and resources on CCSS.	January 2011 June 2011	Superintendent of Education
Develop and deliver initial CCSS training for grades K-2 ELA and math	March 2011-July 2011	IE, RESAs
Develop and deliver initial CCSS training for grades 3-5 ELA and math	August 2011 November 2011	IE, RESAs
Develop and deliver initial CCSS training for grades 6-8 ELA and math	December 2011 March 2012	IE, RESAs

Key Milestone or Activity	Detailed Timeline	Party or Parties Responsible
Develop and deliver initial CCSS training for grades 9-12	March 2012 July 2012	IE, RESAs
Develop and deliver follow up CCSS training for grades K-2 (webinar and face to face)	November 2011 April 2012	IE, RESAs
Develop and deliver follow up CCSS training for grades 3-5 (webinar and face to face)	November 2012 April 2013	IE, RESAs
Develop and deliver follow up CCSS training for grades 6-8 (webinar and face to face)	November 2012 April 2013	IE, RESAs
Develop and deliver follow up CCSS training for grades 9-12 (webinar and face to face)	January 2013 December 2013	IE, RESAs
Provide initial CCSS training for higher education faculty	November 2011	IE, RESAs
Provide follow up CCSS training for math higher education faculty	April 2012	IE, RESAs, and IHE board
Provide follow up CCSS training for ELA higher education faculty	April 2012	IE, RESAs, and IHE board
Conduct regional superintendents meetings that includes CCSS	May 2012	State Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent
Disseminate information about CCSS to educators working with EL population	May 2012	IE
Conduct regional principals meetings that includes CCSS	Spring 2012	Deputy Superintendent, IE
Conduct training for curriculum coordinators that includes CCSS	Spring 2012	IE
Conduct initial phone meeting and webinar with CCSS Steering Committee	May 2012	IE
Finalize all CCSS task force committees (SATP transition & educator leader cadre)	May 2012	IE
Conduct meetings with math grades 9-12 Task Force to discuss high school courses, training materials, and the textbook adoption process	May 2012 June 2012	Office of Curriculum and Instruction (CI)

Key Milestone or Activity	Detailed Timeline	Party or Parties Responsible
Develop and disseminate a supplement to the RtI manual that focuses on literacy interventions for low achieving students, students with disabilities, and ELs	May 2012 August 2012	CI, Office of Special Education
Meet with ELA and Math Grades 9 12 Task Force to discuss the 9 12 TOT materials	June 2012	CI
Develop training on the CCSS for Writing Grades K 2, 3 5, 6 8, and 9 12	May 2012 June 2012	Office of Student Assessment, MS Writing Projects, IE, RESAs
Deliver 10 day training on the CCSS for Writing Grades K 2, 3 5, 6 8, and 9 12, which includes an online writing assessment tool Write To Learn.	July 2012 May 2013	Office of Student Assessment, MS Writing Projects, IE, RESAs
Meet with institutions of higher learning on the process for revising teacher preparation programs to align with the CCSS	August 2012	Office of Teacher Quality
Conduct state textbook adoption for CCSS reading and literature	August 2011 March 2012	Office of Textbooks, SBE
Conduct state textbook adoption for CCSS mathematics	August 2012 March 2013	Office of Textbooks, SBE
Develop and disseminate a supplement to the RtI manual that focuses on literacy interventions for low achieving students, students with disabilities, and ELs	August 2012	CI
Develop a scaffolding document for the CCSS that can be used for struggling learners, students with disabilities, and ELs	August 2012 December 2012	Office of Special Education, Office of Federal Programs, CI
Conduct state textbook adoption of CCSS language arts	August 2013 March 2014	Office of Textbooks, SBE
Launch iTunes U.	July 2012	Office of Student Assessment, IE
Implement PARCC Assessments and Dynamic Learning Map Assessment	2014 2015	Office of Student Assessment
ELL – Common Core for the not so common learner	2014 and beyond	CI

Key Milestone or Activity	Detailed Timeline	Party or Parties Responsible
Scaffolding document for struggling students and corresponding training	2014	CI
Regional Principal Meetings 13 14 and 14 15 focused on CCRS and literacy	2013 and beyond	Office of Elementary Education and Reading; Office of Secondary Education (formerly CI)
Continue to include higher education faculty and pre service teachers in training for CCRS focused on literacy	2014 and beyond	
Online Application System . Mississippi comprehensive automated performance based system (MCAPS)	June 2014 July 2015	Office of Federal Programs and Office of Special Education
Champions of Change	January 2014 & March 2015	Office of Federal Programs
School Effectiveness Review Process	June 2014 & Ongoing	Office of Federal Programs
Title I part C Migrant Education Program released RFP and awarded three year grant	May 2014	Office of Federal Programs
OFP University (New Directors Training Program)	August 2014	Office of Federal Programs
OFP Highlights By monthly communication tool to all key stakeholders	April 2014	Office of Federal Programs
ESEA and IDEA Joint Fiscal State Conference	February 2015	Office of Federal Programs; Office of Special Education; Office of School Financial Services; and Office of School Improvement
Acquired Trans Act (Translation Software) for all 146 districts	June 2014	Office of Federal Programs
Provided to the assistance of all title III grantees missing AMAO's	March 2014	Office of Federal Programs
ELP Training focusing on Lesson Planning and ACCESS	October 2014	Office of Federal Programs
Scaffolding and Academic Language and Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) Training	February 2014	Office of Federal Programs
Academic Language and Literacy Training, Technical Assistance	September 2014	Office of Federal Programs
OFP published list of ELL Resources	September 2014	Office of Federal Programs
Drafted of Three Year Strategic Plan for Title III Program	October November 2014	Office of Federal Programs

Key Milestone or Activity	Detailed Timeline	Party or Parties Responsible
ELP Training Sessions on English Language Development Standards Differentiation and ACCESS	December 2014	Office of Federal Programs

Evidence, Resources, and Obstacles:

Training materials and resources, including agendas, PowerPoint presentations, reference materials, facilitator notes, and other resources, are provided for participants at each of the training sessions listed in the timeline. Selected agendas from some of the training opportunities are included in **Attachment 4d1**. These agendas include evidence of work that MDE has conducted with the Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges (SBCJC) and the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) to make clear connections between CCSS and College and Career Ready Standards. Through the work of Dr. Susan Gendron and others from MDE, SBCJC, and IHL, the alignment between CCSS and Mississippi’s post secondary expectations has been strengthened.

Obstacles that remain with the implementation of CCSS include the traditional resource related barriers: time, money, and people. However, through the partnership of all educational organizations in the state, Mississippi has a strong capacity to meet the challenges of implementing CCSS.

Alignment of current state standards to the CCSS

In October 2010, MDE worked with SEDL’s Southeast Comprehensive Center to conduct an alignment study, which revealed that the overall alignment between the Mississippi Language Arts Framework and the *CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy* is strong and that the rigor is comparable. The alignment study revealed that the overall alignment between the Mississippi Mathematics Framework and the *CCSS for Mathematics* is not tightly aligned because many specifics in the *CCSS for Mathematics* are addressed at a lower grade level(s). The *CCSS for Mathematics* are more rigorous than the Mississippi Mathematics Framework objectives, which will make the transition to the *CCSS for Mathematics* challenging for Mississippi educators. The alignment study, being used during the transition to the CCSS, was posted to MDE website in March 2011 to help school districts determine how to realign local resources to support curriculum and instruction. The alignment results are being used by MDE to inform decisions such as revising the timeline for the textbook adoption process to ensure that materials that are aligned to the CCSS are available by full implementation of PARCC in the 2014 2015 school year.

Additionally, to support teachers, particularly in grades/subjects where the teacher may not have a thorough content knowledge base, SEDL has developed videos for each grade level on the *CCSS in Mathematics*. Each grade level video begins with an in depth introduction of a featured *CCSS for Mathematics*. The on line videos for mathematics provide support for teachers by clarifying vocabulary, identifying prerequisite skills, and recommending instructional strategies. The videos are being incorporated into MDE trainings to help teachers with standards that may be

challenging in terms of teacher content knowledge. Each training participant receives a thumb drive that includes the videos. These videos, available online at http://secc.sedl.org/common_core_videos/, will continue to be updated by SEDL.

MDE has developed instructional materials aligned with the CCSS grades K 2, grades 3 5, and grades 6 8. MDE staff members are currently developing training and materials for grades 9 12, along with professional development modules on the improvement of writing instruction. The materials are designed to help teachers with the implementation of the CCSS. The materials include examples of how the CCSS can be unpacked or deconstructed, writing teaching tools, alignment documents, teaching strategies for standards identified as being difficult to teach, and suggestions for starting points based on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) model content frameworks. The training materials are provided in hard copy and electronic format by grade band.

All documents related to CCSS are available on MDE website at http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculum_and_instruction/curriculum_and_instruction_other_links/common_core_state_standards.

Mississippi, through participation in the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, has analyzed the linguistic demands of the State's college- and career-ready standards to inform the development of English language proficiency (ELP) standards corresponding to the college- and career-ready standards and to ensure that English Learners (EL) will have the opportunity to achieve to the college- and career-ready standards on the same schedule as all students.

MDE, as a member of the WIDA Consortium, has implemented ELP standards that are aligned to the CCSS. In November 2011, the United States Department of Education (ED) approved Mississippi's revised Title III Plan for Annual Measureable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), based upon the WIDA achievement standards, to ensure that ELs have the opportunity to achieve college and career ready standards. The commitment of the WIDA project is clear from **Attachment 4e WIDA News**.

The WIDA ELP Standards are designed for the many audiences in the field of education who impact ELs. These audiences include ELs and their family members; teachers; principals; program, district and regional administrators; test developers; teacher educators; and other stakeholders in the educational lives of ELs. By developing the ELP standards, the WIDA Consortium has responded to demands to link language learning with state academic content standards and to address educators' needs in three different areas: 1) Pedagogy, 2) Assessment, and 3) Educational Policy.

The development of WIDA's ELP standards has been in response to recent educational change brought about through theory, research and legislation. First, the vision of language proficiency has expanded to encompass both social contexts

associated with language acquisition and academic contexts tied to schooling in general, and particularly to standards, curriculum and instruction. Second, the WIDA ELP Standards have been designed, in part, to guide the development of test blueprints, task specifications and ELP measures. Thus, the language proficiency standards are envisioned as the first step in the construction of reliable and valid assessment tools for ELs. Finally, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and corresponding state statutes currently mandate that states administer a standards based English language proficiency test annually to all ELs in Kindergarten through grade twelve in public schools.

In fall 2011, MDE conducted four regional trainings on WIDA. Over 300 participants, including district test coordinators, content area teachers, and teachers of ELs, received training focused on scaffolding academic language. The agenda from this training is attached as **Attachment 4f**.

In the November of 2014, the MDE began drafting a Three Year Strategic Plan for Title III Program. The Title III Coordinator worked with Heidi Goertzen, Jayne Sowers, and Ramona Chauvin of SEDL to develop a comprehensive, strategic plan for State Title III Program with emphasis on professional development and compliance.

The MDE conducted several training sessions in 2014 for regular education teachers. In December 2014 sessions were conducted around using English Language Development Standards Differentiation and ACCESS.

The ELD Standards Differentiation Training was a one day regional training, sponsored by MDE but conducted by WIDA staff, and held in three locations— December 2 (Oxford), December 3 (Jackson), and December 5 (Biloxi). Training emphasized the relationship of proficiency level and domain in the instruction and assessment of English Language Learners. Training also provided supports and scaffolds to engage ELLs at various levels in the language and content of lessons.

In an effort to increase transparency and fairness in state contracts, Mississippi is moving away from sole source procurement toward competitive RFPs for all contractual services. To that end, Mississippi will be releasing an RFP for English language proficiency assessments in Spring 2015. The awarded vendor will be required to meet a number of requirements, including assessment items that are aligned to the English language proficiency standards.

MDE has analyzed the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities will have the opportunity to achieve to the college- and career-ready standards; and the results of this analysis is informing the on-going training and support for students with disabilities in accessing the college- and career-ready standards on the same schedule as all students.

The Mississippi SBE requires all teachers, including special education teachers, to use the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards. Instruction for students with disabilities will be designed according to the students' individualized education plan (IEP). MDE's adoption of the CCSS, along with the participation in the PARCC consortium, has facilitated the analysis of learning and accommodation factors for students with disabilities. PARCC is committed to providing all students with equitable access to high quality, 21st century PARCC assessments. Through a combination of Universal Design for Learning principles and computer embedded supports, PARCC intends to design an assessment system that is inclusive for all participating students by considering accessibility from the beginning of initial design through item development, field testing, and implementation, rather than trying to retrofit the assessments for students with disabilities and English language learners. Accessible assessments will allow all individuals taking the assessments to participate and engage in a meaningful and appropriate manner, with the goal being to make valid inferences about the performance of students with diverse characteristics and to allow students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

In order to ensure the development of an accessible and fair assessment system, PARCC has created the following two working groups: The Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Operational Working Group (AAF OWG) and AAF Technical Working Group (AAF TWG). The AAF OWG, comprised of governing and participating state representatives, manages the day to day work stream while the AAF TWG, comprised of national experts, provides expert guidance to the OWG and the Technical Advisory Committee on technical issues related to accessibility and fairness.

The working groups are guided by the following principles:

1. Minimize/eliminate features of the assessment that are irrelevant to what is being measured and that measure the full range of complexity of the standards so that students can more accurately demonstrate their knowledge and skills;
2. Design each component of the assessment in a manner that allows ELs and students with disabilities to demonstrate what they know and can do;
3. Use Universal Design for Learning for accessible assessments throughout every stage and component of the assessment, including items/tasks, stimuli, passages, performance tasks, graphics and performance based tasks; and
4. Use technology for rendering all assessment components in as accessible a manner as possible.

PARCC Definitions:

- Universal Design for Learning Principles: principles guiding the design environments, products, and communications in a way that is inherently accessible to all intended users.
- Universal Design for Assessment: refers to principles that support a flexible design approach for test items such that all participating students are able to demonstrate what they know and can do regardless of physical, sensory, behavioral, or cognitive impairment, and recognizing that no single model will meet all students' needs.

- Accessible development includes consideration of questions such as:
 - Does the item or task measure what it intends to measure?
 - Does the item or task respect the diversity of the assessment population?
 - Does the item or task material have a clear format for text?
 - Does the item or task material have clear directions indicating what the student is supposed to do to answer the item or task?
 - Does the item or task material provide enough information for the students to respond to the item or task?
 - Does the item or task material have clear visuals (when essential to the item)?
 - Does the item or task material have concise and readable text?
- **Embedded Support:** Any tool, support, scaffold, link, or preference that is built into the assessment system with the explicit expectation that the feature will help many diverse students. Embedded supports will be readily available on screen, stored in a tool palette, or accessible through a menu or control panel as needed. To the extent possible, supports will be consistent through subtests. When an embedded support is made available to all users, it is considered a function of Universal Design. When a support is made available to only a subset of users based on their learner profile, it is considered an accessibility feature.

Three Tier Instructional Model

Mississippi has a SBE Policy on intervention (**Attachment 4g**) that requires all school districts to utilize a three tier instructional model to meet the needs of every student.

Tier 1

Tier 1 is *quality classroom instruction* and describes the school wide efforts and practices that are available to all students. Students who are successful at Tier 1 are making expected progress in the general education curriculum and are demonstrating behavioral expectations. With Tier 1 school wide practices in place, data should indicate when and where a student is experiencing difficulty.

Tier 2

Tier 2 is strategic/targeted intervention and supplemental instruction designed for those students who are not progressing or responding to Tier 1 efforts as expected. In these cases, instruction and/or behavior management within the general classroom setting may not be sufficient for these students, and additional strategic/targeted intervention and supplemental instruction may be necessary.

Tier 3

Tier 3 focuses on intensive interventions through academic and behavioral strategies, methodologies, and practices designed for students who are having significant difficulties with the established grade level objectives in the general education curriculum or who demonstrate significant difficulties with behavioral and social competence. Tier 3 interventions are more intensive than those in Tier 2 and are introduced when data suggest that a student has failed to make progress or

respond to the interventions in Tier 2 or the rate of progress or growth and level is such that the student is unlikely to narrow the performance gap. Students may receive Tier 3 interventions by “skipping” Tier 2 when the school can demonstrate through data that the students’ current level of performance is highly discrepant from peers. Finally, State Board Policy 4300 states specifically which students should be referred to the Teacher Support Team (TST) to determine if Tier 3 interventions are needed.

MDE recommends progress monitoring of all Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in the target area(s) of the supplemental instruction or intervention. Because a trend line must be determined from the established baseline, progress monitoring twice a week is recommended. At a minimum, there should be one assessment per week. The district has the flexibility to select appropriate progress monitoring assessments based on the interventions being used. The results of the assessment are used by the TST to recommend student placement in the tiered process.

Training on Response to Intervention

In an effort to support school districts with meeting the needs of **all** students, including students with disabilities, MDE has trained approximately 3,000 school staff, including district and school level administrators, interventionists, behavior specialists, counselors, teachers, and school psychologists, in the area of Response to Intervention (RtI). The in depth training was conducted over three years to address universal screening, effective instruction, differentiated instruction, planning, teaming, data based decision making, and positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS). The training was offered through collaboration with MDE’s Office of Special Education and Office of Curriculum and Instruction. The training sessions provided at six locations throughout the state include the following topics (lengths indicated are per training site):

- General Overview sessions of RtI (half day)
- Training on Tier 1 (8 days)
- Training on Tier 2 (2 days)
- Training on Tier 3 (2 days)
- Principal Institutes (included Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3) (5 days)
- Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (2 days)

MDE has a website with materials and resources related to the Three Tier Instructional Model and RtI for practitioners to utilize as well:

[http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculum and instruction/curriculum and instruction other links/response to intervention teacher support team](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculum%20and%20instruction/curriculum%20and%20instruction%20other%20links/response%20to%20intervention%20teacher%20support%20team).

In 2015, the MDE hired a Director of Intervention Services who will be working with a stakeholder group to revisit the structure of the RTI model and revise the manual, forms, and essential elements. Regional trainings will be conducted to share updates on any changes.

MDE has conducted outreach on and dissemination of the college- and career-ready standards, which is planned to reach all appropriate

stakeholders, to increase awareness of the State's college- and career-ready standards.

The SBE has made a tremendous commitment to prepare Mississippi children to compete on a national and international level by adopting the CCSS in June 2010. In January 2012, the state approved early learning standards for programs serving three year old children and four year old children that are aligned with the CCSS for kindergarten in mathematics and English language arts. As the state implements the CCSS, there will be alignment across early childhood education, K 12 education, and postsecondary education.

The Board is also devoted to committing resources to ensure the standards are reaching all educators. The timeline below provides an overview of the dissemination process, in addition to the information provided in the proceeding sections.

Timeline for statewide outreach and dissemination

August 2010: Posted the CCSS to MDE website and notified all stakeholders (institutions of higher learning, school district superintendents, curriculum coordinators, principals, teachers, parent advocacy groups).

November 2010: Posted a list of ten quick facts about the CCSS.

November 2010: Conducted first webinar to provide overview of the CCSS and assessments.

Oct 2010 June 2011: Conducted awareness sessions and institutes throughout the state. MDE solicited feedback from participants on training needs and scenarios for transitioning to the CCSS.

February 2011: Conducted a meeting with a CCSS stakeholder group to review the findings of the alignment study, make recommendations for the high school courses that will be based on the CCSS, and identify standards that will be most difficult for teachers.

Webinars and awareness sessions have already been conducted to provide stakeholders with more details on Common Core. These sessions have greatly increased awareness of the CCSS. Initial feedback from Mississippians has been very positive. MDE has developed a plan to transition to the Common Core over the next few years with assessments expected to be in place in 2014 15. Presentations on the CCSS have also been made at state conferences and meetings for stakeholder groups and organizations such as the Mississippi Parent Teacher Association, MDE Special Education Parent Advisory Panel, Mississippi Association for Mathematics Teachers Educators, Mississippi Association for School Superintendents, Mississippi Association for School Administrators, Mississippi Association of Secondary School Principals, Mississippi Association of Elementary School Administrators, Head Start Directors, Mississippi Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Parents for Public

Schools, State Literacy Team, School District Communication Directors, Institutions of Higher Learning, Community College Presidents Council, and the Higher Education Literacy Council. In an effort to ensure parents are well informed, access to the national PTA's parent guides for the CCSS is available via MDE website.

November 2011: **CCSS Training** sessions for **higher education faculty** (community college and four year university faculty) occurred in two regional sites for 200 participants. The next phase of training on CCSS for higher education faculty, providing a deeper understanding of the standards, is planned for March April 2012.

On going: MDE has a **dedicated webpage** that houses all training materials regarding the CCSS initiative at <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculum> and [instruction/curriculum](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/instruction/curriculum) and [instruction other links/common core state standards](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/instruction/other-links/common-core-state-standards).

MDE has provided professional development and other supports to prepare teachers to teach all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, to the new standards. The professional development and supports prepare teachers to teach to the new standards, use instructional materials aligned with those standards, and use data on multiple measures of student performance (e.g., data from formative, benchmark, and summative assessments) to inform instruction.

The SBE has a clear expectation that teachers will ensure that all students have an opportunity to meet the high expectations established through the CCSS. Instruction for students with disabilities will be designed according to the students' IEP. See training timeline below for the CCSS Training of the Trainers (TOT) sessions. Each school district sends a team to be responsible for training at the local level. The Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) help with the facilitation of the training sessions. Training materials in print and electronic form and video resources are being provided. Training content includes an overview of the CCSS and PARCC, activities on how to unpack the CCSS and scaffold instruction for all learners, videos to help with understanding the CCSS, and an overview of the alignment between the CCSS and the current Mississippi standards. Materials also include practical classroom activities, instructional planning materials, and guidelines for developing quality formative assessments. Follow up sessions will be conducted to help districts facilitate problem solving, implement support mechanisms, and use data to drive instruction.

Training on the CCSS

- **CCSS Grades K-2 Training-of-the-Trainers** sessions occurred in June July 2011 in three regional sites for 600 participants.
- After the initial training for grades K 2, a follow up session was provided on November 29, 2011, via webinar for participants to identify and discuss challenges and opportunities related to implementation as well as hear from a

panel of practitioners about their school's implementation through the professional learning community model.

- **CCSS Grades 3-5 Training of the Trainers** sessions occurred in October November 2011 at three regional sites for 500 participants.
- **CCSS Grades 6-8 Training of the Trainers** sessions occurred in January March 2012 in three regional sites for 500 participants.
- **CCSS Grades 9-12 Training of the Trainers** sessions occurred in June July 2012 in three regional sites for 500 participants.

It is anticipated that the training for all grades will follow the same basic pattern of training with improvements that are learned along the way. All grade levels completed follow up activities by the summer of 2013, well before starting the new assessments in the 2014 15 school year. Additional training was provided as details related to the PARCC assessment are released.

Evaluations are conducted after each training session to collect information that will be used to design future training and to develop resources.

In June 2010, MDE released a publication to help school districts with the continuous implementation of State Board Policy 4300 on Intervention (**Attachment 4g**). The publication was developed around three general themes regarding RtI.

1. RtI provides opportunities for educators to learn new and different ways to provide quality services to children.
2. RtI is a process that involves the early identification of students who need assistance with academics or behavior, provides scientifically research based efforts to help students, and monitors progress of their responses to those efforts.
3. Finally, RtI is not a linear process but is a recursive process in that any student may move throughout the three tiers several times in his or her educational career.

Additionally, the Office of Special Education (OSE) provides on going training for schools and districts in appropriate learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities will have the opportunity to access the college and career ready standards on the same schedule as all students. These training sessions have included the following on going opportunities:

- **Accommodating Students in an Inclusive Classroom** (provided at seven regional locations across the state during the 2010 11 School Year);
- **IEP and Inclusionary Practices** (provided at six regional locations across the state during the 2010 11 School Year);
- **Accommodating Students in an Inclusive Classroom** (provided at four regional locations across the state during the 2011 12 School Year)
- **Basic IEP Practices** (provided at six regional locations across the state during the 2011 12 School Year); and
- **Response to Intervention** (provided at five regional locations across the state during the 2011 12 School Year).

During the 2008 2009 school year, OSE provided all districts with *Tool Kits for Success*, a set of professional development resources designed to help foster effective educational practices for all students. The tool kits include resources on inclusion, accommodations, RtI, co teaching, differentiating instruction, classroom management and more. Training on effectively using the resources was provided by OSE regionally during the 2009 2010 and 2010 2011 school years. OSE has continued to identify and add resources to the tool kits. The tool kits are available on the website at (<http://mdestream.mde.k12.ms.us/sped/ToolKit/index.html>).

Mississippi has provided and will continue to provide high quality professional development, curriculum, and instructional support to all school leaders and all content area teachers. These support opportunities are designed to provide strategies and resources for teaching challenging content for all struggling learners, including ELs not yet proficient in the language typically used to explain the content. The agenda for an upcoming session on writing effective Title III plans is included as **Attachment 4h**.

MDE continues to seek opportunities for on going professional development, curriculum, and instructional supports for all teachers of ELs and students with disabilities, including general education teachers, with a focus on increasing curriculum supports for the general education setting. MDE is currently considering proposals for principal and teacher training in which participants will study, share insights on, and engage the district and school climate and context, the major language and content issues, and research on the best practices for improving instruction for ELs. The purpose of the training is to provide educators with the tools to support all students in achieving the same clear standards at much higher levels so that they are all ready to advance successfully to the next stage of education. Similar supports are on going for teachers of students with disabilities, and the validity of instructional supports for all struggling students will be emphasized for use in the general education classroom.

MDE, through the leadership of the Office of Instructional Enhancement, as part of the Statewide System of Support (SSOS), will develop a scaffolding document that will provide an extensive guide of the skills students need to reach the learning targets identified in the CCSS. The scaffolding documents and corresponding training and assistance will help all teachers, both special education and general education, to support the individual needs of learners struggling to meet the requirements of CCSS. The materials will be helpful for developing individualized education plans, prescribing interventions, and differentiating instruction for diverse learners. The documents and training will be developed by representatives from all levels and areas of instruction, including teachers of students with disabilities, English learners, and struggling learners.

The primary purpose of the 2014 Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards Scaffolding Documents is to provide teachers with a deeper understanding of the Standards as they plan for classroom instruction. Based on the

2014 Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards, these documents provide a close analysis of the requirements for student mastery. Because of the rigor and depth of the Standards, scaffolding instruction to meet the needs of all learners is essential to individual success. These documents will aid teachers' understanding of how to teach the Standards through a natural progression of student mastery. Scaffolding Documents can be accessed at <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculum-and-instruction/ccr-scaffolding-documents>.

Under the Regional Service Delivery Model, the MDE has hired a number of professional development coordinators. These content specialists are delivering professional development sessions and assisting MDE with the development of instructional resources. Training is delivered through online and face to face sessions. Content areas include mathematics, literacy, English Language Arts, special education, and early childhood. The specialists are working directly with classroom teachers and district personnel to improve instructional practices and educational outcomes for students. MDE plans to hire a professional development coordinator in the area of science to begin in July 2015.

A number of resources related to CCR standards are available online at <https://districtaccess.mde.k12.ms.us/commoncore/Training%20Public%20Access/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

The Office of Elementary Education and Reading is responsible for supporting and training literacy teachers, curriculum specialists, coaches and other educators by providing the most up to date information on literacy and the implementation of the Literacy Based Promotion Act. Passed during the 2013 legislative session, the Literacy Based Promotion Act places an emphasis on grade level reading skills for students, particularly as they progress through grades K 3. Beginning in the 2014 2015 school year, a student scoring at the lowest achievement level in reading on the established state assessment for 3rd grade will not be promoted to 4th grade unless the student meets the good cause exemptions for promotion. In an effort to support schools in their literacy efforts, the MDE has deployed educators with expertise in literacy to a number of targeted schools across Mississippi. The MDE has recruited additional literacy coaches for projected deployment in August of 2015. Information is available online at www.mde.k12.ms.us/literacy. Further, MDE has increased staff capacity by hiring three additional team members to support this important work: Early Childhood Director (added December 2014), Intervention Services Director (added February 2015), and State Literacy Director (added February 2015).

As a part of the Early Learning Collaborative Act, Mississippi is piloting 11 preschool collaboratives, serving almost 1,800 students in 66 sites across the state. This effort is Mississippi's first venture into state funded preschool, focusing on high quality programs preparing students for kindergarten. During FY2014 and FY2015, the state appropriated \$3M annually.

MDE has provided professional development and supports to prepare principals to provide strong, supportive instructional leadership based on the new standards.

MDE continues to take opportunities to provide professional development and support on instructional leadership, including the following activities:

- **Overview Sessions** on the CCSS and Assessments both “live” and via webinar have been offered throughout the state to over 3000 participants, including **principals**.
- **Two Day K-12 Institutes** delving deeper into the CCSS and Assessments have taken place at six regional sites for 1200 district administrators, including superintendents, curriculum coordinators, **principals**, and lead teachers. The Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) helped with the facilitation of the training sessions.
- **Presentations** on various aspects of CCSS and Assessments have been made to **principals**, local **school district staff**, **professional organizations**, and **conference breakout sessions** across the state as mentioned in the section on outreach and dissemination.

School districts continue to support the effort by actively including principals and lead teachers in the Train the Trainers model of professional development being used by the state to disseminate all CCSS information.

iTunes U: Professional Development to Principals and Teachers

MDE envisions iTunes U becoming the communication hub for professional development for educators in the state of Mississippi. As MDE launched a new web site, logo, and branding in July 2012, iTunes U became an integral part of the massive public relations effort.

From a programmatic standpoint, iTunes U will dramatically accelerate Mississippi’s efforts in implementing the CCSS. As MDE seeks to engage every teacher and administrator in the state, all available media will be leveraged. Undertaking this immense training challenge for over 32,000 teachers will be virtually impossible without an intuitive and robust content delivery model like iTunes U.

The portal will also serve as a central storehouse for all professional development efforts of MDE, providing practitioners with a single platform for all training resources offered by MDE, including webinars, training materials, and event registration.

MDE stands ready to launch the initiative and usher in a new era of collaborative teaching and learning opportunities that Mississippi’s students, teachers, and administrators so desperately want, need, and deserve.

MDE has developed and disseminated high-quality instructional materials aligned with the new standards. These materials were designed with the purpose of supporting the teaching and learning of

all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students.

MDE has developed instructional materials aligned with the CCSS for grades K-2, grades 3-5, and grades 6-8. The materials are designed to help teachers with the implementation of the CCSS. The materials include examples of how the CCSS can be unpacked or deconstructed, writing teaching tools, alignment documents, teaching strategies for standards identified as being difficult to teach, and suggestions for starting points based on the PARCC model content frameworks. The training materials include printed materials and video clips, and are provided in hard copy and electronic format by grade span. All documents related to CCSS are available on MDE website at http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculum_and_instruction/curriculum_and_instruction_other_links/common_core_state_standards.

MDE is working with SEDL's Southeast Comprehensive Center to provide video clips on the teaching of college- and career-ready standards in math and English language arts. In order to support the teaching and learning of all students, including ELs, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, MDE is developing a list of scaffolding objectives that will help students to reach the learning outcomes in the CCSS.

Mississippi is launching iTunes U, a platform to provide practitioners with a variety of tools to support learning. Among these materials are the **Mississippi ELL Guidelines** (http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/federal_programs/federal_programs_title_iii_ell), the **Special Education Tool Kits for Success** (<http://mdestream.mde.k12.ms.us/sped/ToolKit/index.html>), and the **What Works Clearinghouse** (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>) resources.

MDE, Office of Special Education (OSE) offers educators a variety of professional development opportunities to provide support in educating students with disabilities. During the 2011-2012 school year, OSE offered a total of twelve (12) trainings on the topics of Accommodating Students in the Classroom and LRE: The Decision Making Process. OSE also co-sponsored a co-teaching mini-conference with the Mississippi Association of Educators (MAE). At the two-day conference, school teams of teachers heard presentations about common core standards, career pathways, co-teaching, inclusion, differentiating instruction, and bullying. Lastly, OSE provided professional development on the topic of inclusion throughout the school year, at the request of various school districts.

For the 2012-2013 school year, OSE will be offering a total of twelve (12) regional trainings on the topics of Co-teaching in an Inclusive Setting, Accommodating Students in their Least Restrictive Environment, and Programming for Students with Difficult Behaviors. OSE will continue its partnership with MAE and has scheduled a second two-day mini-conference for school teams of teachers. The topics that will be presented include differentiating instruction, co-teaching, classroom management, and curriculum mapping. Lastly, OSE will continue to provide individualized district training at the request of school districts.

Further, while textbook adoption is not a requirement for full implementation of the CCSS, Mississippi's textbook adoption timeline has been revised in order to have materials aligned to the CCSS available before starting the new assessments in the 2014-15 school year. As directed through state law, a review panel including practitioners and content experts review texts for alignment with CCSS and make recommendations to SBE for only the texts that meet the criteria for inclusion in the state adoption list. During the 2011-2012 school year, textbooks were adopted in the area of reading and literature. During the 2012-2013 school year, textbooks were adopted in the area of mathematics. Textbooks were adopted in the area of English language arts in the 2013-2014 school year. These materials are available for teachers to meet the needs of all students, including ELs, low-achieving students, and students with disabilities.

Mississippi is making great strides to expand access to college-level courses or their prerequisites, dual enrollment courses, or accelerated learning opportunities, in an effort to lead to more students having access to courses that prepare them for college and a career.

With the idea that students and schools need options for success, SBE and State Superintendent have worked with legislative groups to determine any barriers to a variety of pathways to success for Mississippi's students. As further reiterated in Governor Bryant's recent inaugural address, "*We must also attack the dropout rate by allowing children to take standard high school classes and workforce learning in community colleges at the same time. A dropout who would otherwise be preordained as a societal failure could be valued as a craftsman with such programs.*"

Statewide decision makers clearly understand that postsecondary skills are required for the highly competitive economy in the world today. A strong predictor of college credential completion is the accumulation of the first 20 credits within the first year of college. The return on investment suggests significant financial benefits to students and their families, to communities, and to states based on greater high school and college completion rates. MDE has enacted several initiatives to expand access to college preparatory course work and experiences and has plans to add further options for success.

Existing Options for Success

Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement (AP) is a rigorous academic program of the College Board that allows high school students to earn college credit through rigorous courses taught at their local high school. Students have the opportunity to submit AP exam results to colleges and universities for consideration for accepting the course work in lieu of college course requirements for graduation. Since 1955, the AP Program has enabled

millions of students to take college level courses and exams, and to earn college credit or placement while still in high school.

A 2008 study found that AP students had better four year graduation rates than those who did not take AP. For example, graduation rates for AP English Literature students were 62 percent higher than graduation rates for those who took other English courses in high school. Taking AP also increases eligibility for scholarships and makes candidates more attractive to colleges:

- Thirty one (31) percent of colleges and universities consider a student's AP experience when making scholarship decisions.
- Eighty five (85) percent of selective colleges and universities report that a student's AP experience favorably impacts admissions decisions.

In 2006, MDE established State Board Policy 2903, the *Access to a Substantive and Rigorous Curriculum Policy*. It mandates that every high school offer at least one AP course in each of the four core academic subject areas: mathematics, English/language arts, science, and social studies. Mississippi participates in the Federal Advanced Placement Test Fee Grant program that subsidizes the Advanced Placement Test Fee for students who qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program. These steps have proven successful in expanding opportunities for students to gain access to courses that would prepare them for college success. Since 2006, the number of students taking AP exams has grown 49%. In the 2009 2010 school year, a total of 5,483 public school students took AP exams in Mississippi. In spring 2010, 39% of the AP exam takers were minorities.

International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate (IB) aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end, the IB works with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate, lifelong learners who understand that other people with their differences can also be right.

The IB works in four areas:

- Development of curriculum;
- Assessment of students;
- Training and professional development of teachers; and
- Authorization and evaluation of schools.

Upon successful completion of the IB program, students are issued a certified IB program designation certificate that, along with their regular high school diploma, signifies to prospective colleges and universities that these students are well prepared for successful matriculation in even the most selective colleges and universities around the world.

While Mississippi has supported the development and expansion of the IB Program, during the years from 1996 to 2007 only one school district in the state implemented an IB program. In 2008, three additional school districts embraced the program and now offer IB coursework and experiences to their students. MDE has worked with these school districts to remove any barriers to successful implementation of the IB course of study.

Dual Enrollment

Mississippi offers opportunities for students to be enrolled dually in high school and postsecondary education programs. Dual Enrollment allows students the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit for college level courses taken while still enrolled in high school. School districts enter into agreements with public four year colleges and universities or community colleges to allow for students to take courses taught by college faculty. The students earn credit towards high school graduation and a college degree while in the program. The strong partnership between and among two and four year colleges and high schools in Mississippi has allowed the program to flourish. This program was recently revised to allow for smoother transition from high school to community college and on to a four year college. Mississippi plans to expand Dual Enrollment opportunities for Mississippi's students through a variety of outlets.

Pathways to Success

MDE, through the leadership of the Office of Career and Technical Education, is committed to improving the success for all students and is implementing the Pathways to Success system, combining high academic standards with career exploration. The components of the Pathways to Success model include the following:

- Career Clusters for Schools: A strong career cluster system transcends all K 12 schooling and links to postsecondary education and the workplace. It focuses on career awareness and preparation in elementary school, high school, and beyond.
- Career Pathways: Each cluster is divided into Career Pathways, which represent more specific slices of the job market. In a comprehensive cluster system, each high school student, by the 10th grade, has chosen a career major on which to focus his or her studies and career planning. Completion of a major usually requires at least four units of study in that area as well as complementary electives.
- Organize Curricula and Courses around Career Clusters: In a comprehensive cluster system, schools or districts reorganize curricula and other elements of education around the careers students will pursue after graduation. Rather than focusing just on traditional disciplines, career cluster systems combine rigorous academics with relevant career education. The programs of study include opportunities for dual or articulated credit at the postsecondary level for all students and meet college and career readiness standards. They may also lead to an associate's or a bachelor's degree, a certificate at the postsecondary level, or an

industry recognized credential. Alignment to national academic and career and technical education standards is required.

- Require Individual Graduation Plans for All Students: Working with school guidance personnel, each student in a cluster system, along with his or her parents or guardians, develops an individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP) in middle school. The plan is reviewed and updated annually. The iCAP records the student's career cluster, career major, planned or completed courses from 9th to 12th grade, postsecondary objective, planned and completed extracurricular activities, and work based learning experiences.
- Align K-12 Schooling, Postsecondary Education, and Workplace: An effective cluster system offers all students clear pathways for K-12 schooling, as well as into college or other postsecondary options and into employment. Educational institutions use articulation agreements to align programs and seamlessly transition students as they accumulate the knowledge and skills needed for independent adulthood.

Pilot Programs

Excellence for All

As one of several new options being piloted in Mississippi to afford students with multiple pathways for successful exit from high school, three school districts in Mississippi are piloting Excellence for All, formerly known as the Mississippi State Board Examination System. Through this program, districts will offer students rigorous coursework during the 9th and 10th grade year that would allow them to then take the State Board Exam. Depending on performance on the exam, students could progress to IB, AP, or career and technical education programs during the 11th and 12th grade year, exit high school to begin a community college program, or pursue employment. The curricula for the Excellence for All program in Mississippi incorporates the Cambridge International Secondary Curriculum and the ACT Quality Core.

Cambridge International Secondary Curriculum

- The Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) curriculum is designed for 14-16 year olds and has two sub-components:
 - Cambridge O Level is an internationally recognized qualification equivalent to the UK General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Cambridge O Level provides learners with excellent preparation for academic progression to Cambridge Advanced including Cambridge International AS and A Levels and Cambridge Pre-U.
 - Cambridge ICE is the group award of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and requires the study of subjects drawn from the five different IGCSE subject groups. It gives schools the opportunity to benefit from offering a broad and balanced curriculum by recognizing the achievements of students who pass examinations in at least seven subjects, including two languages, and one subject from each of the other subject groups.

- Cambridge International AS and A Levels are internationally benchmarked qualifications providing excellent preparation for university education. They are part of the Cambridge Advanced stage. This level is primarily for 16-19 year olds. It is also divided into 2 subgroups:
 - Cambridge Pre-U is an exciting new post-16 qualification. It prepares learners with the skills and knowledge they need to make a success of their subsequent studies at university.
 - Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) Diploma provides a high quality English-medium qualification, which prepares young people for honors degree programs.

ACT Quality Core

The Quality Core is part of the ACT College and Career Readiness System that uses periodic summative assessments in order to gauge student preparedness of college and career. ACT's College and Career Readiness System provides a longitudinal approach to educational and career planning through assessment, curriculum support, and student evaluation. The research-based solutions are designed to help schools, districts, and states prepare every student for college and career by focusing on academic and non-cognitive measurement and instructional improvement. The quality core program is aligned to the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards and Benchmarks. Quality Core offers five flexible components to improve and align the current high school curriculum and instructional materials: English, science, mathematics, writing, and reading.

Early College High School and Mississippi Diploma High School

Additional options to be planned in 2012-13 and piloted in the 2013-14 school year are the Early College High School and the Mississippi Diploma High School.

An Early College High School (ECHS) is a small, autonomous school, operated on a college campus or in close connection with a postsecondary institution that targets low-income youth, first-generation college students, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education. However, ECHS campuses are open to all students. The schools are designed so that students have the opportunity to earn an associate's degree or up to two years of transferable college credit along with a high school diploma. Local school districts operate the early college high schools, which may start in Grade 9. An ECHS must have approval for operation from SBE, as the school functions as a separate school located on a college campus and operated in cooperation with a postsecondary institution through a memorandum of understanding. An ECHS provides support services necessary to prepare for and complete college-level work successfully. The postsecondary partners provide college courses as substitutes for some high school classes. Opportunities exist for students to earn up to 60 college credit hours, all at no cost to the student. Clearly, at the core of every ECHS program is the opportunity of dual credit courses and greater success in the postsecondary environment.

One such opportunity was piloted during the 2012-2013 school year. Hinds Community College and Rankin County School District are partnering to implement an Early College model funded through the Gates Foundation. The program, a part of the Gateway to College National Network, will provide students who would potentially drop out of high school with a fulfilling educational experience. To date, the program, as a Mississippi Works site, has graduated over 60 participants. The first official Early College High School will open at East Mississippi Community College in 2015-2016.

The Mississippi Diploma High School (MDHS) provides students who have dropped out or who are about to withdraw with an opportunity to gain a high school diploma, while being dually enrolled in a career and technical education program. MDHS is a program of instruction offered collaboratively by local school districts and community colleges and operated as a means to help students who are between the ages of 16 and 21, needing credits for graduation. The typical student entering the Diploma High School will need course work usually provided during the last two years of study at a traditional high school. Upon completion of state requirements, these students will be issued a standard diploma as approved by the Mississippi SBE.

The legislature enacted House Bill 1163 in 2011 to have a report on the feasibility of these options presented to the legislature in January 2012. Based upon the reception of the January 2012 report, Mississippi anticipates implementing ECHS in three or four pilot sites.

MDE has worked with the State's IHEs and other teacher and principal preparation programs to better prepare incoming teachers to teach all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, to the new college- and career-ready standards; and incoming principals to provide strong, supportive instructional leadership on teaching to the new standards.

Understanding the linkage between quality instruction and appropriate preparation programs, MDE is in the midst of redesign efforts for both teacher and leader preparation programs, as noted in the information for Principle 3. Additionally, higher education faculty from both two- and four-year institutions have participated in overview sessions and training opportunities for CCSS and assessments, including strategies to ensure teachers can meet the needs of all students.

CCSS Training sessions for higher education faculty occurred in November 2011 in two regional sites for 200 participants to provide an overview of the CCSS. Training sessions will be offered in the spring of 2012 specifically for higher education faculty, two days for mathematics and two days for English language arts.

Additionally, Mississippi has taken steps to improve educator preparation programs including a quality review and recertification of all leadership programs through the Commission for Licensure. A part of this process ensures that education preparation programs are and will be preparing educators to meet the rigorous demands of

classroom instruction aligned to the CCSS. The work of Dr. Joseph Murphy and others will continue to strengthen the quality of educators entering the workforce and ensure that instruction is aligned to the new standards. Over the last eighteen months, Dr. Murphy has conducted an extensive quality review of all nine educator leadership programs in Mississippi, under the auspices of the Mississippi Licensure Commission and SBE. Dr. Murphy's process ensured that each program meets ISLLC standards and includes strong internships to link theory to field experiences.

Teacher preparation programs have been provided with guidance for redesign under a Blue Ribbon Committee with further review anticipated by program within the next twelve months. During that time, through a partnership of MDE, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), and Mississippi State Board of Community and Junior Colleges (SBCJC), collaborative work will identify content experts to review programs across the state.

MDE has reviewed current assessments to identify areas of alignment with the State's college- and career-ready standards. In order to better prepare students and teachers for the upcoming PARCC assessments, MDE has implemented the following strategies:

- ***Coordinating with the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) through representation of higher education faculty and system staff in PARCC assessment planning***
- ***Revising the statewide writing assessment***
- ***Partnering with IHL, State Board of Community and Junior Colleges, and the Governor's Office on College Readiness issues***

Increasing the rigor of the state standards and assessments

Since 2006, Mississippi has been working to raise the rigor and relevance in state standards. Each objective for the 2007 Mississippi Mathematics Framework Revised and the 2006 Mississippi Language Arts Framework Revised has been assigned a Depth of Knowledge (DOK) level based on the work of Norman L. Webb. DOK levels help administrators, teachers, and parents understand the objective in terms of the complexity of what students are expected to know and do. Standards (i.e., competencies and objectives) vary in terms of complexity. Teachers must know what level of complexity is required by an objective in order to ensure that students have received prior instruction or have had an opportunity to learn content at the level students will be expected to demonstrate or perform. External reviewers have recognized the improved of the state curriculum. Based upon the 2012 Quality Counts report from *EdWeek*, Mississippi's standards, assessments, and accountability rating of *A* is in the top 12 ratings for the nation, tied with California and North Carolina at number 10.

Mississippi has worked to revamp the state's assessment system by developing assessment items in English language arts and mathematics to ensure that what is elicited from students on the assessment is as demanding cognitively as what students are expected to know and do as stated in the objectives. The transition from

the Mississippi Curriculum Test to the Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition (MCT2) took place in 2007. The transition from the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) to SATP2, which includes Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and United States History, began in 2007 and was completed in 2011. This transition will help schools as the state moves towards full implementation of the CCSS.

Further, MDE has revised the state's science and social studies standards with rigor and relevance. Dr. Norman Webb conducted a DOK analysis for these standards as well. As a result, the state is implementing a revised assessment for science (grade 5, grade 8, and Biology I) and social studies in the area of United States History, all with increasing rigor.

During the transition years to the PARCC assessments (2011-2013), Mississippi administered the legacy state assessments.

Mississippi is firmly committed to increasing the rigor of our entire assessment system, which is both board approved and peer reviewed. We have demonstrated this commitment by transitioning every assessment program to a second generation model over the past four years. Since 2008, Mississippi has implemented new curricula and new assessments that are aligned with national standards in the following assessment programs:

- Mississippi Curriculum Test (which assesses language arts and math in grades 3-8)
- Mississippi Science Test (which assesses science in grades 5 and 8)
- Subject Area Testing Program (which includes high stakes graduation tests in English II, Algebra I, Biology I and US History)
- Mississippi Writing Assessment Program (which assesses student writing in grades 4, 7 and 10)

As a Governing State in PARCC, Mississippi was intimately involved with the PARCC consortium in developing the next generation of assessments aligned with the CCSS. Once Mississippi became a governing state in the fall of 2011, it became apparent that the consortium was still many months away from developing next generation assessments which would be defined by both *innovative item types* and *technology enhanced items*. Therefore, it was difficult for any state to develop new test items to resemble the assessment shifts anticipated with the PARCC assessment.

Consequently, our state continued using the state assessment system through the 2013-2014 school year. As Mississippi transitioned to PARCC, the state continued to implement the ongoing communications plan to ensure all educators and stakeholders are aware of the changes that will take place, which will include new formats, need for scaffolding instruction, online assessments, and possible dips in performance. MDE prepared districts and schools for the new assessments by thoughtfully aligning all resources for teacher and principal training so that all educators are better prepared to deliver high quality instruction at the appropriate level of rigor necessary to impact the desired student learning outcomes envisioned by the CCSS. Preparation and training include working with complex text and

writing instruction to give educators and parents more information about increased levels of rigor. One such informational activity is The Writing Project.

The Writing Project

MDE is partnering with the seven Mississippi Writing Projects to offer a ten day professional learning program to support teachers as they implement new types of literacy instruction required by the CCSS for English language arts. Sessions will include analysis of student work, class demonstrations, classroom observations, instructional strategies, and model lessons that focus on teaching writing effectively.

MDE offsets the development and delivery cost so that school districts will be responsible for a nominal fee of \$250 per teacher. All teachers including teachers of students with disabilities, ELs, and struggling learners are able to participate in this training. While schools or districts will pay a \$250 registration fee, the total cost of this training program is over \$850 per participant. MDE is paying the balance of this fee as part of the ongoing transition to—and implementation of—the College and Career Readiness Standards. Additionally, participating teachers receive access to Pearson’s online formative writing assessment program, Write to Learn, at **no cost**. This program normally sells for between \$14-20 per student per year, so the total value of this component could vary from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars—depending on the number of assigned students.

Training sessions will be delivered by grade band: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The timeframe of the training involves two days of regional training during the summer, two days of regional training during the fall, two days of regional training during the spring, and four days of local training throughout the school year. The dates and locations for the summer training are indicated below. Dates for the fall, spring, and local training will be determined at a later date.

Dates and Locations for Summer 2012 Training

- July 10-11, 2012: Oxford Conference Center in Oxford
- July 12-13, 2012: Greenville Higher Education Center in Greenville
- July 17-18, 2012: USM Gulf Park Campus in Long Beach
- July 17-18, 2012: Ronald Whitehead Advanced Technology Center in Ellisville
- July 19-20, 2012: Jackson State University R & D Center in Jackson
- July 24-25, 2012: Riley Center in Meridian

Due to the success of the Writing Project in 2012, MDE continued to provide this training annually through the summer of 2015, in similar regional locations.

Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

Mississippi became a governing state in the PARCC Consortium in 2011. PARCC is developing an assessment for grades 3-11 that will be aligned to the CCSS. The new assessments will be implemented during the 2014-2015 school year. Mississippi

participated in the field test of the next generation assessments in 2013-2014. However, under growing concerns from stakeholders regarding the sole source nature of PARCC's service contract, MDE has not signed a multi-year agreement with PARCC. Rather, MDE [released an RFP](#) to evaluate responding vendors for Mississippi's assessment system beginning with the 2015-16 assessment cycle. To ensure equity in the RFP process, the State Board of Education voted in January 2015 to withdraw as a governing state in the PARCC Consortium. The primary goal with respect to test design is ensuring that the assessments measure student mastery and are completely aligned to the state's adoption of the 2014 Mississippi College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics and any updates or revisions to said standards. The plan for implementation of the newly selected assessments is as follows:

Plan for Math/Reading Language Arts Assessment Implementation

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process and timeline for development of test blueprints and item specifications 	<p>The Office of Student Assessment in the Mississippi Department of Education will work with Questar Assessment Inc. to develop test blueprints and item specifications based on the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards and Universal Design guidelines in early July 2015. These documents will ensure that there is assessment of all MS CCRS standards to be assessed in grades 3-8, English II, and Algebra I. These documents will also describe the types of items (selected response, technology enhanced, written response, etc.) and how these items will be constructed for item development. Once the blueprints and item specifications are developed, Mississippi teachers, content specialists, and administrators will review the documents and make suggestions before each is approved by the MDE.</p>	<p>July 2015</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review and selection of items for inclusions in the assessments 	<p>The OSA in the MDE will work with Questar to recruit, vet, and train Mississippi classroom teachers to write items for the assessment. These items will be aligned to the blueprints, item specifications, and the MS CCRS. Once the items have been written, Questar will utilize their content specialists and item experts to review and adjust items. Once the items have been reviewed and adjusted by Questar specialists, another group of MS teachers will review items for content and bias. The items will then be finalized and field tested, beginning in the spring of 2016.</p>	<p>August 2015 June 2016 (Ongoing Item Development Cycle)</p>

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling and scoring procedures to be used 	In coordination with Questar and the MDE's Technical Advisory Committee, the scoring procedures will be determined based on the results of the assessment and best practices according to <i>The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing</i> .	May 2016 Fall 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test administration procedures, including selection and use of appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners 	Questar will lead the development of the Test Administration Manuals based on the test blueprints, Questar's testing platform, and all other pertinent information. MDE will provide input, with additional input from the field, into this process. All accommodations will be developed by the MDE and will implement all requirements based on federal law. The Office of Special Education will provide assistance in the development of this manual, with further input from the field.	July 2015 August 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analyses proposed to document validity and reliability of the assessment 	The MDE and Questar will use an imbedded field test in the spring of 2015-2016, and continue this process in subsequent years, to determine the validity and reliability of the items and assessment. Once an item is field tested, a data study will be conducted with input from the field and data analysis conducted by Questar and MDE psychometricians to determine the validity and reliability of the assessment.	May 2016 Fall 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An independent evaluation of alignment of the assessments with the State's CCR standards 	Questar will subcontract with edCount to complete the independent evaluation of the assessment to the state's CCR standards.	Fall of 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process and timeline for setting CCR achievement standards and the method and timeline to validate those achievement standards 	Questar and the MDE will use best practices to develop Performance Level Descriptors based on the testing blueprints and the MS CCRS. MDE will seek input from MS teachers, content specialists, and administrators to help in the development of the PLDs.	July 2015

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful report formats to communicate results to students, parents, and educators 	Questar will follow the procedures outlined in the Request for Proposals to develop reports to communicate results to students, parents, and educators. The RFP outlines who should receive which report. The RFP provides Questar with the ability to create online reports that provides clear and concise data reports that are easily understood to all stakeholders. The MDE will seek and provide input before a final report form is approved.	July 2015 June 2016

Mississippi is not seeking Waiver 14 at this time, as the Department does not have more than one advanced, high school level, mathematics assessment, consistent with the State’s mathematics content standards, for use in high school accountability determinations. MDE may apply for Waiver 14 in the future if an appropriate assessment is in place.

MDE has reviewed the factors that need to be addressed in preparing teachers of students with disabilities participating in the State’s alternate assessment in order to ensure these students can participate in the assessments that will be aligned with college and career-ready standards.

MDE Offices of Special Education and Student Assessment have collaborated to provide regional and statewide high quality technical assistance and training for district and school staff on Mississippi’s current alternate assessment. Participants, including special education directors, district test coordinators, building principals, and classroom teachers, have received written guidance, manuals, and suggested forms for quality implementation, as well as a series of webinars for on going support. MDE Offices of Special Education and Student Assessment will continue to collaborate to provide training and assistance as the state transitions to the common core.

Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System Consortium (DLM)

Mississippi is a governing member of The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment System Consortium. DLM is a multi state consortium awarded a grant by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to develop a new alternative assessment system. DLM is led by The Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation (CETE) and includes experts from a wide range of assessment fields as well as key partners, such as The Arc, the University of Kansas, Center for Literacy and Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and Edvantia.

The Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment (DLM AAS) differs from the current alternate assessments in several ways. First, DLM AAS will be based on learning maps. Learning maps allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, even when they take alternate pathways to achieve that knowledge. These alternate pathways give students more opportunities to show that they can learn challenging content linked to the CCSS.

Second, DLM AAS provides an instructionally embedded assessment integrated into the teaching process, thus allowing the teacher to know what students can do and make adjustments to instruction in real time. A stand alone summative assessment will also be available.

Third, DLM AAS will incorporate instructionally relevant item types. These items will be similar to what students actually do during instruction. These item types will also utilize technology tools such as drag and drop, hot spots, keyword lists, numerical responses, as well as other types to be determined. These new item types will allow the rigor and challenge of the assessment to be aligned with the CCSS.

There are two types of assessments that are being developed for DLM. The first is a stand alone adaptive, summative assessment, to be given in the spring of the year to assess the knowledge and skills learned throughout the year. The second is an instructionally embedded assessment that will take place throughout the year. Regardless of which assessment is used, students, parents, and teachers will be given detailed information to help guide learning. The timeline for administration is currently aligned with the PARCC implementation.

In an effort to increase transparency and fairness in state contracts, Mississippi is moving away from sole source procurement toward competitive RFPs for all contractual services. To that end, Mississippi will be releasing an RFP for alternate assessments in Spring 2015. The awarded vendor will be required to meet a number of requirements, including assessment items that are aligned to the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards. The Plan for Alternate Assessment Implementation is still in draft format, pending State Board of Education approval of a contract with a vendor.

Plan for Alternate Assessment Implementation

Alternate Assessment Task	Procedures to Meet Task	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process and timeline for development of test blueprints and item specifications 	VENDOR will propose, and host a meeting where MDE can review and revise the proposed test and item specifications and test blueprints to create a Mississippi specific assessment.	MDE (Office of Student Assessment) and VENDOR	August September 2015

Alternate Assessment Task	Procedures to Meet Task	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review and selection of items for inclusions in the assessments 	<p>VENDOR will bring existing Delaware items to MDE and Mississippi educator committees for review and accept/reject. VENDOR will also develop the quantities of items in this contract and bring those items to MDE and Mississippi educator committees for review, revision, and acceptance.</p>	<p>MDE and VENDOR</p>	<p>August – October 2015.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling and scoring procedures to be used 	<p>Following the item selection analyses, VENDOR uses item response theory (IRT) methods to calibrate and equate field test items. These methods, in conjunction with the common item linking design, allow VENDOR to construct scales that are comparable across test administrations within grades and that allow for the measurement of student growth over time and across grades. Calibration and equating activities are centered on the production of student test scores that accurately and reliably (a) measure student achievement of the alternate achievement content standards, (b) compare grade level performance across student cohorts, and (c) evaluate students' performance gains as they move through the educational system.</p> <p>VENDOR will employ a concurrent calibration and linking procedure to place all test items on a common, vertical scale.</p>	<p>MDE and VENDOR</p>	<p>August – October 2015.</p>

Alternate Assessment Task	Procedures to Meet Task	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test administration procedures, including selection and use of appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners 	<p>VENDOR will demonstrate that the assessment will be developed with universal design principles to be valid and accessible for use by the widest possible range of students. VENDOR and MDE will determine the appropriate accommodations for this assessment from the set of accommodations used in instruction.</p> <p>Test administrators (TAs) will use the TA kits as well as the TA manual and VENDOR's Data Entry Interface (DEI) to administer the test. The kits will be developed for each grade and will include reusable materials needed to administer the alternate assessments for each subject. While the alternate assessment is administered in person using paper test materials, the student responses are recorded and submitted in the online DEI by TAs and second raters.</p>	MDE and VENDOR	August – September 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analyses proposed to document validity and reliability of the assessment 	<p>As part of the Technical Reporting, VENDOR will provide documentation of reliability and validity indices, bias and fairness reviews, classification consistency indices, generalizability analyses, and results of second rater studies. Continuation with the use of the procured assessments will be contingent on MDE's and VENDOR's willingness/ability to make necessary changes to rectify any deficiencies identified in the studies using the states' population.</p>	MDE and VENDOR	May August 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process and timeline for setting CCR achievement standards and the method and timeline to validate those achievement standards 	<p>Following the initial administration of the new alternate assessments, it will be necessary to conduct a standard setting workshop and develop a reporting scale prior to reporting student test scores. VENDOR will produce a Standard setting plan for MDE approval that details the standard setting workshops, including text of instructions to panelists, statistical analyses, and construction of ordered item booklets.</p>	MDE and VENDOR	June 2016

Alternate Assessment Task	Procedures to Meet Task	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful report formats to communicate results to students, parents, and educators 	<p>VENDOR will present MDE with reporting specifications for MDE approval and then will configure VENDOR's Online Reporting System (ORS) to support Mississippi's teachers, students, and administrators. ORS will include immediate, real time reporting of student scores beginning in Year 2 after standards are set; easy navigation through the system to access online reports and data; customized reports that can be easily generated through a series of filters; the ability to download data files in various formats for further analysis; and mobile compatible online reports that can be accessed on tablets.</p> <p>ORS also will provide a Build PDF Reports tool, which allows users with appropriate access to generate family score reports for individual students.</p>	MDE and VENDOR	Design: Fall 2015; Delivery: Summer 2016

Mississippi is implementing additional activities in its College and Career Readiness transition plan to support implementation of the standards.

In addition to the Career Pathways and college transitions options discussed earlier in this section, MDE, in collaboration with literacy experts and practitioners, has developed a Statewide Literacy Plan to guide efforts in the literacy of students from birth through grade 12. Even though the state did not receive federal funding for literacy, MDE is committed to working with school districts, parents, other state agencies, and private partners to implement the plan. As reinforced through Governor Bryant's Rising Together inaugural address, Mississippi, "must re-focus our efforts on the most important factor in education: a child's ability to read. We know a child who cannot read at a standard level by the fourth grade is almost always destined to failure. We cannot continue to stand-by and allow this failure. The future our children live in will be written, and I want every child in Mississippi to be able to read it."

Efforts to address actions in the State Literacy Plan are already underway. MDE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction, in collaboration with the Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University, has developed early learning standards. The *2012 Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three-Year Old Children* and the *2012 Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms*

Serving Four-Year Old Children represent the expertise and experience of a task force of early childhood professionals.

While the *2012 Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year Old Children* are aligned to the kindergarten CCSS for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, the standards for four year old children serve as the basis for the standards for three year old children. Each document defines what young children should understand and be able to do before entering kindergarten. The standards correspond to the CCSS for ELA strands for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language and the CCSS for mathematics domains.

1.C DEVELOP AND ADMINISTER ANNUAL, STATEWIDE, ALIGNED, HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS THAT MEASURE STUDENT GROWTH

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option selected.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The SEA is participating in one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition.</p> <p>i. Attach the State’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under that competition. (Attachment 6)</p>	<p>Option B</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA is not participating in either one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition, and has not yet developed or administered statewide aligned, high quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>i. Provide the SEA’s plan to develop and administer annually, beginning no later than the 2014-2015 school year, statewide aligned, high quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs, as well as set academic achievement standards for those assessments.</p>	<p>Option C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA has developed and begun annually administering statewide aligned, high quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the SEA has submitted these assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review or attach a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review. (Attachment 7)</p>
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Attachment 6 is MDE’s Memorandum of Understanding for the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Consortium through the 2014-15 school year..

MDE has [released an RFP](#) to evaluate responding vendors for Mississippi’s assessment system beginning with the 2015-16 assessment cycle. Whatever assessment provider is finally awarded the Mississippi assessment contract, the primary goal with respect to test design is ensuring that the assessments measure student mastery and are completely aligned to the state’s adoption of the 2014 Mississippi College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics and any updates or revisions to said standards.

PRINCIPLE 2: STATE-DEVELOPED DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

2.A DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STATE-BASED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

2.A.i Provide a description of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that includes all the components listed in Principle 2, the SEA's plan for implementation of the differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system no later than the 2012–2013 school year, and an explanation of how the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is designed to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

MDE's accountability system provides differentiated recognition, accountability, and support for all districts in the state and for all schools in those districts based on student achievement, graduation rate, and school performance. The Mississippi plan includes measures to address the achievement gap for the lowest achieving subgroup, as measured by the state's performance assessments.

MDE is making the Request so that it and its LEAs will no longer be required to make AYP determinations. Instead, MDE and its LEAs will report on their report cards, for the “all students” group and for all subgroups identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) in each LEA and school, respectively, achievement at each proficiency level, performance against the Annual Measurable Objectives, or AMOs (e.g., “met” or “not met”), participation rate, and graduation rate for high schools or the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools (which is attendance rate for Mississippi). In addition, MDE and its LEAs will continue to comply with all other reporting requirements in ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C) and 1111(h)(2)(B), including, for example, reporting information on achievement at each proficiency level disaggregated by gender and migrant status.

MDE, as part of the optional flexibility, will not make an annual AYP determination for its LEAs, and its LEAs would not need to make an annual determination for their schools. In addition, any element of ESEA flexibility that is linked to making AYP would instead be linked to meeting AMOs, the 95 percent participation rate requirement, and the graduation rate goal or targets for high schools or the attendance rate goal for elementary and middle schools. For example, the definition of “reward schools” provides that “a highest performing school must be making AYP for the ‘all students’ group and all of its subgroups.” For Mississippi’s model, a highest performing school must be meeting the AMOs, the 95 percent participation rate requirement, and the graduation rate goal or target for a high school or the attendance rate goal for an elementary or middle school for the “all students” group. Mississippi recognizes all high performing schools annually during its Champions of Change ceremony. This event highlights successful best practices implemented in the recognized schools.

Testing Participation

Testing participation will be calculated using the methods approved in the current accountability workbook. Those districts with schools which have a testing participation rate less than 95% for all students and each ESEA subgroup are referred to the Commission on School Accreditation for disciplinary action, which could include a loss of accreditation. In September 2013, three districts received a downgrade in accreditation status related to testing issues, and one district received the downgrade solely for failing to meet the assessment participation standard.

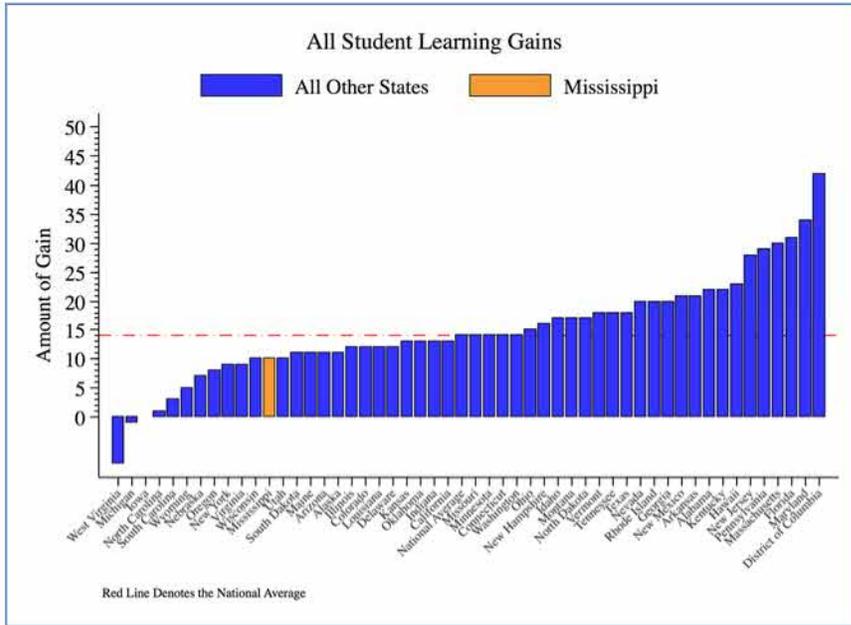
Additionally, to encourage testing participation for all students, if a school/district does not meet the 95% minimum participation rate, the school/district will automatically be dropped a letter grade. Although subgroup participation rates will be reported, this penalty will apply to the overall participation rate only. (A 94.5% participation rate will not be rounded to 95%.) To increase the emphasis on testing participation, the number of students not tested will be treated as an overriding indicator for each ESEA subgroup's AMO measures: a subgroup's AMO level is moot if the subgroup participation rate is below 95%—a school must design interventions to address participation or risk loss of autonomy in the budgeting of grant dollars. A document supporting the participation rates for a sample subgroup is included in **Attachment 8a, Appendix 8**.

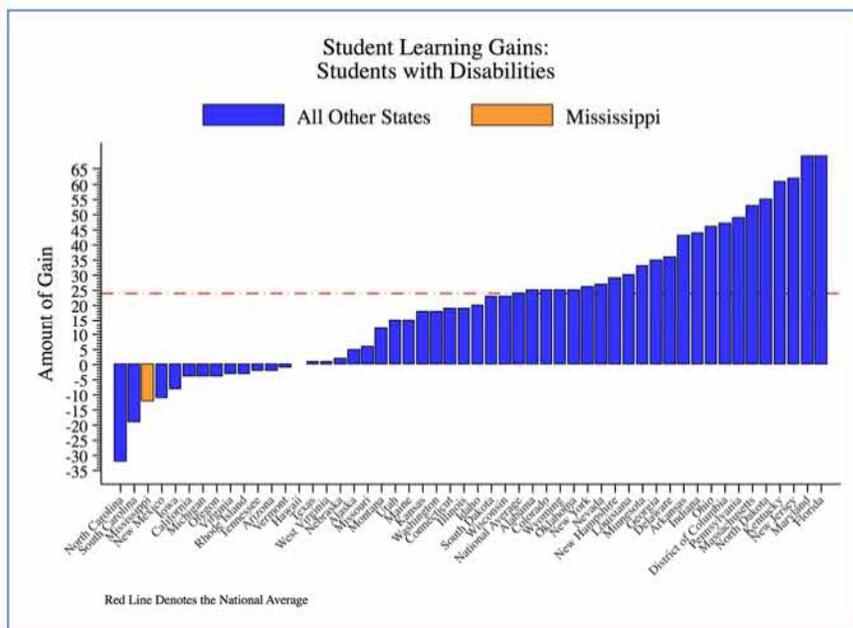
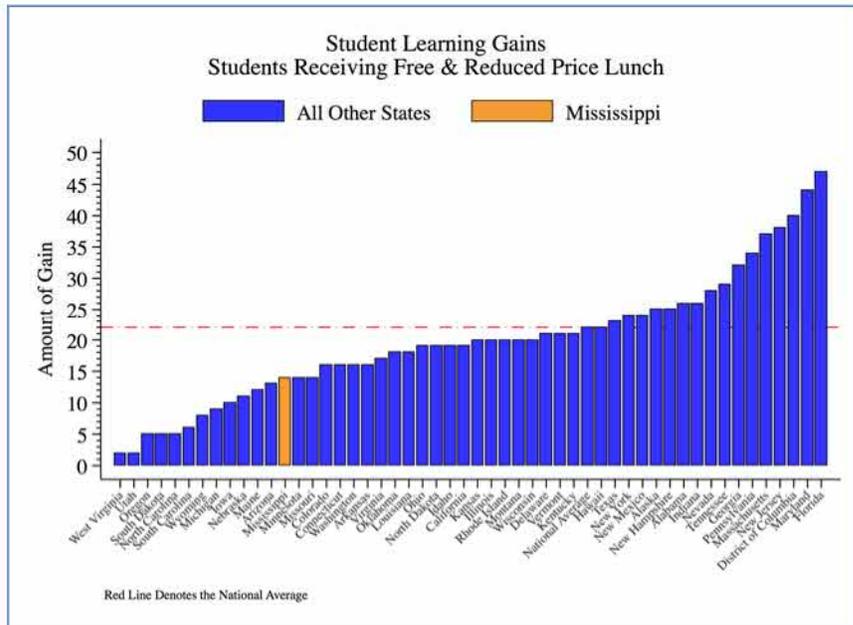
N-Size

Mississippi uses an n size of ten for accountability and reporting purposes. This approach balances the need to have an n size sufficiently high to provide reliability to the accountability system, but provide information to the public on how each ESEA subgroup is performing.

Overview

Mississippi's results on national assessments, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), indicate a need for educational change, as illustrated in the charts below.





In the fall of 2012, the Mississippi State Board of Education convened the Mississippi Accountability Task Force to assess and evaluate the quality, accuracy and transparency of Mississippi’s High School Completion Index and its use in the Mississippi Performance Accountability System (MPAS). The Task Force’s focus quickly changed to a complete revision of the MPAS. This was largely due to pending legislation, which represented a major revision to the system. The Task Force members included classroom teachers, Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, and District Test Coordinators, as well as a representative of the State Board of Education and leaders of the Mississippi Legislature.

During the eighteen month process all meetings of the Task Force were held as open (public) meetings and included opportunities for members of the public to make suggestions and offer thoughts during the meeting. This process was substantially more transparent than the process used to develop the previous system in 2007 2008.

After the “framework” of the revised system was built, a technical advisory committee (TAC) was established to develop and determine the procedural and statistical components of the system. Every meeting of the TAC was open to the public and the meetings were normally well attended by interested individuals and groups from the public. When the TAC completed its work, the revised system was presented to the original Task Force for its approval (public meeting). Following the Task Force’s approval, the revised system was presented to the State Commission on Accreditation (public meeting), who recommended the system for approval by the State Board of Education. Upon State Board approval, the system underwent Mississippi’s Administrative Procedures Act process as normal for all State Board of Education policy.

Mississippi’s new single statewide accountability system includes the following components:

Beginning with the 2013 2014 school year, accountability labels will be assigned based on the following school grading assignments:

Schools with no 12th grade will have seven (7) components, each worth 100 points, totaling 700 possible points:

1. Reading Proficiency
2. Reading Growth – All Students
3. Reading Growth – Low 25% of Students
4. Math Proficiency
5. Math Growth – All Students
6. Math Growth – Low 25% of Students
7. Science Proficiency

For schools and districts with a grade 12 the following schedule (totaling 900 1000 points, as available) will be used:

1. Reading Proficiency (100 points)
2. Reading Growth – All Students (100 points)
3. Reading Growth – Low 25% of Students (100 points)
4. Math Proficiency (100 points)
5. Math Growth – All Students (100 points)
6. Math Growth – Low 25% of Students (100 points)
7. Science Proficiency (50 points)
8. U.S. History Proficiency (50 points)
9. Graduation Rate – All Students (200 points)

As they come available, additional points will be incorporated into the grade 12 model as follows:

10. College & Career Readiness (Math 50% and English/Reading 50%) (50 points)
(Note: This component is contingent upon legislative funding. If for any reason this component is not implemented, the components and their corresponding weights used during the 2013-2014 calculations will be applied.)
11. Acceleration (Participation and Performance Combined) on the following sliding scale:
 - a. Year 1 (2015-2016): Participation 70%/Performance 30% (50 points)
 - b. Year 2 (2016-2017): Participation 60%/Performance 40% (50 points)
 - c. Year 3 (2017-2018) and beyond: Participation 50%/Performance 50% (50 points)

The single school accountability model uses both the scale score distribution for a state assessment and the four defined proficiency levels (Minimal, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced) for the assessment. Each student's scale score is used to determine his/her exact position within the score distribution and to classify students into a "low 25%" performing group for purposes of accurately assessing achievement gaps. Each student's assigned proficiency level is incorporated into a formula for calculating the proficiency and growth components for all tested students, as well as growth for the "low 25%" group, for purposes of accurately assessing achievement gaps.

The State Board approved model identifies schools with large gaps in achievement—a key measure for Focus School designations—as well as the **largest gaps** among subgroups. As school grade levels improve from F to A, so improves the performance of ESEA Subgroups. For example, in schools that received an F school label in 2013, the Black subgroup was 43.4 points from 100% proficiency, while the White subgroup was 26.5 points away: thus, the Black-White learning gap among F schools is 16.9 points. The gaps decrease for these two groups as the school label improves, with A labeled schools having a 7.8 point gap.

The highest rating in Mississippi's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is **High Performing Reward**. The schools achieving the highest rating not only achieve an A label but also meet the ESEA flexibility definition for a reward school, including meeting AMOs for all subgroups.

The new achievement measures and their use within ESEA Flexibility Principle 2 (DA)

The values on the above model for each school and district—along with measures based on the new AMOs—provide all the student achievement information necessary for implementing an accurate and reliable accountability model reflecting the principles established by the ED Request documents.

Mississippi's current graduation rate uses the ED approved cohort graduation rate. MDE will publish graduation rates for each school/LEA with a 12th grade for all

students and for each ESEA subgroup. The graduation rates will be calculated using a four year cohort, as approved in the current state accountability workbook. The results of these calculations will be used to determine interventions.

The graduation rate objectives currently approved by the Department of Education will be the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for each LEA and school for all students. A high school or LEA can meet the graduation rate AMO in 3 ways: 1) Meet or exceed the annual graduation rate AMO for the 4 year cohort graduation rate; or 2) the 4 year cohort is 10% greater than the previous year.

Mississippi Graduation Rate AMOs	
Year	4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate
2010 2011 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2012)	66%
2011 2012 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2013)	66%
2012 2013 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2014)	71%
2013 2014 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2015)	71%
2014 2015 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2016)	77%
2015 2016 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2017)	77%
2016 2017 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2018)	81%
2017 2018 (AYP Calculations, Fall, 2019)	85%

Even though high schools have the graduation measures noted above for the purposes of meeting AMOs, Mississippi has a much higher expectation for graduation rates across the state. As a result of the increasing number of students dropping out of school nationally, policymakers and the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) focused on initiatives intended to increase graduation rates and reduce dropout rates. Each state was charged with providing guidelines for districts to follow in an effort to meet the requirements of increasing graduation rates and decreasing the number of students leaving the K 12 system prior to completion. The Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated § 37 13 80 outlines the requirements for district plans. The revised legislation and policy will strengthen the requirements incorporating the requirements of Senate Bill 2658 which states, "High schools with graduation rates lower than eighty percent (80%) must submit a detailed plan to the Mississippi Department of Education to restructure the high school experience to improve graduation rates." MDE will ensure interventions are in place for schools that fail to meet the graduation rate targets (known as the Other Academic Indicator, or OAI), not only for the ALL subgroup, but also for each of the traditional ESEA subgroups, for two consecutive years.

Combining additional accurate and reliable information (e.g., graduation rates) with the achievement information (overall achievement improvement and closing achievement gaps) allows the assignment of Title I schools to the categories specified and defined in the ED Request documents.

Characteristics of the Accountability Model

The model complies fully with the following requirements for ESEA flexibility approval.

- (1) The system represents a fair, flexible, and focused accountability and support system with incentives for continuously improving the academic achievement of all students, closing persistent achievement gaps, and improving equity.
- (2) The system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support ... looks at student achievement in ... reading/language arts and mathematics for all students and [for the students in] all subgroups ... identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II); graduation rates for all students and [for the students in] all subgroups; and school performance and progress over time, including the performance and progress of [the students in] all subgroups.
- (3) The amendment to the state's AYP model sets new ambitious but achievable AMOs in ... reading/language arts and mathematics for the State and all [districts], [all] schools, and [all of the students in all] subgroups, that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts..
- (4) The amendment to the state's AYP model includes an algorithm (as described in the State's Accountability Addendum) that ensures that proficient and advanced scores of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (SCD) based on alternate academic achievement standards included for AYP proficiency calculations do not exceed 1% of all students in the grades assessed within a district.
- (5) The system of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support includes appropriate and statistically valid measures of student achievement (and cohort graduation rates) that allow for reliable and accurate classifications of Title I schools as:
 - a) Reward Schools
 - b) Priority Schools
 - c) Focus Schools
 - d) Other Title I schools not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, based on the State's new AMOs and other measures
- (6) While the system of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support includes all of the specific [required] components, the system was designed to incorporate innovative characteristics that are tailored to the needs of the state, [districts], schools, and students. The DA system is designed to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps ... and support continuous improvement for all schools.
- (7) The state's annual [NCLB] report card will be revised to delete information related to "Title I Improvement Status" (based on NCLB §1116) and add the DA School Category (Reward School, Focus School, Priority School).
- (8) Reward Schools, Focus Schools, and Priority Schools under the DA system will be identified (using achievement and graduation data from SY 2010 2011 and earlier years) and the list of identified schools will be included in the state's waiver request..
- (9) The system of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support will take into account student growth using the state's high quality assessments.

Ensuring Improvement for Students in all ESEA Subgroups

It is possible to ensure that students in each ESEA subgroup make progress and that the achievement gaps among students in those subgroups are closed without actually including all of the separate subgroups within an accountability model. The DA system outlined in the Mississippi Accountability Addendum uses sensitive and reliable measures of student achievement and reliable measures of school and district level achievement within a contrasting achievement group paradigm to meet the NCLB goal of ensuring that students in each subgroup make progress and that the achievement gaps among students in those subgroups are closed.

Before ESEA Flexibility, Mississippi's accountability system required an n count of 40 for data to be included in a given subgroup. Under the old AYP model, 74% of the schools in Mississippi were not held accountable for the IEP subgroup, due to having an n count fewer than 40; likewise, 98% of the schools were not held accountable for the EL subgroup. Under the new model only 2% of schools would have fewer than ten students in the "low 25%" subgroup.

Accountability for Individual ESEA Subgroups

The Mississippi model using the "low 25%" increases the accountability for the traditional ESEA subgroups. The Mississippi school system is predominately a rural school system with many small schools. For the 2010 11 school year, the median school size was 257 students, and the average size was 310 students. At an n count of 30, 95% or more of the schools will not be accountable for the following ESEA subgroups:

- Limited English Proficient (or English Learners/EL)
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Native American

Even at an n count of 20, the percent of schools not held accountable for these subgroups is still 90% or more.

As noted above, using the former n count of forty, 76% of schools in the state were not held accountable for the IEP subgroup in the 2010 11 school year. Using an n count of thirty, the number of schools not held accountable for Students with IEPs is approximately 59%. However, using the "low 25%" subgroup provides more accountability for the IEP subgroup, as nearly all schools have Students with IEPs within the "low 25%," and will thus be held accountable for subgroup performance. With the added weight for the low 25%, it becomes difficult if not impossible for a school to improve the lowest subgroup without improving the results of the IEP subgroup. This shift in accountability metrics effectively increases the number of schools held accountable for each ESEA subgroup.

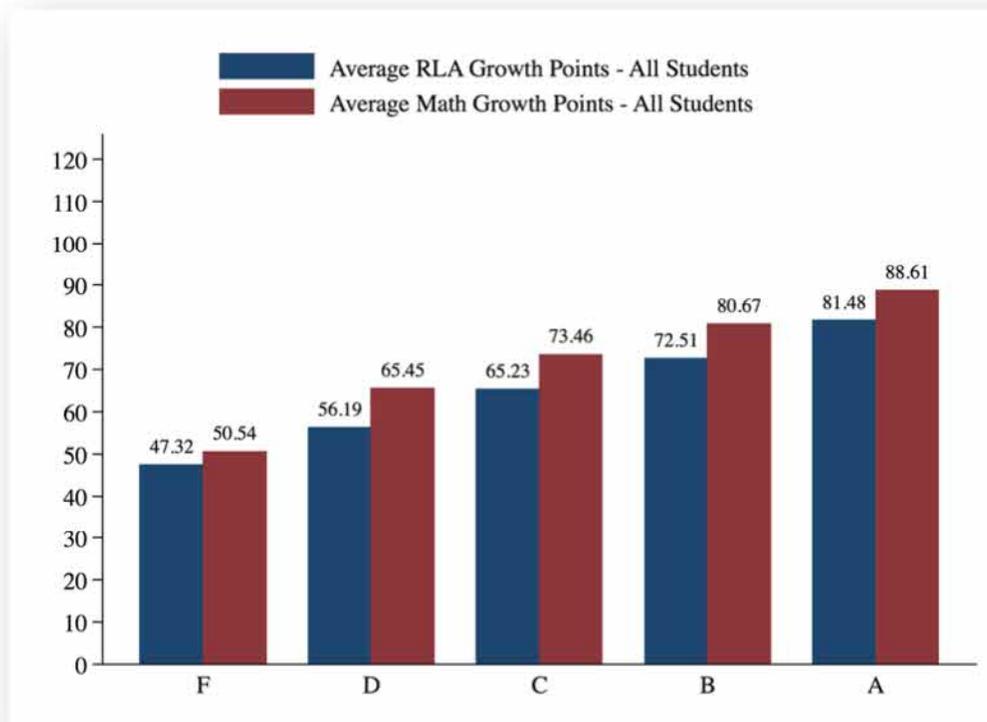
Creating Incentives for Improvement

The Mississippi growth model incentivizes schools to move students to the next level regardless of their current level and penalizes schools that allow a student's proficiency level to drop. In the Mississippi model, the school gets as much credit for moving a student from minimal to basic as for moving a student

from basic to proficient. Likewise, if a student slides from basic to minimal, the school loses as much as a student sliding from advanced to proficient.

Increasing the percentage of students at Basic, Proficient and Advanced provides an increase in the growth components of the model. The reverse is also true: allowing students to fall down an achievement level penalizes the school regardless of the resulting level. If a school becomes complacent with its advanced students and scores slip into proficient levels, then the school's growth component will be lower.

The chart below illustrates the alignment between the A-F labels and the growth model. High performing schools have higher numbers of students making growth; conversely, low performing schools have lower numbers of student making growth.



In summary, the model is designed to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and support continuous improvement for all schools.

Mississippi enacted legislation in 2013 directing the Mississippi Department of Education to implement a single accountability model, combining current state and federal models beginning with the 2013-14 school year designations. The 2013-14 school year was the last year Mississippi's legacy assessments in reading language arts and mathematics were used. In order to encourage full implementation of the Common Core State Standards during the 2013-14 school year, the State Board, in consultation with the Governor and the Legislature, as well as extensive feedback

from district administrators and teachers, approved a Transitional Timeline (http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/communications_library/transitional_timeline.pdf?sfvrsn=2). This timeline allowed a school to retain its 2012-13 state accountability label (state letter grade) if the 2013-14 grade is lower. The timeline did not impact any federal designations at the end of the 2013-14 school year, given the criteria of two years for federal designations. Any school that did not meet AMOs for two consecutive years (2013 and 2014) has developed and implemented an action plan addressing areas of low performance during the 2014-2015 school year.

In a few circumstances, the Timeline could potentially delay required implementation of interventions for the 2015 school designations, as indicated by the green shading in the table below. However, Mississippi's capacity to identify and support Priority Schools (36) and Focus Schools (72) will be met and continue throughout the transition period, as 2014-15 is the third year of ESEA Flexibility, and thus the third year of Priority implementation.

2013 Letter Grade and School Count	2015 Potential Letter Grades				
	A	B	C	D	F
A 113				Potential Focus/Priority if 2014 was also a D or F and not already designated	
B 222					
C 231					
D 144				Potential Focus/Priority if not already designated	
F 92					

As allowed through ESEA Flexibility Renewal guidance (FAQ E 3), Mississippi will continue this accountability pause during assessment transitions in the 2014-15 school year. However, as noted in Assurance 8, the state will update the list of priority and Focus Schools, identified based on school year 2014-15 data, as soon as the data are finalized and approved by the Mississippi State Board of Education. Newly identified schools must begin implementation in the 2016-17 school year. Current information from the test vendor indicates that Mississippi will receive summative data files for high school on September 14, 2015, and for grades 3 through 8 on October 9, 2015. MDE will be able to provide the updated lists for priority, focus, and reward schools if these data are in place by October 9, 2015. If for any reason the statewide data files are not available by that date, or if something similarly unforeseen occurs, the January 31, 2016, submission date will be adjusted accordingly.

Mississippi's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system creates incentives and provides support to close achievement gaps for all subgroups of students.

Incentives:

To actively encourage schools to close achievement gaps for all subgroups of students, MDE plans to recognize schools that reach Reward status. While financial incentives are desirable, due to current economic and fiscal restraints, MDE is pursuing other avenues of recognition, including banners, recognition at board meetings, designations noted on the website and/or included in a publication, staff serving on councils of excellence, flexibility on some state requirements, and other areas of encouragement, as identified by district personnel, which may include additional funds as available. MDE is actively working with school and district personnel, through focus groups and on line surveys, to identify additional supports and incentives. Further, information will be gathered through research such as the *Closing the Expectations Gap* annual report from Achieve, Inc.

Current state accountability procedures include incentives for overall school performance, such as the following items on recognition and rewards that incentivize schools and districts to improve:

RECOGNITION

Special recognition will be provided to all schools meeting the highest levels of accreditation standards. Examples of recognition include, but are not limited to the following:

- Public announcements and events;
- Special recognition of student progress and effort;
- Certificates of recognition and plaques for teachers, principals, superintendents, support and classified personnel and parents; and
- Media announcements utilizing the services of the Mississippi Educational Television.

REWARDS

Rewards may be provided for schools and school districts assigned the highest levels of performance as defined by SBE as follows:

- Schools meeting the highest levels of performance may be exempted from citations of noncompliance with [certain] process standards.
- School districts assigned the highest levels of performance may be exempted from citations of noncompliance with [certain] process standards.
- Financial Rewards. If funds are appropriated by the legislature, schools meeting the highest levels of performance may apply to SBE for monetary incentives to be used for selected school needs, as identified by a vote of all licensed and instructional personnel employed at the school.

Support:

Mississippi has been working since 2008 towards a structured and coordinated statewide system of support (SSOS). Early efforts involved conducting a thorough evaluation of existing support, identifying gaps for informing strategic planning, exploring a tiered model for district assistance, and collaborating across MDE offices. Due to change in MDE staff and reorganization of the agency in 2010, the work on the SSOS was placed on hold. In 2011, MDE established the Office of

Instructional Enhancement to focus on developing and implementing a structured and coordinated statewide system of support.

Due to restructuring of the agency in 2014, the Office of Instructional Enhancement was renamed the Office of Professional Development. The director of this office is working closely with other offices throughout the agency to coordinate services through a unified delivery system. The agency continues to work toward establishing consistency across offices in terms of the delivery of professional development and the system for communicating to stakeholders.

In order to better support the needs of school districts and schools in Focus, Priority, and Reward status, and schools not in the identified school categories, as well as to reduce duplicated services and paperwork burdens, MDE is undergoing another review of the staff, offices, and support mechanisms to realign MDE's capacity and structure to most effectively address gaps, at risk populations, and "bubble schools" or those near to entering the Focus and Priority status.

One of the key components of flexibility to be garnered through the Request is the ability to leverage funds from a variety of state and federal sources. With approval of the Renewal, MDE plans, as part of the review and realignment noted above, to include Title I, Part A, 1003(a), and Consolidated Federal Cost Pool funds to support a streamlined effort of support for schools identified as Priority or Focus. Through the flexibility of coordinated funding, services from MDE will ensure that all schools will receive the support needed to address the needs of all subgroups, including schools that have overall high performance, but lagging scores for one or more subgroups. To reduce duplication and paperwork expectations, offices across MDE will coordinate submissions of plans and district monitoring, including activities from accreditation, federal programs, special education, and school improvement to ensure that support efforts are reaching each subgroup in the state and targeting continuous improvement.

In accordance with Waiver 13, MDE has an approved methodology for annual 1003(a) grant awards. MDE ensures annually that all of the priority and Focus Schools have funding to implement their required interventions. If Title I 1003(a) funds become sufficient for the intervention needs of priority and Focus Schools, then MDE may award funds to other Title I schools not meeting AMOs. The funding would be prioritized within other Title I schools to ensure those schools not meeting AMO targets over a number of years receive additional funding.

All of these plans and initiatives will continue to be implemented in districts and schools during the 2012-13 school year and beyond.

Supports, interventions, and incentives will be provided to schools according to the following tiers: Priority Schools, Schools at risk, Focus Schools, Other schools not meeting the AMOs, Other schools that meet the AMOs, and Reward schools. School districts that are under conservatorship will also receive support based on the designation of each school as well as additional support from MDE based on the

needed areas. The Office of Professional Development is taking the lead on establishing a coordinated support system. The role of this office is to work with all MDE offices that support Mississippi schools in order to coordinate efforts by conducting meetings periodically with agency staff and other stakeholders, establishing a calendar of events to include regional meetings, conferences and technical assistance sessions, monitoring sessions, etc.

MDE began using Indistar as a reporting tool through a pilot being conducted in the schools receiving 1003g School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding. The statewide system of support, as coordinated by the Office of Professional Development, provides resources and services that will help schools improve instructional practice to prepare students for college and career ready standards. MDE offices will continue to work together to develop and disseminate resources and training materials to support all students including low performing students, students with disabilities, and ELs. All training will be facilitated through the Regional Education Service Agencies with the delivery of the content provided by MDE content specialists, higher education faculty, and MDE contract workers. The MDE will also utilize professional development coordinators to conduct training through the Regional Service Delivery Model.

Statewide System of Support (SSOS) Timeline

Key Milestone/Activity	Detailed timeline	Party (Parties) Responsible
1. Establish an Associate Superintendent position to lead the statewide system of support	August 2011	State Superintendent, SBE
2. Begin piloting of Indistar as a reporting tool in SIG schools	November 2011	School Improvement
3. Conduct further examination of Indistar	Feb–March 2012	Core team members
4. Conduct Conference Call with SEDL, ADI, and MDE regarding SSOS	March 29, 2012	Office of Instructional Enhancement (IE), ADI, SEDL
5. Conduct initial meeting with Core Group and SEDL staff to plan for the development of the coordinated SSOS	May 8, 2012	IE, SSOS Core Group, SEDL
6. Determine other members of MDE staff that need to participate in development of the coordinated SSOS	May 8, 2012	SSOS Core Group & SEDL

Key Milestone/Activity	Detailed timeline	Party (Parties) Responsible
7. Identify offices that will take the lead on the tiered support to schools <u>Levels of Support for schools</u> a. Priority/SIG b. School At Risk c. Focus d. Other not meeting AMO e. Other meeting AMO f. Rewards g. **Conservatorship districts will also receive support according to how each school is designated	May 8, 2012	MDE Office of a. School Improvement b. School Improvement c. School Improvement d. Federal Programs e. Federal Programs f. Accountability/ Federal Programs g. Conservatorship
8. Provide an update to MDE Leadership Team about the timeline for developing the SSOS	May 14, 2012	IE
9. Conduct preplanning meeting for the coordinated SSOS operations manual.	May 29, 2012	IE, SR, School Improvement, SEDL
10. Conduct meeting with Core Group to develop draft SSOS operations manual	June 11, 2012	SSOS Core Group and SEDL
11. Convene office staff to develop a plan for coordinating their efforts with departments that provide direct services to districts and schools	July 2, 2012	IE
12. Convene larger group of MDE staff to review the draft coordinated SSOS operations manual and provide feedback.	August 7, 2012	IE
13. Identify schools to determine level of support	August 2012	Accountability, IE, Federal Programs, SR, School Improvement
14. Notify schools of preliminary status.	August 2012	Accountability, IE, Federal Programs, SR, SI
15. Train schools on the Indistar system	September 2012	IE, Federal Programs, SR
16. Support schools in completing self assessment on Indicators, as appropriate for status.	September/ October 2012	IE, Federal Programs
17. Support schools in utilizing Indistar platform to develop action plans and begin implementation	October 2012	IE, Federal Programs, SI
18. Provide an opportunity for districts and schools, at state meetings and conferences, to provide input on the draft MDE coordinated SSOS operations manual	Fall 2012	IE

Key Milestone/Activity	Detailed timeline	Party (Parties) Responsible
19. Convene internal and external stakeholders to provide input around the coordinated SSOS through meetings, webinars, and surveys.	Fall 2012	IE
20. Incorporate feedback provided by internal and external stakeholders into SSOS process.	December 2012	IE
21. Create supporting documents for the coordinated SSOS and update website to communicate MDE SSOS.	January 2013	IE
22. Follow up with schools to determine progress of interventions and discuss consequences.	February 2013	IE, Federal Programs

While the timeline above provides an overview of merging all support into one unified SSOS, MDE offices listed in item 7 will identify, intervene, and support schools as needed to ensure that implementation begins with the 2012-13 school year and to prevent students and schools from falling farther behind in the process of improvement. Detailed timelines are provided in each of the school status areas later in this document.

With the MDE restructuring of 2014, as well as MDE's participation in the Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) initiative and the Regional Service Delivery Model, the SSOS as a group has morphed into a more fluid group, allowing MDE staff to work to build a more unified system of support through coordinated professional development and office collaborations.

2.A.ii Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding information, if any.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA only includes student achievement on reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools.</p>	<p>Option B</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system or to identify Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools, it must:</p> <p>a. provide the percentage of students in the “all students” group that performed at the proficient level on the State’s most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed; and</p> <p>b. include an explanation of how the included assessments will be weighted in a manner that will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college and career ready standards.</p>
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MDE includes student achievement on science assessments (currently Biology I and 5th and 8th grade Science) in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System, in addition to reading language arts and mathematics. Beginning with the 2013-14 designations, US History data was also included for high schools in the model. The table below includes the percentage of students in the “all students” group that performed at each performance level on the 2010-11 administration for each assessment.

2010-2011 Student Level Proficiency Distributions²

Test ¹	N Count	% Minimal	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced
MCT2 Language	212,463	12.8	33.8	43.6	9.8
MCT2 Math	212,341	14.4	24.3	47.0	14.3
Science Test 5/8	68,073	16.8	27.5	38.2	17.4
English II	32,074	21.0	21.7	39.3	18.0
Algebra I	33,422	6.9	15.5	43.6	34.0
Biology I	32,037	13.6	30.7	45.4	10.3

¹ Test results in this table are collapsed across grades.

² N Counts and results include students enrolled for a full academic year only.

MDE’s weighting of the included assessments will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve the State’s college- and career-ready standards. Given the importance of science, along with all areas of STEM, in a student’s overall educational program, the decision to include state science assessment results in the model will send a strong message: Mississippi makes the right choices for its students. Working with various STEM partnership initiatives, including collaborative efforts between Career and Technical Education, the US Navy, and postsecondary education, Mississippi has set an example following the national focus on STEM. By including science in the on-going focus on assessment and accountability, the state supports the instructional practices that are necessary to take students to the next level of instruction and truly ensures that all students achieve college and career ready standards.

Assurance 6 of the ESEA Request is checked, and as it indicates, MDE proposes to include student achievement on science assessments (currently Biology I and 5th and 8th grade Science) in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system. The achievement on all the assessments will be used to identify Priority, Focus, and Reward schools, and MDE has technical documentation, which can be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments are administered statewide; include all students, by providing appropriate accommodations for ELs and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on grade level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2); and are valid and reliable for use in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system.

For the 2013 14 school year, Mississippi reduced the testing burden on students by allowing districts to choose if a student with significant cognitive disability participated in either the Dynamic Learning Maps field test or the statewide alternate assessment for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Because the field test did not produce individual student scores, participation was recorded, but other student data was not included for the 2013 14 school year for DLM field test participants. All eligible students took the statewide alternate assessment for Science. Given the small population of students taking the alternate assessments, the data gaps created by field test participants did not have an impact of school accountability determinations. Mississippi measured school accountability based on the remaining assessment data.

2.B SET AMBITIOUS BUT ACHIEVABLE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Select the method the SEA will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts. If the SEA sets AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup, the AMOs for LEAs, schools, or subgroups that are further behind must require greater rates of annual progress.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Set AMOs in annual equal increments toward a 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. The SEA must use current proficiency rates based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p>Option B</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Set AMOs that increase in annual equal increments and result in 100 percent of students achieving proficiency no later than the end of the 2019–2020 school year. The SEA must use the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p>Option C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p> <p>ii. Provide an educationally sound rationale for the pattern of academic progress reflected in the new AMOs in the text box below.</p> <p>iii. Provide a link to the State’s report card or attach a copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the “all students” group and all subgroups. (Attachment 8)</p>
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The following information remains from the AMO process from 2012-2014. As provided by ED guidance from February 25, 2015, Mississippi will reset AMOs during the fall of the 2015-2016 school year, upon receipt of the results of the transitional assessment data. The new AMO targets will begin with the 2014-15 school year and incorporate a safe harbor provision. The final targets will be submitted to ED upon approval, as directed in the February 2015 guidance letter.

Method for Setting Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

MDE will set AMOs based on an achievement index. The achievement index is based on statewide assessments in reading/language and math, which yields four achievement levels: Minimal, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The proficient level is the goal for all students in Mississippi.

The following formula will be used to calculate the Achievement index:

1. Percent of student scoring Basic times 0.5; plus
2. Percent of students scoring Proficient times 1.0; plus
3. Percent of students scoring Advanced times 1.0.

Note: Students scoring Minimal do not contribute to the index.

This total will be rounded to a whole number and be between 0 and 100 for each school, LEA, and the State.

An achievement index will be calculated for all students and each ESEA subgroup for reading/language and math and compared against the annual AMO objective.

Calculation of Annual AMOs

MDE is choosing **Option A** for setting AMOs for the State, LEAs, and schools in the state.

Based on 2010–2011 assessment data, a baseline achievement index will be established for each school, LEA, and State **for all students and each ESEA subgroup, by subject area**. The baseline achievement index will be subtracted from 100. This percentage will be divided in half. This percentage will be divided by 6 to establish annual AMO increase. This methodology will be used to establish separate AMOs for each school, LEA and the State and also ESEA subgroups within each school, LEA, and State.

Example:

State of Mississippi Reading/Language: All Students 2010 2011 Assessment results

- Minimal = 14.1 percent
- Basic = 32.3 percent
- Proficient = 42.8 percent
- Advanced = 10.8 percent

Achievement index calculation

$$(14.1 \times 0.0) + (32.3 \times 0.5) + (42.8 \times 1.0) + (10.8 \times 1.0) = 70 \text{ (round to whole number)}$$

Therefore, the baseline is 70. Subtract from 100 = 30. Divide by 2 = 15. Divide by 6 = 2.5. Details of the calculations are included in **Attachment 8a**.

Mississippi's AMOs for the State

The following table provides the 2012 proposed annual AMOs for the state.

MDE Proposed AMO (Proficiency Index) Objectives by Subgroup for the State (Option A in Request: Reduce gap by half in 6 years)

Reading/Language(Proficiency Index)														
Subgroup	2011 (Baseline)	Annual Increase	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ALL	70	2.50	73	75	78	80	83	85	88	90	93	95	98	100
IEP	40	5.00	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
EL	58	3.50	62	65	69	72	76	79	83	86	90	93	97	100
Economically Disadvantaged	62	3.17	65	68	72	75	78	81	84	87	91	94	97	100
Asian	86	1.17	87	88	90	91	92	93	94	95	97	98	99	100
Black	60	3.33	63	67	70	73	77	80	83	87	90	93	97	100
Hispanic	69	2.58	72	74	77	79	82	85	88	90	93	95	98	100
Native American	69	2.58	72	74	77	79	82	85	88	90	93	95	98	100
White	80	1.67	82	83	85	87	88	90	92	93	95	97	98	100
Math (Proficiency Index)														
Subgroup	2011 (Baseline)	Annual Increase	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ALL	75	2.08	77	79	81	83	85	88	90	92	94	96	98	100
IEP	45	4.58	50	54	59	63	68	73	78	82	87	91	96	100
EL	72	2.33	74	77	79	81	84	86	88	91	93	95	98	100
Economically Disadvantaged	68	2.67	71	73	76	79	81	84	87	89	92	95	97	100
Asian	93	0.58	94	94	95	95	96	97	98	98	99	99	100	100
Black	66	2.83	69	72	75	77	80	83	86	89	91	94	97	100
Hispanic	78	1.83	80	82	84	85	87	89	91	93	94	96	98	100
Native American	78	1.83	80	82	84	85	87	89	91	93	94	96	98	100
White	83	1.42	84	86	87	89	90	92	93	95	96	98	99	100

As assured in Assurance 14, MDE will make determinations for each district and school in the state linked to meeting the AMOs, the 95 percent participation rate requirement, and the graduation rate goal or targets for high schools or the attendance rate goal for elementary and middle schools. For example, a highest performing school must be meeting the AMOs, the 95 percent participation rate requirement, and the graduation rate goal or target for a high school or the attendance rate goal for an elementary or middle school for the "all students" group.

Purpose of AMOs: Interventions for ESEA Subgroups

AMOs will be used to identify persistently low ESEA subgroups, and any schools not meeting AMOs for two consecutive years will be required to develop and implement action plans for improving student performance. Schools not meeting AMOs for two consecutive years in the same AMO category (reading language arts, math, or other academic indicator [graduation rate or attendance rate]) must select and implement interventions that address each of the subgroups not meeting annual objectives. After two years of persistently not meeting AMOs, the schools and districts with low performing ESEA subgroups will receive more oversight and direction on intervention selection, implementation, and the overall use of federal dollars to support curriculum.

As an example, the first step of additional oversight for every school district will come through the annually completed Consolidated Federal Programs Application (CFPA) that includes the school district's expenditures for Title I A and Title II A of ESEA. The current application includes assurances and strategies for addressing the five goals of NCLB. Upon approval of the ESEA Request, schools not meeting AMOs will be required to address specific interventions through program planning and possible funding restrictions which target key instructional elements that caused schools to miss AMOs. School leaders must address specific interventions designed to improve AMOs by using the new online application system (MCAPS), MS SOARS (Indistar System), or other research based intervention. If AMOs do not improve annually, the district will be required to revise strategies and interventions. After two years of not meeting AMOs, schools will develop new interventions and strategies.

Each school will receive a Differentiated Accountability Report that will outline subgroup performance, denoting each subgroup's performance toward the expected AMO and identifying the areas that are low performing.

Communicating the Changes

In an effort to be proactive in accountability communication, MDE created the Office of Accountability Services in 2012. This office is responsible for providing training and information both for the local school districts and their communities in every aspect of the Mississippi Accountability System. The Office of Accountability Services along with MDE's Communication Office is responsible for educating and informing Mississippi communities on the changes involved with the new accountability system and how those changes will affect student performance. Generally, the sharing information occurs through regional stakeholder meetings, the use of multiple forms of media (e.g., internet, television, newspapers), regional administrator meetings, and educational service organizations and associations.

2.C REWARD SCHOOLS

2.C.i Describe the SEA's methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as Reward schools. If the SEA's methodology is not based on the definition of reward schools in ESEA Flexibility (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided is consistent with the definition, per the Department's "Demonstrating that an SEA's Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions" guidance.

MDE will use the following methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as Reward schools, as directed through the ESEA Flexibility Request Documents provided by the ED:

In accordance with the business rules approved by the State Board of Education, Reward school are identified as follows:

- 13.1. Schools identified as "A" schools will also be identified as "Reward" schools. (SECTION 37 17 6, MS CODE OF 1972)
- 13.1.1. Any school also meeting the federal criteria for "Reward High Progress" or "Reward High Performing" will be recognized.

MDE follows the ED's guidance entitled "Demonstrating that an SEA's Lists of Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools Meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions," which includes on pages 1 and 2 in the Definition Summary that the Reward Schools must be Title I schools. MDE calculates the data for each school, and then rank orders all schools. Schools are selected for Reward based upon the criteria described below. Mississippi further removes any non Title I schools from the list, as the ED guidance indicates only Title I schools are eligible for Reward Status.

High Performing

1. The school's overall point value must be in the highest 20% of the point values for all schools in the State for two consecutive years, **AND**
2. The "Low 25%" growth must be in the highest 20% of the "Low 25%" growth for all schools in the State, **AND**
3. The graduation rate for the current school year must be in the highest 20% of the graduation rates for all schools in the State, **AND**
4. The school must have met AMOs for the current school year for "all students" and "all subgroups," including participation rates, and graduation/attendance rates for "all students."

The highest rating in Mississippi's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is **High Performing Reward**. The schools achieving the highest rating not only achieve an A label but also meet the ESEA flexibility definition for a reward school, including meeting AMOs for all subgroups.

High Progress

1. The difference between the school's overall point value for the current year and the overall point value from the previous year is in the highest 10% of the differences for all schools in the State, **AND**
2. The difference between the 4 year cohort graduation rate for the current year and the 4 year cohort graduation rate from two years previous is in the highest 25% of the differences for all schools in the State, **AND**
3. The school's "Low 25%" growth for the current year must be in the highest 25% of "Low 25%" growth for all the schools in the State or the difference between the current "Low 25%" growth and the "Low 25%" growth from the previous year is in the highest 25% of the differences for all schools in the State.

2.C.ii Provide the SEA's list of Reward schools on page 68.

MDE has provided data to demonstrate that the identified number of schools meet the definition in Attachment 8a, Appendix 7.

2.C.iii Are the recognition and, if applicable, rewards proposed by the SEA for its highest-performing and high-progress schools likely to be considered meaningful by the schools? Has the SEA consulted with the LEAS and schools in designing its recognition and where applicable, rewards?

As noted in response 2.a, MDE, in cooperation with school district practitioners, is developing a statewide recognition and rewards program that will truly incentivize schools to improve and reach Reward status. In addition to the information presented in 2.a regarding the statewide plan for rewarding high performing schools and districts, MDE has a board approved methodology to provide monetary awards to Title I schools that have significantly closed the achievement gap between the sub groups of students; or exceeded their AMOs for two or more consecutive years:

- Funding provided based on increase in Title I Part A funding from preceding year (maximum of 5%);
- Generally award twelve schools annually (depending on funding);
- Highest two awarded schools recognized at National Title I Conference; and
- All awarded schools are recognized by SBE in the annual Champions of Change ceremony organized by the Office of Federal Programs.

Options for Rewards in **Reward Schools**:

- Recognition at SBE meeting with banners and public recognition via the media (TV, newspaper, website);
- Increased opportunities to serve on task forces, such as Educator Leader Cadre, and assist MDE with the transition and implementation of College and Career Ready Standards and Assessments;
- Post list of reward schools on MDE website;
- Determine best practices and share with other districts at state conferences;
- Serve as a model school that other schools may visit; and

- Exempt school from certain citations of noncompliance with certain state accreditation requirements, as noted in the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

Exemptions for Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance.

Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance may be exempted from citations of noncompliance with process standards such as the ones listed below.

- Library Media/Organized Collection (Each school has a library media center with an organized collection of materials and equipment that represents a broad range of current learning media, including instructional technology.)
- Library Media Program of Service (The library staff offers a systematic program of service to students and staff by providing access to the materials and equipment, by providing instruction in the use of the materials and equipment, and by working with teachers and other staff members to provide learning activities for the students.)
- High School Science Laboratory (The school district provides each student with appropriate equipment and laboratory experiences to meet the instructional requirements of the science program. See the current edition of the Mississippi Science Framework.)
- Limit on Course Preparations (Individual teachers (grades 9-12) are limited to three course preparations per scheduling cycle or five in the same subject/content area.)
- Student Teacher Ratios in Grades 1-4 (Student teacher ratios do not exceed 27 to 1 in classrooms serving grades 1 through 4 unless approved by SBE.)
- Limit of 150 Students Per Teacher in Academic Core Subjects (The total number of students taught by an individual teacher in academic core subjects at any time during the school year shall not exceed 150.)

Exemptions for Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance.

School districts assigned the Highest Levels of Performance may be exempted from citations of noncompliance with the process standards listed below.

- Community Involvement, Parental Communication, and Business Partnerships (There is an organized system to encourage community involvement, parental communication, and business partnerships in school district decision making.)
- Senior Preparation for Graduation Ceremonies (Standard 19.5: The school district schedules preparation for graduation ceremonies in such manner that graduating seniors are absent from classes for no more than three days prior to the end of the school year.)
- Summer School Program Requirements (The summer school/extended year program meets all applicable requirements of the regular school program. {MS Code 37-3-49})
- Professional Development Plan/Program (The school district implements a professional development program that complies with the guidelines published in Professional Development for the New Millennium.)

- Early Childhood Programs (kindergarten and teacher assistant) (The school district is in compliance with state requirements of provisions of subsection (4) of MS Code 37 21 7.)
- Instructional Management System (The school district implements an instructional management system that has been adopted by the school board and includes, at a minimum, the competencies and objectives required in the curriculum frameworks approved by SBE.)
- Suggested Teaching Strategies, Resources, and Assessment Strategies (Suggested teaching strategies, resources, and assessment strategies are available to teachers in each school for selection and use in teaching the required competencies.)

Please note that while tangible monetary rewards are desirable, MS Code prohibits awarding “bonuses”; however, schools are encouraged to give incentives or additional stipends, as is the case for National Board Certification and other similar programs.

2.D PRIORITY SCHOOLS

2.D.i Describe the SEA's methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State's Title I schools as Priority schools. If the SEA's methodology is not based on the definition of priority schools in ESEA Flexibility (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided is consistent with the definition, per the Department's "Demonstrating that an SEA's Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions" guidance.

MDE will use the following methodology for identifying at least five percent of the State's Title I schools as Priority Schools:

Per the ESEA Flexibility definition, MDE will identify a Priority School as "a school that, based on the most recent data available, has been identified as among the lowest performing schools in the State. The total number of Priority Schools in a State must be at least five percent of the Title I schools in the State." Mississippi served 720 Title I Schools in 2010-11; thus, the number of Priority Schools identified will be a minimum of 36, or 5% of the Title I schools in the State.

Criteria for Priority School Status

Based upon Mississippi statute and State Board approved supporting documents, any school that receives an "F" designation for two consecutive years will be a Priority School and implement Priority interventions for a minimum of three years. As 2014-15 is the third year of ESEA Flexibility, and thus the third year of Priority implementation (except for a few of the schools identified based on SIG participation), any school identified as Priority in previous years will remain on the Priority list until the school meets the exit criteria. MDE will provide ED with demonstration data regarding the revised entrance and exit criteria for Priority when schools are next identified in Winter 2015-16.

Category of Priority Schools, as of July 2012	Number of Schools
Total number of Title I schools	720
Total number of Priority Schools required to be identified	36
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating that are currently served Tier I or Tier II SIG schools	17
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating that are Title I eligible or Title I participating high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years	6
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating that are among the lowest achieving five percent of Title I schools	13

2.D.ii Provide the SEA's list of Priority schools on page 68.

MDE has provided the list annually, and will update the list as noted in Assurance 8 for implementation beginning the 2016-2017 school year.

2.D.iii Describe the meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles that an LEA with Priority schools will implement.

a. SEA Interventions

MDE is committed to providing a coordinated, seamless system of intervention and support to Priority Schools. Under the new flexibility, multiple offices will consolidate efforts to support intervention implementation in the Priority Schools. Through the identification process for these schools, a minimum of 36 schools (or 5% of the 720 Title I participating schools) will be identified for Priority status. Of those 36 schools, 17 schools are Tier I or II SIG participants for 2012-13. SIG Priority Schools are bound by the turnaround principles through SIG awards. Each SIG school has an approved plan describing how the school will meet each requirement. Each school has a three year (annually renewable) grant to support the interventions. All schools have at least \$50,000 a year but no more than \$2,000,000 available through 1003g. SIG schools must use any additional federal funds to support their approved school improvement implementation plan.

The non SIG Priority Schools will also receive technical assistance and continuous monitoring services, based on SIG turnaround principles. Rather than requiring school districts to utilize set asides for Choice and SES, as required under ESEA, state and local funds, along with up to 20% of the districts' Title I, Part A budget and portions of the 1003a set aside, will be leveraged to implement the turnaround principles in the non SIG funded schools.

All Priority Schools will be required to notify the parents of all students enrolled in the school of the Priority designation within 30 days of receiving notification. Each district will establish a community based prekindergarten through higher education council (MS Code 37-18-5(4)). The community council will be representative of a diverse segment of the school's stakeholders. The council will serve in an advisory capacity in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the school's action plan. Council members, parents, and community members will have access to *Mississippi SOARS* (Schools Obtaining Academic Results for Success, a web based school improvement resource) and the Children's First annual report of academic progress, school demographics, and other key information.

Priority Schools: Requirements, Supports, and Interventions

Requirements	Supports and Interventions
LEA and School: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent notification explaining designation as Priority School • Set aside of up to 20 percent of District's Title I basic funds which must be used to implement intensive interventions at the identified Priority School(s) that address the turnaround principles and are aligned with the comprehensive needs 	SEA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of LEA submitted Action plan for each Priority School to ensure that all turnaround principles have been adequately addressed and in some cases, the SEA may require districts to implement specific interventions based on the needs assessment, student performance data, or other pertinent information • Approval of each Priority School's Action plan

<p>assessment (Action plan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct comprehensive needs assessment. • Develop and implement an Action plan that is aligned with turnaround principles; addresses areas of deficiency; defines continuous improvement objectives and a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the school's action plan • Establish annual goals for leading and lagging (achievement) indicators • Approval of the Action plan by the local school board • Establish a Community Council that meets consistently and actively participates in the school transformation process • Fully implement the M STAR and MPES evaluation systems, which include student achievement as a significant component • Implement MS SOARS/Indistar online system for planning, monitoring, and reporting progress • Establish a office/staff within the LEA to provide oversight for the implementation and ongoing monitoring of the school's action plan • Participate in the School Effectiveness Review Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to support the effective implementation of Action plans that are aligned with turnaround principles in Priority Schools. Training will include, but not be limited to: leadership; instructional quality; increased learning time; data collection, analysis, and decision making; community and family engagement; principal and teacher evaluation systems; college and career readiness; professional learning communities; diverse learners (students with disabilities, ELs, struggling students) • Monthly support and monitoring of implementation provided by MDE staff and assigned Implementation specialists • Technical support includes, but is not limited to: MS SOARS/Indistar reporting and coaching; monthly on site visits; email and/or conference call support; webinars; newsletters; training, technical assistance briefs • Provide mechanisms for networking/mentoring/collaborating between Priority Schools and schools that have been identified as successful, high progress, or reward schools • Engage district and school leaders with the School Effectiveness Review Process (SERP). Participating school district administrators and instructional leaders will be engaged in a series of open ended questions designed to review, verify, and evaluate expected outcomes of the Consolidated Federal Programs Application
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b. Practices to be implemented

MDE will incorporate an integrated approach for monitoring, technical assistance, and accountability for Priority Schools. The approach assesses the district/school's implementation of turnaround principles and determines the types of support needed in order to meet the goals identified in their Action plan. Evidence is gathered through site visits; the collection of progress data; the completion of on line implementation progress reports; and an annual site visit by staff from MDE that includes gathering and reviewing documentation, conducting interviews, and visiting classrooms.

Action plan

All Priority Schools will design a three year comprehensive action plan that explicitly addresses each of the turnaround principles. Plan components will include narratives, implementation milestones/timelines, action plans, measures of

progress, and responsible parties. Continuous assessments of implementation actions by the school will be monitored through on-line reports submitted in *Mississippi SOARS*, on-site technical assistance visits by MDE implementation specialists, and annual monitoring visits.

MDE, Office of School Improvement, currently contracts with implementation specialists who are serving the 1003g SIG sites. Support will be differentiated based upon factors such as the school's capacity for implementation of the improvement model and the turnaround indicators.

MDE developed a comprehensive set of *Indicators of Implementation* that provide a framework for monitoring implementation progress in Priority Schools and ensure that districts and schools are embracing research-based practices that address turnaround principles.

The **bold** font text below indicates a federal turnaround principle. Mississippi has refined its list of indicators to include those essential to school improvement. To drive this work, the MDE used one guiding question: What must schools do well to improve student achievement? Addressing this question shifts the focus from a compliance mindset to one of support to help improve school performance. Each indicator is reviewed and monitored electronically using ADI's Indistar platform (aka Mississippi SOARS) for regular implementation, feedback, and oversight.

Turnaround Principle 1: Providing strong leadership

Turnaround Principle 2: Ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction

Turnaround Principle 3: Redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration:

Turnaround Principle 4: Strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with State academic content standards.

Turnaround Principle 5: Using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data.

Turnaround Principle 6: Establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs.

Turnaround Principle 7: Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

In addition to the seven turnaround principles identified through the ED documents related to the ESEA Flexibility Request, MDE will implement one other principle that finds its foundation in the 1003g SIG program:

Turnaround Principle 8: Ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner organization (such as a school turnaround organization or EMO).

The required indicators build on the relationship between the LEA and school in the turnaround/transformation process. The identified indicators still follow the federal turnaround principles. Focusing on a smaller set of indicators allows LEAs and schools to delve deeper into practices that will improve student outcomes.

Monitoring, Reporting, Technical Support, Evaluation

In November 2011, the Mississippi SIG program began implementation of the Academic Development Institute's web based resource called Indistar®, a nationally recognized school improvement system for reporting, monitoring, and ultimately driving comprehensive school improvement efforts. ADI worked with Mississippi to design a state specific Indistar® based system named *Mississippi SOARS*. The system has the potential to be the vehicle for developing, implementing, and evaluating a singular, comprehensive school improvement process within Mississippi.

The use of the online resource for differentiating intervention support efforts and focusing on the critical elements of school reform in all Priority Schools will provide streamlined planning and reduce duplicity as well as the paperwork burden currently felt by school districts with schools served by the varying offices across MDE. Further, the system guides district and school leadership teams in charting their improvement, managing the continuous improvement process, and maintaining a focus on strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to sustain school improvement efforts. In addition, the implementation indicators are aligned with research based strategies from resources such as *Wise Ways*, *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants*, *Turnaround Competencies*, and *What Works Clearinghouse* (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>).

Through the online system, schools will build a comprehensive database of information designed to direct their school improvement actions. Specifically, school leadership teams in collaboration with district leadership teams, will establish three year performance goals with interim annual benchmarks for the leading/lagging indicators identified for Priority Schools. At the conclusion of each year, actual progress toward meeting the yearly benchmark is reported, showing the extent that

the school met its annual benchmark and providing information to guide the school's progress toward meeting the three year goal. The extensive analysis of data elements serves as the core of the school's comprehensive needs assessment.

Leadership teams within each Priority School will assess their progress relative to the implementation of indicators/turnaround principles. Indicators that are rated as "fully implemented" must be supported with extensive evidence, whereas detailed action plans will be developed for indicators rated as "limited implementation" or "no development." Action plans will indicate the research based best practices being implemented to guide reform efforts for rapid school improvement.

Consistent support for each Priority School/district will come primarily through an MDE placed implementation specialist. Implementation specialists will conduct monthly site visits to Priority Schools. The purpose of the site visits is to provide differentiated support to districts and schools as they implement their action plans and to gather information on implementation progress to determine further support to be extended. Implementation specialists use the *Indicators of Implementation* as the basis for determining progress.

After conducting each district and school site visit, implementation specialists complete and submit a site visit report to MDE staff for review. Following MDE review, site visit reports will be submitted to the district superintendent, school improvement specialist, and school principal. Site visit reports are intended to provide continuous feedback to schools and to identify targeted technical assistance services that are necessary to support schools as they move forward with implementation of their school's action plan. Further, the reports identify areas where implementation is successful, where implementation challenges exist, how challenges may be addressed, and how plans for subsequent years may be improved.

MDE expects each Priority School to implement the Indicators of Implementation/turnaround principles as outlined in their approved action plan within the first two years, and continue that implementation for a minimum of three years.

The action plan will include strategies to meet the school's annual goals toward the following performance metrics:

Leading Indicators:

- Number of minutes within the school year and school day;
- Student participation rate on State assessments in reading/language arts and in mathematics, by student subgroup;
- Number and percentage of students completing advanced coursework (e.g., AP/IB), early college high schools, or dual enrollment classes;
- Dropout rate;
- Student attendance rate;
- Discipline incidents;

- Truants;
- Distribution of teachers by performance level on an LEA's teacher evaluation system; and
- Teacher attendance rate.

Lagging/Achievement Indicators:

- Percentage of students at or above each proficiency level on State assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics, by grade and by student subgroup;
- Average scale scores on State assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics, by grade, for the "all students" group, for each achievement quartile, and for each subgroup;
- Percentage of limited English proficient students who attain English language proficiency;
- School improvement status and AMOs met and missed;
- College enrollment rates; and
- Graduation rate.

MDE will review each school based on whether the school has satisfied the requirements in regards to its annual performance targets or on a trajectory to do so.

- *Leading Indicators*—A school must meet 5 of 9 leading indicator goals.
- *Lagging/Achievement Indicators*—A school must also meet a minimum of 50% of applicable achievement indicators.

Each LEA will work with Priority Schools to set annual goals, and the SEA approves the annual goals with consultation with the LEA. MDE has partnered with the Academic Development Institute (ADI) to provide schools and districts with training and supports needed to develop SMART goals and implement plans with fidelity, and through this partnership MDE is poised to continue quality support for other targeted schools.

If a school does not improve after two years in the process, state conservatorship is a possibility. Mississippi Code Ann. Section 37-167-1 requires that schools failing for two consecutive years may be transformed into a New Start School under the administration and control of the Mississippi Recovery School District within the Mississippi Department of Education.

The process for entering conservatorship is structured through state law and board policy and can include fiscal and leadership deficiencies. More information is provided in Section 2G. Intermediate procedures include a loss of autonomy and MDE becoming more directive with federal grant awards, in an effort to ensure effective selection and implementation of curriculum supports necessary to improve schools. Moreover, if a school does not exit priority status after three years, more intensive targeted support will be provided to the district and school.

Implementation specialists will be assigned to support priority schools that do not exit at least twice monthly, as funding allows. Specifically, support will be provided around the specific turnaround principles and identified implementation indicators.

Schools failing to exit priority status after three years will be required to attend **all** MDE training regarding the turnaround principles and implementation indicators that align to the approved improvement/action plan for the school.

MDE staff members will provide additional support and quarterly follow up training for any school not exiting priority or focus status after three years of implementation. This training and support is aligned to the turnaround principles, is different and more rigorous when compared to support provided to other priority and focus schools, and is required of all schools not exiting.

2.D.iv Provide the timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more Priority schools implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each Priority school no later than the 2014–2015 school year and provide a justification for the SEA’s choice of timeline.

As noted earlier, the use of the online resource for differentiating intervention support efforts and focusing on the critical elements of school reform in all Priority and Focus schools will provide streamlined planning and reduce duplicity as well as the paperwork burden currently felt by school districts with schools served by the varying offices across MDE. The indicators for implementation from 2.D.iii.a are pre loaded into *Mississippi SOARS* platform and include all of the turnaround principles. In addition, the implementation indicators are aligned with research-based strategies from resources such as *Wise Ways, Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants, Turnaround Competencies, and What Works Clearinghouse* (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>).

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
SIG Schools	Year 1 implementation 8 schools	Year 1 implementation 10 schools Year 2 implementation 8 schools	Year 2 implementation 10 schools Year 3 implementation 7 schools	Year 3 implementation 10 schools Transition Year 7 schools exiting SIG	17 total SIG sites

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Priority Schools			<p>Fall 2012 notification of priority status training for Priority Schools develop and approval of action plans</p> <p>Spring 2013 begin implementation of Action plan</p> <p>Minimum Implementation Criteria of no more than 25% of indicators of implementation rated as Not Addressed or No Evidence</p>	<p>Implementation of Action plan</p> <p>Minimum Implementation Criteria of no more than 10% of indicators of implementation rated as Not Addressed or No</p>	<p>Implementation of Action plan</p> <p>Minimum Implementation Criteria of no indicators of implementation rated as Not Addressed or No</p>

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE will notify Priority Schools of preliminary status with the release of statewide accountability results; time allowed to review data used for identification • Approximately 30 days after official notification, MDE will provide training for Priority Schools on developing a action plan to include implementation of interventions that address specific deficiencies using MS SOARS/Indistar. The intervention must align to the school’s Title I application as well as needs or district action steps. • Priority Schools will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and use the results to develop the action plan outlined in MS SOARS. • Continuing Priority Schools will begin implementing revised plan to address needs identified through needs assessment results <p>Minimum implementation criteria of no more than 25% of indicators rated as Not Addressed or No Evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority Schools will continue Implementation of Action plan • MDE will conduct mandatory quarterly and summer training for Priority Schools. • Implementation specialists will provide two days of monthly, targeted support to Priority Schools, as funding allows. <p>February 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental notification of priority status <p>Minimum Implementation Criteria of no more than 10% of indicators of implementation rated as Not Addressed or No Evidence for schools in priority status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Implementation of Action plan • Implementation specialists will provide two days monthly, targeted support for continuing Priority Schools • MDE will provide support, training, and technical assistance. <p>Minimum Implementation Criteria of No indicators of implementation rated as Not Addressed or No for year schools in priority status</p>

2.D.v Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits Priority status and a justification for the criteria selected.

Given that a school enters Priority status and is expected to implement the turnaround strategies for three years, schools identified as Priority for the 2012-2013 School Year will remain Priority through the 2014-2015 School Year, even if all the Exit Criteria are met during the first three years of implementation.

Criteria for Exiting Priority Status

- No longer in the bottom 5% of schools based on performance (i.e., School has not received an F school label for the two latest years of implementation.);
- Meeting goals established for Leading and Lagging/Achievement Indicators as noted in section 2.D.iii; **AND**
- Community based council in place and functioning.

Once a school exits Priority Status, the district and school will continue to receive technical assistance as needed. Examples of Exit Criteria for Priority Designation:

Year 1 of Priority Implementation School Label	Year 2 of Priority Implementation School Label	Year 3 of Priority Implementation School Label	Designation for School Year following Year 3 results
"F"	"F"	"F"	Priority
"D"	"F"	"D"	Priority
"D"	"F"	"C" (or higher)	Priority
"D"	"F"	"F"	Priority
"F"	"D"	"C" (or higher)	No Designation

2.E FOCUS SCHOOLS

2.E.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools as “Focus schools.” If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of priority schools in ESEA Flexibility (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

MDE will use the following methodology for identifying at least ten percent of the State’s Title I schools as Focus schools:

Per the ESEA Flexibility definition, MDE will identify a Focus School based on the following criteria: Based upon state code and State Board Approved supporting documents, any school that receives a “D” or “F” school label for two consecutive years, and not designated Priority, will be a Focus School and implement Focus interventions for a minimum of two years. Any schools identified as Focus in previous years will remain on the Focus list until the school meets the exit criteria. MDE will provide ED with demonstration data regarding the revised entrance and exit criteria for Focus when schools are next identified in Winter 2015-2016.

Examples of Entry Criteria for Designation:

Year 1 School Label	Year 2 School Label	Designation for School Year following Year 2 results
"F"	"F"	Priority
"D"	"F"	At Risk of Priority

"F"	"D"	Focus
"D"	"D"	Focus

Category of Focus Schools, As of July 2012	Number of Schools
Total number of Title I schools	720
Total number of schools required to be identified as Focus schools	72 (MDE tentatively has 80.)
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating that are Title I participating high schools that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a three year period	None, all are identified in Priority
Total number of schools on the list generated based on overall rating that have the greatest within school gaps over a three year period	43
Total number of schools on the list generated based on overall rating that have a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement or, at the high school level, low graduation rates over a three year period	37

2.E.ii Provide the SEA's list of Focus schools on page 68.

MDE has provided the list annually, and will update the list as noted in Assurance 8 for implementation beginning the 2016-2017 school year.

2.E.iii Does the SEA's process and timeline ensure that each LEA will identify the needs of its focus schools and their students and implement interventions in focus schools at the start of the 2012–2013 school year? Did the SEA provide examples of and justifications for the interventions the SEA will require its focus schools to implement? Are those interventions based on the needs of students and likely to improve the performance of low-performing students and reduce achievement gaps among subgroups, including English Learners and students with disabilities?

Interventions for Focus Schools

MDE is committed to providing a coordinated, seamless system of intervention and support to Focus schools. Under the new flexibility, multiple offices will consolidate efforts to support interventions in the schools. The coordination will also serve to reduce duplication and paperwork expectations for school districts.

All Focus Schools will be required to notify the parents of all students enrolled in the school of the Focus designation within 30 days of receiving notification. MDE will evaluate the fidelity of implementation of the school's action/improvement plan and provide support on needed corrections, as funding allows. The district will establish a community based prekindergarten through higher education council to influence the action plan. Districts and their councils may utilize *Mississippi SOARS*, a quality on line tool for districts/schools to use in developing the action plan and tracking progress toward meeting goals.

Focus Schools: Requirements, Supports, and Interventions

<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Supports and Interventions</i>
<p>LEA and School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent notification explaining designation as Focus school. • Set aside of up to 10 percent of School's Title I basic funds which must be used to implement intensive interventions at the identified focus school(s) that address all subgroups not meeting AMOs and are aligned with the comprehensive needs assessment (Action Plan) • Conduct comprehensive needs assessment. • Develop and implement an Action Plan that addresses areas of deficiency; defines continuous improvement objectives and a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress • Approval of the Action Plan by the local school board • Establish a Community Council that meets consistently and actively participates in the school's Action Plan implementation process • Implement the statewide teacher and principal evaluation system that includes student achievement as a significant component • Implement a system for planning, monitoring, and reporting progress • Participate in the School Effectiveness Review Process 	<p>SEA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to support the effective implementation of the Action Plan, including but not be limited to leadership; instructional quality; increased learning time; data collection, analysis, and decision making; community and family engagement; principal and teacher evaluation systems; college and career readiness; professional learning communities; diverse learners (students with disabilities, ELs, struggling students) • Technical assistance and support of action plan development and implementation, including but not limited to coaching; email and/or conference call support; webinars; and training • Provide mechanisms for networking/mentoring/collaborating between Focus Schools and schools that have been identified as successful, high progress, or reward schools • Engage district and school leaders with the School Effectiveness Review Process (SERP). Participating school district administrators and instructional leaders will be engaged in a series of open ended questions designed to review, verify, and evaluate expected outcomes of the Consolidated Federal Programs Application

In-depth Performance Review and Support

The intervention model to be employed with Focus schools includes a comprehensive needs assessment and qualified support specialists to assist schools in the implementation of the school improvement (action) plan. Each school, with the support of its district and in consultation with the SEA must develop and implement interventions through *Mississippi SOARS*, of the level of need/performance on the research based indicators for continuous improvement. Focus school sites will be trained on strategies as part of their targeted interventions to address student achievement gaps.

Rather than utilizing set asides for Choice and SES, as required under NCLB, Focus schools will be required to use a minimum of 10% of the school's Title I, Part A allocation for specific interventions related to achievement gaps. To receive Focus status, a school must receive a "D" or "F" school label for two consecutive years. Part of the school label is impacted by the performance of the school's low 25% subgroup, which is further comprised of traditional ESEA subgroups. In order to exit Focus status, a school must improve school labels and not meet Focus criteria. Therefore, the interventions identified in each Focus School's Action Plan will address the subgroups not meeting AMOs. Job embedded professional development will play a role in supporting instructional best practice. As funds are available, these schools may also receive 1003a funding to support specific interventions for achievement gaps.

The primary goal of the Focus School Action Plan and the corresponding support from MDE is to establish safeguards to ensure appropriate attention is given and action is taken when one or more subgroups are not meeting goals even if the school is making progress on its index measure or for the consolidated subgroup. MDE plans to utilize ADI's Indistar platform for developing the action plan, monitoring interventions, and providing distance based support through ADI's Indicators in Action web based video series. The identified indicators for each school must align to the school's needs assessment data. The district and school will use the implementation indicators in MS SOARS to develop a plan to address the subgroups not meeting AMOs. Each school will receive training on the use of the platform in early Fall 2012. On site support specialists will assist schools with development and implementation of the action plan throughout the school year. *AMOs will be used to identify persistently low ESEA subgroups, and schools will be required to develop and implement action plans for improving student performance for each ESEA subgroup not meeting AMOs for two consecutive years.*

Throughout Focus School implementation, the identified school will receive continuous support both on site and off site through a team of state specialists to help with the development of action plans and with the implementation. Support will also help the schools with identifying training needs based upon the problem areas. For example, if a Focus School's low performance includes student with disabilities in the area of Algebra I, the interventions might include but will not be limited to the following:

- Require LEA to send students with disabilities who have not passed the Algebra I end of course test to the MDE remediation sessions designed for students;
- Require the LEA to send administrators to the remediation best practices sessions designed for administrators; and
- Require teachers and administrators to attend the ADI Indicator in Action web based video series on differentiating assignments in response to student performance on pre tests and other methods of assessment.

Timeline for Focus Schools

Summer-Fall 2012	Spring 2013	School Year 2013-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE will notify LEAs of Focus status for schools on a preliminary basis in August; time allowed to review data used for identification. MDE will provide initial training for school specialists during this time to ensure teams are supporting schools upon final identification. • Immediately after official notification in September, MDE will provide training for LEAs with Focus schools on the use of Indistar to develop Focus School Action plans and assign school support specialists for on going training, technical assistance, and support. • LEA will conduct and/or revise comprehensive needs assessment and use the results to develop and approve Focus School Action plans. Self assessments will be due in October. • School and LEA will begin implementation of Action Plan, focusing on interventions for subgroup performance in October. • If funds are available, MDE will approve 1003a applications for LEAs with Focus Schools in November. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and LEA will continue implementation of Action Plan, focusing on interventions for subgroup performance. • Action plan must have tasks developed and in the implementation phase for any indicators not already at full implementation level by January 2013. • MDE will provide on going support, training, and technical assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and LEA will continue implementation of Action Plan, revising comprehensive needs assessment annually. • MDE will provide on going support, training, and technical assistance.

Fall 2015/Winter 2016	Spring 2016— Spring 2017	School Year 2016-2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE will notify Focus Schools of preliminary status with the release of statewide accountability results; time allowed to review data used for identification. • Approximately 30 days after official notification, MDE will provide training for Focus Schools on implementation of interventions used to address the instructional areas in which the school is not meeting AMOs. Interventions must address the specific deficiencies using the indicators identified in MS SOARS/Indistar. The intervention must align to the school's Title I application as well as the comprehensive needs assessment results and district and/or district action steps, if included. • Focus Schools will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and use the results to develop the action plan outlined in MS SOARS/Indistar. • Continuing Focus Schools will begin implementing revised action plan that is aligned to the schools' needs assessment results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Implementation of Plan, targeting specific interventions for subgroups not meeting AMOs. Interventions must be specific in action and offer measureable results. • Attend required summer and quarterly training on implementation indicators • MDE will provide support, training, and technical assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Implementation of Plan of selecting interventions, revising comprehensive needs assessment annually. • Attend required summer and quarterly training on implementation indicators • MDE will provide support, training, and technical assistance.

2.E.iv. Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits Focus status and a justification for the criteria selected.

Per the ESEA Flexibility definition, MDE will identify a Focus School based on the following criteria:

School has not received a "D" and/or "F" school label for two consecutive years.

Once a school enters Focus status, the school will not exit Focus status until the Exit Criteria are met for two consecutive years. The first step of additional oversight for schools not meeting AMOs will come through the annually completed Consolidated Federal Programs Application that includes the school district's expenditures for Title I A and Title II A of ESEA. The current application includes assurances and strategies for addressing the five goals of NCLB. Upon approval of the ESEA Request, the application will necessarily be revised to include assurances and strategies for meeting AMOs as outlined in the ESEA Request. Schools that do not meet the criteria within two years may lose autonomy in selecting and implementing interventions to address the needs of the subgroups not meeting AMOs. If a school does not exit focus status after three years, more intensive, targeted support will be

provided to the district and school. Implementation specialists will be assigned to support focus schools that do not exit after three years, as funding allows. Specifically, support will be provided to districts and schools around the specific turnaround principles and identified implementation indicators. Districts and schools failing to exit focus status after three years will be required to attend **all** MDE training on the select turnaround principles and implementation indicators identified for the school's improvement plan. The final consequence, state conservatorship, is engaged on a case by case basis, as described on page 103 (Section 2G).

Criteria for exiting Focus Status

A school will no longer be identified as a Focus school, based upon the definition above, if the school has not received a "D" and/or "F" label for two consecutive years.

Once a school exits Focus status, the school will continue to receive technical assistance as needed.

Examples of Exit Criteria for Focus Designation:

Year 1 of Focus Implementation School Label	Year 2 of Focus Implementation School Label	Designation for School Year following Year 2 results
"D"	"D"	Focus
"D"	"F"	Focus
"F"	"D"	Focus
"C" (or above)	"C" (or above)	No Designation

REWARD, PRIORITY, AND FOCUS SCHOOLS TABLE

Provide the SEA's list of Reward, Priority, and focus schools using the template. Use the key to indicate the criteria used to identify a school as a Reward, Priority, or Focus school.

Note: Mississippi's school identification lists are based upon 2010–2011 school year data. Therefore, the completed list below is redacted to conceal school-specific information for three reasons:

1. The final listing of Reward, Priority, and Focus schools will be compiled based upon 2011–12 school year data, and those data are not yet available.
2. The ED has recommended redaction of school names.
3. The proposed accountability process within the Request is not officially approved.

Total # of Title I schools in the State in 2011-12: 720

Total # of Title I-participating high schools in the State with graduation rates less than 60%: 4 based on 2010-2011 data (final number to be determined with 2011-2012 data)

REWARD, PRIORITY, AND FOCUS SCHOOLS

Mississippi annually publishes the list of Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools, as well as all school designations. The 2014–2015 list is available on the MDE website at <http://reports.mde.k12.ms.us/report/report2014.aspx>.

As noted in Assurance 7, MDE will continue to annually make public its lists of reward schools, priority schools, and focus schools, as well as publicly recognize its reward schools, and will update its lists of priority and focus schools at least every three years. Given the timing of assessments, annual notifications cannot always occur prior to the start of the school year, unless designations lag a year behind.

As noted in Assurance 8, MDE will provide to the Department, as soon as available, an updated list of priority and focus schools, identified based on school year 2014–2015 data, for implementation beginning in the 2016–2017 school year. The timing of the updated list will be contingent upon data from the 2014–2015 school year being available in a timely manner, given the transitory nature of the 2014–2015 assessment cycle. Mississippi will submit an updated list as soon as the data are finalized and approved by the State Board of Education.

2.F PROVIDE INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS FOR OTHER TITLE I SCHOOLS

2.F Describe how the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system will provide incentives and supports to ensure continuous improvement in other Title I schools that, based on the SEA's new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, and an explanation of how these incentives and supports are likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

2.F.i Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system provide incentives and supports for other Title I schools that, based on the SEA's new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps?

MDE's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system provides incentives and supports for other Title I schools that, based on the SEA's new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps.

As noted in response 2.a, MDE conducts an annual Champions of Change ceremony, organized by the Office of Federal Programs. Through the ceremony, the MDE recognizes the High Progress Reward, High Performing Reward, and Title I Distinguished schools. The Office of Special Education also recognizes the schools identified as Exemplary Inclusion. The criteria for each school is as follows:

The ***High Progress*** status is awarded to schools across the state for demonstrating the greatest gains in closing achievement gaps among students. This award status goes to schools that represent the highest 10% of schools that have improved in overall performance over the past two years and fall within the top quartile of schools in performance gains of the lowest 25% subgroup.

The ***High Performing*** status is awarded to schools for demonstrating the highest performance across all Title I schools in the state. High Performing schools represent the highest 20% of all schools in performance over the past two years, fall within the top quintile of schools in performance gains of the lowest 25% subgroup, meet all annual measurable objectives (AMOs), and earn a graduation rate that ranks in the top quintile across the state (where applicable).

The ***Distinguished School*** status is awarded to the top 20 Title I schools who have effectively closed the achievement gap between the black and white student subgroups in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics for two or more consecutive years. As part of this recognition, the two schools with the greatest gain among all schools have received national recognition as National Title I Distinguished Schools.

The ***Exemplary Inclusion*** status is awarded to two schools for demonstrating and encouraging full inclusion of children with disabilities in all aspects of academic and extra curricular activities.

Timeline for Other Title I Schools not meeting AMOs

Summer-Fall 2015	Spring 2015	School Year 2015-16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDE will notify the Other Title I Schools not meeting AMOs and Other Title I Schools meeting AMOs of preliminary status with the release of statewide accountability results; time allowed to review data used for identification. • Approximately 30 days after official notification, MDE will provide training for Other Title I Schools not meeting AMOs on the implementation of interventions used to address the instructional areas, which caused the school to miss AMOs. Interventions must address deficiencies in mathematics or language arts using one or all of the following: MS SOARS/Indistar, Title I Application, or district action steps. • The Other Title I Schools will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and use the results to develop Action plans. • The Other Title I Schools will begin/continue implementation of interventions, focusing on subgroup performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Other Title I Schools will continue implementation of selected interventions, focusing on subgroup performance. Interventions must be specific in action and offer measurable results. • MDE will provide support, training, and technical assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Other Title I Schools will continue implementation of selected interventions, revising comprehensive needs assessment annually. • MDE will provide support, training, and technical assistance.

MDE's Office of Federal Programs will be responsible for the other Title I schools not meeting AMOs and the other Title I schools meeting AMOs but not receiving services from another program office. Each school not meeting AMOs in the same category (ELA, Math, OAI) for two consecutive years, and not already designated as Priority or Focus, will use the Indistar system or an alternate, locally developed plan to complete a self evaluation based on the indicators provided in **Attachment 8b1**. For the initial year of implementation, if the school missed AYP in a category for 2011 determinations and missed the AMO in the same category for the 2012 determinations, then a school will be required to develop and implement interventions designed to address the deficiencies that caused the school to miss AMOs. Intervention must address deficiencies in mathematics, language arts, or other academic indicator using one or all of the following: Indistar, Title I application, or district action steps.

Further, any small school or kindergarten only site that may not receive a letter grade will engage in the planning processes for accountability as applicable if the site's feeder schools are identified for action planning. Small schools, particularly the MS School for the Blind and Deaf, do not have data sufficient to meet the business rules for minimum n counts and thus may not receive school accountability

designations (A-F). Nevertheless, these schools will still receive annual AMO reports and be held accountable for implementing interventions for subgroups not meeting AMO targets.

The interventions used to address the instructional areas for the Other Title I Schools will be monitored by the Office of Federal Programs. The primary goal of the interventions for the Other Title I Schools is to establish safeguards to ensure appropriate attention is given and action is taken when one or more subgroups are not meeting goals even if the school is making progress on its index measure or for the consolidated subgroup. MDE is utilizing a combination of ADI's Indistar system, the Title I application, and district developed interventions as a platform for developing and monitoring interventions. MDE's Office of Federal Programs assists the Other Title I schools with the implementation of the interventions throughout the school year.

Supports and Interventions for schools that are not Reward, Focus, or Priority may include the following:

<u>Other Title I Schools Not Meeting AMOs</u>	<u>Consequence if Title I Schools Do Not Make Improvements</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA must establish a <u>data team</u> with training support from MDE through regional meetings. Technical assistance will be provided to help the schools determine why they are not making progress. • LEA is required to participate in training that targets the needs of subgroups. • LEA develops and implements Plans for teachers and school leaders targeting the needs of subgroups. • LEA ensures that schools implement Mississippi's Response to Intervention model, including each step of the RtI process. • LEA participates in all MDE training opportunities, and disseminates information to school staff, particularly as it relates to state initiatives (College and Career Readiness, RtI, PLCs, Pathways to Success, state science framework, MS Comprehensive Literacy Instructional Model, pre K, Writing Project, assessment). • LEA ensures that all staff members are trained on the principal and teacher evaluation process. MDE is requiring that all administrators attend training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA ensures that students who have failed the state test attend MDE remediation sessions. • LEA participates in the Office of Student Assessment's remediation best practices for administrators. • LEA uses Title II funds to pay for additional days of onsite training such as the Writing Project. • LEA uses Title I funds to employ a master teacher to provide support in the targeted area(s). • LEA ensures that schools demonstrating the greatest need based on data receive the highest percentage of resources.

Every school in the state must meet AMOs. Schools not meeting AMOs for two consecutive years must develop and implement interventions to support instruction to meeting AMOs for all subgroups. Schools that do not make progress within two years will move toward a more directive intervention from MDE, as an intermediate step between local control of interventions and state conservatorship. The Office of Federal Programs will facilitate the support that will be provided as well as bring

offices together to plan for subsequent school years. For example, an intervention for a high school not meeting graduation rate AMOs might include the following:

- Attend all MDE training on dropout prevention, including the annual conference, Pathways to Success, and iCAP;
- Assess and implement best practices in high school reform, such as providing clear pathways for success, positive behavior interventions and supports, and credit recovery options;
- Through the framework of the ADI Indicators, evaluate student data to identify students in need of instructional support and complete all corresponding training activities through Indicators in Action; and
- Leverage available resources to provide supports for students at risk of not completing high school.

Additionally, in accordance with Waiver 13, MDE has an approved methodology for annual 1003(a) grant awards. MDE ensures annually that all of the priority and Focus Schools have funding to implement their required interventions. If Title I 1003(a) funds become sufficient for the intervention needs of priority and Focus Schools, then MDE may award funds to other Title I schools not meeting AMOs. The funding would be prioritized within other Title I schools to ensure those schools not meeting AMO targets over a number of years receive additional funding. The additional funds would be used by the school to implement the interventions.

2.F.ii Are those incentives and supports likely to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for all students, including English Learners and students with disabilities?

In 2011, former State Superintendent Dr. Tom Burnham shared the seven successful strategies of the highest performing schools in the world with legislators, school boards, district leaders, and principals throughout the state. Marc Tucker's report *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants*, commissioned by the ED, and the corresponding book *Surpassing Shanghai: An Agenda for American Education Built on the World's Leading Systems*, have served as the basis for Dr. Burnham's presentations. Included in the seven strategies is the finding that schools must operate along professional lines. To that end, MDE provided training and support for all districts in the state to implement the professional learning communities framework during the 2012-2013 school year. This training, in coordination with the State Board of Education's adoption of Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, provides a framework for intervention and support. MDE Office of Federal Programs, working with the Office of Professional Development, will coordinate efforts to sustain technical assistance for all schools that might not be in the Focus or Priority designation, yet need support in focusing on gaps, instructional interventions, best practice instructional strategies, and other emerging initiatives. The office, working with offices across MDE, will focus interventions on the subgroups not meeting AMOs, as identified through the required report cards.

For Title I Schools not identified as Focus or Priority, yet not meeting AMOs for any subgroup, including ESEA subgroups, districts will ensure that schools are planning and expending ESEA dollars in ways that will best meet the needs of the lower

performing group(s). Plans for funding will make clear links to the supports in place to ensure that all students meet the challenging academic and performance standards of the state's adopted college and career ready standards. The Office of Professional Development, with the support of other MDE offices such as Federal Programs, will support districts to address subgroups not meeting AMOs.

The Flexibility Request will provide MDE with a variety of options in supporting not only Priority, Focus, and Reward schools, but also other schools not making progress. For example, the Flexibility Request includes the *Optional Flexibility* as relates to ESEA sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the Twenty First Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to activities provided only during non school hours or periods when school is not in session (*i.e.*, before and after school or during summer recess). MDE requests that the requirement be waived so that 21st CCLC funds may be used to support expanded learning time during the school day in addition to activities during non school hours or periods when school is not in session.

As noted in the ED FAQ Addendum 3, "the flexibility allows for an additional use of funds for the 21st CCLC program—to provide activities that support high quality expanded learning time. Expanded learning time is the time that an LEA or school extends its normal school day, week, or year to provide additional instruction or educational programs for all students beyond the State mandated requirements for the minimum number of hours in a school day, days in a school week, or days or weeks in a school year." MDE will work with 21st CCLC grantees to utilize this flexibility in ways to increase enrichment for students while allowing teachers time for engaging professional collaboration.

MDE plans to provide differentiated supports and interventions, especially for schools not meeting the needs of English learners and students with disabilities. MDE will utilize ADI's Indistar system to support schools in developing action plans to design appropriate interventions.

Mississippi Law creates an additional level of support for what is currently termed a "Schools At Risk" and these schools are served through the Office of School Improvement (Schools At Risk Services).

Program Purpose

The Office of School Improvement is responsible for the implementation of state legislation regarding low performing schools (MS Code § 37 18 1 through 7). Mississippi Code 37 18 1, 3, 5, and 7, originally enacted by Senate Bill 2488 of the 2000 Regular Session, calls for the evaluation of "Schools At Risk." "Schools At Risk" determination is given to any school with an "F" school label **and** the school receives state office support if it is not already in one of the other school statuses that would garner support from another office. These schools are evaluated by a team of trained practicing and retired educators tasked with assessing school effectiveness to identify possible areas of weakness within the school and/or system.

that could be contributing to the low performance of students. Evaluation teams are equipped with instruments designed to evaluate the areas of Leadership, Curriculum and Assessment, Delivery of Instruction, and School Climate. Identified weaknesses and recommendations are then processed in a report that is presented to school/district personnel and the community so that a plan for improvement can be cooperatively designed and implemented.

Implementation Process

MDE personnel will conduct on-site evaluations and provide targeted support and assistance in identified schools. This includes but is not limited to:

- Collecting and analyzing school data before, during, and after the evaluation;
- Providing technical assistance to school and district personnel before, during, and after the evaluation team visit;
- Assisting in the development of School Improvement Action plans and Individual Personnel Improvement Plans;
- Conducting community meetings and assisting with the recruitment and development of the local Community Advisory (P16) Council at each school site; and,
- Providing overall support to schools identified as Schools At Risk as well as their associated school district.

Specific Technical Assistance to Schools At Risk

A Technical Assistance Specialist from the Office of School Improvement is assigned to each school to aid the school and district personnel by:

- Assisting in the development and implementation of each Action plan by focusing on areas identified by the evaluation process;
- Assist principals/leadership teams with monthly status reports on the implementation of the Action plans to the local school board and community; and,
- Assisting in finding relevant professional development and/or mentors for personnel placed on individual improvement plans.

For the other schools that are not a School At Risk, Priority, or Focus, but are not meeting AMOs, MDE will provide oversight/support through Title I plans, which must show how federal dollars are aligned to address and improve student performance toward meeting AMOs. For example, schools not meeting AMOs will provide plans of action through the annually completed Consolidated Federal Programs Application that includes the school district's expenditures for Title I A and Title II A of ESEA. The current application includes assurances and strategies for addressing the five goals of NCLB. Upon approval of the ESEA Request, the application will necessarily be revised to include assurances and strategies for meeting AMOs as outlined in the ESEA Request.

2.G BUILD SEA, LEA, AND SCHOOL CAPACITY TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

2.G Describe the SEA's process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, including through:

- i. timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in Priority and Focus Schools;
- ii. ensuring sufficient support for implementation of interventions in Priority schools, Focus Schools, and other Title I schools identified under the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources); and
- iii. holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their Priority schools

Explain how this process is likely to succeed in improving SEA, LEA, and school capacity.

Monitoring and Technical Assistance for Priority and Focus to Increase Capacity

MDE provides a variety of resources for SIG awardees to use in selecting and evaluating external providers, including MDE produced webinars and questionnaires as well as materials from the American Institutes for Research (AIR). These materials are available for all schools, and Priority and Focus Schools will use all the resources available to make the soundest educational decisions for their needs.

Priority Schools

MDE is undertaking an integrated approach to SIG monitoring and school accountability, which will be applied to all Priority Schools. The approach is intended to assess the district/school's progress in the implementation of the school improvement intervention model and to determine the types of support needed in order for the school to meet the goals identified in its action plan.

The integrated approach to school improvement grant monitoring and school accountability ensures a comprehensive evidence base. MDE will make use of existing data sources where possible. Evidence will be gathered through site visits by Implementation specialists, the collection of progress data, the completion of implementation progress reports, and an annual site visit by staff from MDE that includes gathering and reviewing documentation, conducting interviews, and visiting classrooms.

MDE staff will share findings from the information gathered with the districts and schools to help them understand where implementation is successful, where implementation challenges exist, how challenges may be addressed, and how plans for subsequent years may be improved. The integrated approach will establish common data collection processes to gather information that will be immediately

useful to schools in their work, as well as useful to long term accountability requirements and grant renewal decisions.

The full description of the process is included in **Attachment 8b**.

Sufficient Support for Interventions

As noted in 2d, MDE is committed to providing a coordinated, seamless system of intervention and support to Priority Schools. Under the new flexibility, multiple offices will consolidate efforts for consistent, unduplicated support. The coordination of services will include leveraging Consolidated Federal Cost Pool, 1003a, 1003g, and state funds to ensure capacity for success.

Specific to Priority Schools, implementation specialists will conduct monthly site visits throughout the school year, following the guidelines established in the attached Monitoring Plan (**Attachment 8b**). The purpose of the site visits is to provide support to districts and schools as they implement their improvement plans and to gather information on implementation progress to determine further support to be extended. Implementation specialists will use the *Indicators of Implementation (Attachment 8b)* as the basis for determining implementation progress of the districts and schools. The *Indicators of Implementation* are aligned with the U.S. Department of Education's *Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs (SASA) Monitoring Plan for School Improvement Grants* (published on January 12, 2011) that identifies various indicators of progress for school improvement intervention models.

After conducting each district and school site visit, Implementation specialists will complete and submit a site visit report. Following MDE review, site visit reports will be submitted to the superintendent, district school improvement specialists, and principal. Notes recorded on the *Indicators of Implementation* form during each site visit provide the basis for completing the site visit report on district and school implementation status and recommendations.

For all schools in the state, the SSOS will ensure that schools identified through the state's differentiated system receive the technical assistance needed to improve instruction and student achievement. As discussed earlier, supports, interventions, and incentives will be provided to schools according to the following tiers: Priority Schools, Schools at risk of becoming Priority Schools, Focus Schools, Other schools not meeting the AMOs, Other schools that meet the AMOs, and Reward schools. School districts that are under conservatorship will also receive support based on the designation of each school as well as additional support from MDE based on the needed areas.

Holding LEAs accountable

MDE ensures LEA accountability through the following measures:

- Reporting:
 - Districts must make monthly reports to the local board on the progress of the action plan (and submit evidence to MDE). (Schools At Risk, per MS Code §37 18 1 through 7)
 - District and School Report Cards must be posted on line and in print.
 - Accountability data are required to be posted on line and in print through multiple dissemination strategies to parents and the community.
- On site support, technical assistance, and monitoring facilitate intervention implementation, including the use of *Mississippi SOARS* reports.
- State accountability laws ensure district accountability by requiring more stringent oversight and additional training for superintendent and school board after consecutive years of low performance. **
- All school districts undergo resource allocation reviews, and districts with concerns and findings receive intensive on site technical assistance.
- Failing to implement interventions appropriately or failing to allocate resources appropriately could result in grant non renewal.

**** District Accountability: Conservatorship**

By state law, after two consecutive years of poor performance without any improvement, a school is designated as a “School at Risk” and receives intensive support from the Division of School Improvement, Oversight, and Recovery focused on the issues that caused the state designation. After a continued pattern of poor student performance, SBE may request that the Governor declare a state of emergency and assign an interim conservator to the District.

By state law, a detailed corrective action plan should be developed within forty five days of the conservator being placed in an LEA. MDE has established procedure in order to meet that requirement. The findings from an accreditation audit compiled by the Office of Accreditation will become the conservator’s corrective action plan. This detailed plan outlines findings, corrective actions, and recommendations required to comply with the standards addressed in the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

The conservator has the authority to enter into a contract with an outside entity to provide the needed services if additional assistance is needed to comply with requirements outlined in the corrective action plan. Typically, the LEA must demonstrate academic progress and a significant number of the accreditation audit violations must be corrected before an LEA exits conservatorship.

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

3.A DEVELOP AND ADOPT GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding description and evidence, as appropriate, for the option selected.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has not already developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the SEA's plan to develop and adopt guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year; ii. a description of the process the SEA will use to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines; and iii. an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year. (see Assurance 15). 	<p>Option B</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a copy of the guidelines the SEA has adopted (Attachment 10) and an explanation of how these guidelines are likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for students; ii. evidence of the adoption of the guidelines (Attachment 11); and iii. a description of the process the SEA used to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines.
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3.A.i Has the SEA developed and adopted guidelines consistent with Principle 3?

The Mississippi SBE adopted the draft guidelines (**Attachment 10**) at the November 2011 Board Meeting, and the minutes indicating so are **Attachment 11a** (Item 23). On June 16, 2012, SBE approved the Mississippi Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidelines (**Attachment 10a** [teacher] and **10b** [principal]). The presentation to the Board including all handouts and the corresponding minutes indicating approval are included in **Attachment 11h**.

These guidelines are based upon research based best practices that increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement. Further information on the research supporting the 360 degree leadership behavior component of the Principal Evaluation model may be found on the web at <http://www.valed.com/research.html>. Research supporting the Teacher Appraisal Systems is included in **Attachments 11b, 11c, and 11d**.

MDE's development process for the teacher and principal guidelines includes multiple focus group meetings with educators to ensure extensive opportunity for involvement in the development of these guidelines. Multiple focus groups, stakeholders meetings, professional organizations, and councils have been actively engaged in the development and refinement of the guidelines.

Ensuring the Guidelines meet ESEA Requirements for Evaluation Methods and Components

The Mississippi Statewide Teacher Appraisal Rubric (M STAR) includes multiple methods of evaluation in order to evaluate every teacher on all standards and to obtain a comprehensive understanding of each teacher's areas of strength and challenge.

The process, which will be approved by SBE, includes:

- Formal classroom observations
 - Two formal observations are recommended; however, one is required.
 - Formal observations will be announced and scheduled in advance with the teacher.
 - All formal observations will include a post observation conference.
- Pre observation conferences (optional)
 - The pre observation conference provides the opportunity for the teacher to describe the context and plans for the lesson.
 - The pre observation conference is highly recommended with all formal observations, but not required.
- Post observation conferences (required)
 - The post observation conference is required with all formal observations, and should be a face to face conversation.
 - The post observation conference should happen as soon after the observation as possible. This conference provides the opportunity for the evaluator to provide feedback, discuss areas for improvement, and plan short term and/or long term next steps with the teacher.
- Informal "walkthrough" observations
 - A minimum of five informal observations are strongly recommended; however, a minimum of two are required.
 - Beyond requirements of the two minimum observations, the frequency and length of time of the informal observations are at the discretion of the LEA.
 - Informal observations will be used as a means to inform instructional leadership functions of the school administrator by providing quick checks of teacher performance and feedback on that performance.
- A review of artifacts
 - Artifacts are evidence used to assess the standards in domains 1, 2, and 5.
 - Artifacts should include existing materials; teachers should not create artifacts solely for the purpose of the artifact review.
 - Lesson plans associated with the formal observation(s) should be retained as documentation; all other artifact requirements are at the discretion of the LEA.
- Teacher self assessment (optional)
 - A teacher self assessment is strongly recommended, but is at the discretion of the LEA.
 - Teachers are encouraged to complete a self assessment at the beginning of the school year using the M STAR rubric.

- Teachers should use the self assessment to identify their areas of strength and areas of growth.
- Student survey (optional)
 - Student surveys can be used to assess specific standards in domains 2, 3, and 4.

Extensive informational training has been provided statewide on this system; the brochure corresponding with the training is included as **Attachment 11g**. Also included is the M STAR System Process Guide, which includes updated guidelines for the information above (**Attachment 10a**).

Ensuring the Guidelines meet ESEA Requirements for Training and Support

All evaluators will be extensively trained on the use and scoring of M STAR. This training will include a review of the concept of multidimensional performance, facilitated practice using and scoring the rubric, a discussion of common rater errors, an exercise to initially calibrate ratings, and recalibration during the year to ensure inter rater reliability. All classroom teachers will receive M STAR training prior to the formal observation. MDE will provide technical support to local school districts to ensure that they implement the guidelines and requirements in the ESEA flexibility.

Overview of the Teacher Appraisal System

Mississippi is working diligently to improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for all students. Study after study confirms that students who have high quality teachers show significant and lasting achievement gains, while those with less effective teachers continue to fall behind. MDE embraces the research and is dedicated to ensuring that each Mississippi child is taught by an effective teacher.

To accomplish this goal, MDE commissioned the establishment of the Statewide Teacher Evaluation Council (STEC) in June 2010. The purpose of the council was to seek broad stakeholder input and guidance in the development of a rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation system for teachers.

The STEC was comprised of a broad range of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and representatives of teacher unions, community, preparation programs, the superintendents' organization, and the Governor's Office. The group felt that the primary objective should be to improve the practice of teachers and administrators—and ultimately increase student achievement.

The group met on several occasions to develop Guiding Principles that identified the characteristics of an effective educator evaluation system. They determined that the new system should include the following components:

1. Drive growth in student achievement at the classroom, department, school, and district levels.

2. Focus on effective teaching and learning based on national and state standards that target high expectations and meet the diverse needs of every learner.
3. Use multiple rating tools to assess levels of productivity, including 1) measures of teamwork and collaboration; 2) student assessment data including student growth; 3) school and classroom climate; 4) leadership.
4. Include comprehensive training on evaluation system components that provide fair, transparent scoring mechanisms and produce inter-rater reliability.
5. Promote and guide individual and collaborative professional learning and growth based on educator content knowledge and the use of research established best practices and technology.
6. Provide appropriate data to differentiate compensation in a fair and equitable manner.
7. Differentiate the evaluation process based on the educator's expertise and student assessment results.
8. Provide appropriate and timely feedback at multiple levels to detect individual and systemic strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, STEC recommended that the educator evaluation system incorporate multiple rating tools to assess the productivity and effectiveness of educator performance. These rating tools should include the following components:

- Student growth (value added)
- Classroom and/or school observations
- Positive student work habits
- Achievement gap reduction
- Participation in collaborative activities with peers
- Individualized and personalized support for students
- Peer evaluations
- Usage of artifacts as objective evidence of meeting agreed upon goals

The complete STEC Recommendations are included in **Attachment 11b**.

In collaboration with AIR, a draft evaluation instrument was created in spring 2011. The draft included twenty standards within five domains (Planning, Assessment, Instruction, Learning Environment, and Professional Responsibilities). These domains are consistent with national standards and practice and are identified as being of primary importance for Mississippi's teachers. Detailed descriptors for each standard at each performance level were created using numerous resources including the Danielson Framework and National Board and Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards. Four teacher performance levels were determined: *Distinguished*, *Effective*, *Emerging*, and *Unsatisfactory*.

To ensure that the teacher appraisal framework captured and reflected teacher practice, a core group of external expert practitioners reviewed the draft and offered suggestions for improvement. In addition, a larger group of expert practitioners from

Mississippi provided feedback on the Framework. In September 2011, AIR convened a panel of subject matter experts to participate in a validation process for the new performance standards, rubric and evaluation guidelines. The training helped to ensure that the standards and guidelines (1) measured a representative sample of teacher behaviors and (2) used sensible methods for assessing these behaviors. These validation descriptions are included as **Attachment 11c**.

The Framework was posted for public comments, and in November 2011, SBE approved the instrument for use in ten pilot schools. Evaluators and master teachers received training in January 2012 to ensure understanding of the purpose and use of the instrument and to produce inter rater reliability.

Ensuring continuous feedback

MDE elicited feedback from more than 2,000 teachers (including teachers of students with disabilities and ELs), principals, professional association members, college deans and professors, and other stakeholders to ensure that feedback was incorporated in the development and implementation of M STAR. In addition to the creation of STEC, MDE convened 20 focus group meetings, comprised of elementary and secondary teachers and principals) across the state. In addition, MDE hosted two *The Other 69%* meetings (one of which was limited to special education teachers only) to provide opportunities for non tested area teachers to weigh in on the best methods to capture student growth in non tested areas.

To ensure continuous feedback, MDE asked each district to designate an M STAR contact person. MDE hosted statewide focus groups during the pilot year to assess progress, monitor concerns, and gain valuable feedback.

The state presently has a data management system, the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) database, linked to individual schools, districts, and data such as student demographics, attendance, discipline records, personnel demographics, degrees, salaries, and schedules. In addition, the Mississippi Achievement and Accountability Reporting System (MAARS) assessment information component contains links to all documents relating to the Statewide Assessment System, including disaggregated subgroup data and participation statistics. Student information on the MAARS system is also maintained by student identification number, which can then be compiled at the teacher level using the interface with MSIS. Appropriate confidentiality protocols are maintained for all aspects of data.

Measuring Effectiveness

The specific measures to determine teacher effectiveness can be grouped into the following distinct areas with the weighting of each area as indicated:

Measure of Effectiveness	Description	Weighting
Standards Based Teacher Actions	Actions of teachers as identified within the 5 domains and 20 standards previously developed. These actions may be evidenced by observations, artifacts, or other elements subsequently identified.	50%
Student Learning Outcomes	Student growth will be determined based on student growth measures. Individual growth for 4 th through 8 th grade English language arts and mathematics teachers with two consecutive years of statewide assessment data will be measured by student growth percentiles, while other teachers will use Student Learning Objectives for individual growth. All teacher measures will also incorporate the schoolwide growth measure approved by the State Board of Education for use in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.	50%

Teacher effectiveness as determined by student growth will be identified using student growth percentiles for teachers in 4th through 8th grade English language arts and mathematics with two consecutive years of statewide assessment data. Scoring will be based on a graduated scale over the range of student growth percentiles assigned to a specific score on statewide assessments. For teachers in non tested grades and subject areas and for school principals, student growth will be determined by the same schoolwide growth measure approved by the State Board of Education for use in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System. The development of valid and reliable Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for non tested teachers will require additional time, funding and resources. After sufficient time for developing valid, reliable measures, student learning objectives will be incorporated. During the spring of school year 2014 15, MDE piloted SLOs for teachers in non tested areas in ten districts. All non tested area teachers in all schools and districts in Mississippi will implement SLOs during school year 2015 16.

Overview of the Principal Evaluation System

Over the last two decades, Mississippi has invested considerable energy and resources in strengthening school leadership. The purpose of this investment has been to improve schools and ratchet up the achievement of students. The work began in 1994 with a report sponsored by the Department of Education entitled Improving the Preparation of Mississippi School Leaders. Based on the recommendations in that report, considerable work has been undertaken in the legislature and the Department of Education to craft designs and strategies to improve the quality of school leadership throughout the state. In 2008, the Mississippi Blue Ribbon Commission for the Redesign of Administrator Preparation added new insights for continuing the essential work.

Across this time, a consensus position has emerged that improvement in school leadership will occur only if a broad set of strategies are employed. That is, no matter how well done, no single line of work can be successful by itself. Thus, improvement efforts in Mississippi have been broad based and tightly aligned. New standards capturing best practice and research about effective leadership have been developed and have become the focus for all efforts to strengthen leadership throughout the state. Major changes have been made in the ways that school administrators are prepared to lead schools and districts. Certification of new leaders has been strengthened through the adoption of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Assessment. Considerable investments have also been made to improve the quality of the continuing education school leaders receive once they are on the job.

Over the last few years, it has become increasingly clear that additional gains in leadership quality can be garnered if more attention is given to the evaluation of school administrators. Research throughout the nation has shown that evaluation can be an especially powerful leverage point for improving leadership. Research has also revealed that, in general, this reform area has not received nearly the attention as have other design elements, such as preparation programs and continuing education. In addition, studies consistently document that leader evaluation across the nation leaves a good deal to be desired. Evaluations of school leaders are often not focused on the “right things.” That is, they do not underscore the actions of principals that are linked to student academic and social learning. The processes employed in principal evaluations are often less than robust, perfunctory in many cases, and evaluation results often lay fallow. These systems do not direct work to the betterment of those being evaluated nor to the improvement of the schools that they lead. To address the need, MDE is developing new evaluation systems for school leaders, beginning with school based administrators.

Guiding Principles of the Evaluation System

The Mississippi Principal Evaluation System adheres to well established principles of effective personnel assessments. For example, MPES relies on multiple sources of data, not a single measure. It also is tightly linked to the Mississippi Standards for School Leaders. These guiding principles give meaning to the evaluation system. The principles that animate the system can be clustered into three categories, as noted below: foundational principles, process principles, and outcome principles.

Foundational Principles

- focused on strong instructional leadership
- grounded on the Mississippi Standards for School Leaders, which are aligned to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards
(http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Educational_Leadership_Policy_Standards_2008.pdf)

Process Principles

- evidence based
- set benchmarks agreed upon in advance
- transparent
- fostered culture of collaboration between the principal and the supervisor

- valid and reliable
- comprehensive but not overly complex
- both formative and summative
- multiple measures, including student achievement
- viewpoints of multiple constituents
- well defined timelines
- ongoing feedback to the principal
- site specific, connected to the needs of the specific school
- flexible enough to allow for adjustments

Outcome Principles

- promote school improvement
- enhance academic and social learning of students
- motivate principals to improve
- promote targeted professional growth opportunities
- result in meaningful consequences

The four pillars for the process are 1) student achievement/growth, 2) a 360 degree evaluation process, including teachers, peers, supervisors, etc., 3) professional growth, and 4) reaching jointly set goals.

Mississippi piloted the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System (MPES) in 2012 2013 and used the feedback from participating districts in the refinement of the MPES for full implementation in 2013 2014. Training occurred during June and July of 2013. The MPES Advisory Board was established, with membership consisting of educators in Mississippi serving in various administrative roles including that of superintendent, conservator, principal, assistant principal, alternative school principal, Career and Technical Education (CTE) director, and deputy superintendent. A representative from the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) is included on the Advisory Board, as are representatives from the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) at SEDL, an affiliate of the American Institutes for Research, and the Research and Curriculum Unit at Mississippi State University. Meeting at least quarterly, the MPES Advisory Board provides input and feedback regarding all aspects of MPES. Focus groups were held in the spring of 2014 to garner feedback regarding MPES and training for MPES. Focus groups also were held in the summer of 2014 due to an identified need to tailor the MPES to meet the needs of principals of alternative schools. The MPES process was refined due to input and feedback from stakeholders statewide, and training regarding the revised MPES was held in the summer and fall of 2014. Online webinars for all components of the MPES were recorded and made available on the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) website. In the fall of 2014, a survey was conducted by SEDL on behalf of the MDE regarding the 2013 2014 MPES implementation and training; this survey provided MDE educator evaluation staff with valuable information from stakeholders "in the field."

MDE educator evaluation staff will continue to seek feedback/input via focus groups and surveys as well as from training evaluation forms to ensure that LEAs are

receiving the training that they need regarding the MPES. As data are gathered regarding the MPES, MDE educator evaluation staff will address identified issues and assist districts with implementation issues, providing essential training when compliance issues are discovered.

Proposed changes to the MPES include a shift in the timeline (i.e., due dates) of MPES actions and refinements of specific elements within certain components – not to the components themselves or their contributions to the overall MPES score. These proposed timeline changes were based upon feedback received from stakeholders during the pilot year and the first full implementation year as well as research regarding the design of meaningful principal evaluation systems. The desired outcomes include increased student achievement and growth and professional growth of school leaders.

After the pilot 2012–2013 year, it became clear that the dates in the proposed MPES needed to be revised. Administering the multi-rater survey by December 31 annually did not allow time for certified staff and supervisors to observe the depth and breadth of the leadership indicators for those principals who were hired later in the school year but who were required to be evaluated with the MPES according to the MPES business rules. Therefore, the multi-rater survey administration was changed to December–January to provide more time. To include student achievement and growth data from the school year for which the principal was being evaluated, the summative assessment conference had to be moved to a time after student achievement and growth results were received annually in LEAs (August). Therefore, the professional growth goals conference needed to be moved until August as well. The proposed MPES timeline now includes the following:

- Goal setting conference – by August 31st annually
- Formative conference – by January 31st annually (held in December–January)
- Circle Survey – administered in December–January annually (survey closes January 31st)
- Circle Survey conference – held by April 30th annually
- Summative assessment conference – by August 31st annually
- Professional growth goals conference – by August 31st annually

Following this timeline, LEAs are able to use the student achievement and growth data from the year for which the principal is being evaluated. A principal who leaves at the end of a school year still receives a score for that year, as all components are complete that are needed for the MPES score. He/she will receive the score after accountability results arrive in LEAs in August. (It should be noted here that included in the goal setting conference is quantification outlining the levels of performance; therefore, subjectivity is removed during the Summative Assessment Conference.)

In addition to the revised timeline, the goal setting and quantification process has been updated to reflect a more school-wide focus for schools with both tested and non-tested grades. This was necessary for three reasons:

- In the first iteration of the MPES, principals of schools with grades 9-12 focused only on two courses for 50% of their MPES score – 10th grade English for ELA and Algebra I for mathematics.
- Algebra I is typically completed by students in grades 8 – 11, with many 8th and 9th graders completing the course and the accompanying statewide assessment. In the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System, scores from 8th–9th graders are banked until a student’s 10th grade year for accountability purposes. In schools with high performing students year after year, the 25% of the overall MPES score for a principal for mathematics might be constituted from students who completed Algebra I two years before in a different school – having nothing to do with the current principal’s influence that is being measured by the MPES.
- Elementary schools that include grades K-2 receive accountability reports based upon previous students’ performance in statewide assessments in the schools that previous students now attend.

Therefore, the current iteration of the MPES includes an option for schools with both tested and non tested grades to set a second goal that represents ELA and/or mathematics growth in addition to the goal set using student accountability data, and the principal and supervisor agree beforehand whether the principal must meet one or both goals. It is important to note that the second metric chosen to assess the second goal must be a normed benchmark assessment tool or other nationally normed metric (e.g., the ACT or Renaissance suite of assessments).

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Educator Quality will continue to collaborate with other MDE offices and programs to gather feedback regarding the MPES to ensure that the MPES is effectively working towards its stated purpose: to achieve a higher level of academic success for every student through improving school leadership. The MPES appears as a state requirement for accreditation purposes in the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards 2014*, and educator evaluation information is required to be reported for other initiatives, such as the Teacher Incentive Fund federal grant. In addition to implementation monitored by the Office of Educator Quality, districts must demonstrate compliance with the MPES when monitored by the MDE Office of Federal Programs. The Office of Educator Quality works closely with the Office of Compulsory School Attendance to assist alternative school principals with the implementation of the MPES to improve student outcomes for the high risk population they serve. The MDE is committed to work collaboratively across all offices to improve student outcomes through building leadership capacity and increasing educator effectiveness throughout the state of Mississippi.

In addition to offices within the MDE, the Office of Educator Quality works with educational research entities, such as the Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU) at Mississippi State University as well as Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) at SEDL and the Regional Educational Laboratory – Southeast (REL SE), to conduct focus groups and surveys to garner stakeholder feedback regarding the MPES and will continue to seek stakeholder input/feedback from school administrators and their supervisors throughout Mississippi. The MDE will continue to meet with the MPES Advisory Board quarterly to request feedback regarding training and

implementation of the MPES as well. The MDE also will continue to contract with the RCU to conduct research regarding the MPES, with the RCU providing monthly reports to the MDE regarding MPES related issues. A validation plan will be developed for the MPES in the fall of 2015, and as research data become available, these data will be shared with stakeholders throughout MS to inform the MPES review process.

3.A.ii For any teacher and principal evaluation and support systems for which the SEA has developed and adopted guidelines, consistent with Principle 3, will promote systems that:

a. Will be used for continual improvement of instruction?

Mississippi is designing the systems to be used for continual improvement of instruction. The professional development component will link directly to the teacher and principal evaluation system with an eye to building educator capacity. The professional development delivered through collaborative teams will be created by teachers and principals, thereby ensuring that training is ongoing, school based, and job embedded. Examples of the detailed supports and systems to be provided to ensure that professional development is targeted and meaningful include the reports for principals found in Attachment 11. Professional growth plans will utilize resources such as those available through partnerships to assist in supporting teachers who are working with students with disabilities and English Learners. The process helps to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation system and a knowledgeable staff about using data and best practices to inform and differentiate instruction across grades, subject areas, and schools to improve student growth.

b. Meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels?

Both the teacher and principal evaluation systems utilize four performance levels, as supported by multiple research based practices: Distinguished, Effective, Emerging, and Unsatisfactory.

c. Use multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys)?

Both systems include multiple measures of performance. The multiple measures for both teacher and principal evaluations occur annually, with steps taking place throughout the year. For example, the teacher evaluation process includes at least one formal observation, multiple walk through observations throughout the year, a summative formal observation at the end of the year, and a summative rating from statewide assessments at the end of the year.

MDE will use a variety of measures to ensure goal validity. Further, as noted in item (a) above, professional growth for teachers is aligned to prescribed professional development for each teacher indicator, as principal growth is aligned to ISLLC Standards. Teachers with “emerging” ratings will receive professional development

targeted to the standard or domain of weakness. Ultimately, validity of the measure lies with the administrator conducting the educator's review, as governed by the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics ([http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/mississippi board of education/mississippi educator code of ethics and standards of conduct](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/mississippi-board-of-education/mississippi-educator-code-of-ethics-and-standards-of-conduct)), which encompasses all areas of professionalism, including integrity, collegiality, and confidentiality. Part of this code of professionalism is designing appropriate staff development tied to best practice, research, and student assessment.

The teacher and principal student growth performance measures are being integrated into the existing state accountability system. The current Mississippi Accountability system uses standardized tests to measure student achievement. Students taking these tests will be linked to the teacher or teachers who taught the student using information in the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS), which maintains individual student data, including course schedules. These tests and teacher linkages will be the basis for calculating student growth percentiles for students in these tested subjects. Data are then processed using algorithms developed by Dr. Damian Betebenner (Center for Assessment) and the Colorado Department of Education. The Student Growth Percentile algorithms produce a Student Growth Percentile (SGP) number for each student. Data for all students will be used to develop these SGP numbers.

Using the business rules that determine which students count for accountability purposes (i.e., full academic year, school of record for mobile students), the individual SGP numbers will be aggregated at the teacher and school level and used as the student growth performance measure in the evaluation system. The current assessments included in the state accountability system are Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 for grades 3-8 in reading/language arts and mathematics; science for grades 5 and 8; and subject area tests for algebra, biology, English, and US History.

As for a statewide approach for measuring student growth for grades and subjects in which assessments are not required under ESEA, MDE implemented pilot sites to include a student learning objective to partner with schoolwide growth percentiles. After gathering input from stakeholders, MDE has determined that Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) will be its approach to measuring teacher level student growth in non-tested grades and subjects. It was also determined that 50% of the teacher's evaluation will be based on student growth. For teachers in non-tested grades and subjects, SLOs will be weighted 30% of the evaluation, and schoolwide student growth as measured by state assessments will represent the remaining 20%; tested grade teachers will be weighted 30% teacher level student growth and 20% schoolwide growth, based on statewide assessments. The split in student growth for non-tested teachers will not take place until after the state can fully vet and validate student learning objectives for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects.

To ensure effective implementation, MDE will be responsible for developing the SLO framework and providing training and technical support. School districts will participate by developing the process for setting and assessing SLOs; setting the timelines; ensuring SLOs are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely, as

well as aligned with state standards; and selecting a variety of assessments that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms. Evaluators and teachers must then collaborate on selection of SLOs based on needs assessment; examine baseline data to set SLO targets at beginning of the year; determine the appropriate growth assessment (e.g., performance based, rubric based, teacher made, project/portfolio based); monitor progress and adjust instruction accordingly; and calculate growth and determine scores. Finally, MDE will review data and make necessary changes to ensure SLOs are valid and reliable measures to determine student growth in non tested subjects and grades.

d. Evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis?

The teacher evaluation system includes both formal and informal observations to occur throughout the school year on a regular basis. The principal evaluation system, as noted on pages 9-10 of **Attachment 10b**, includes activities throughout the school year.

e. Provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development

Both systems require clear, timely, useful feedback to drive professional development, as noted in Section 3.A.1. Please note that the timelines noted on page 116 for the principal self assessment and summative evaluations are being necessarily adjusted, as a final summative assessment cannot take place until student assessment results are available to districts. Part of the pilot process included working within school employment procedures act conflicts to ensure a timely process is in place.

f. Will be used to inform personnel decisions?

While the intent of each system is to provide feedback for professional growth, information for personnel decisions will also be a byproduct of the systems. Through the process, principals will identify areas of strengths, as well as areas of needed professional development, for each teacher. These determinations could not only impact a teacher's professional development to support the improvement plan, but also for placement in a given school, grade, or subject area. Ultimately, every school district in the state will implement the Mississippi Educator Evaluation System to inform placement, tenure, and contract renewal beginning with placements in the 2017-18 school year, using 2016-17 data.

3.B ENSURE LEAS IMPLEMENT TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

3.B Provide the SEA's process for ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and principals, including mechanisms to review, revise, and improve, high-quality teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA's adopted guidelines.

Mississippi's work with teachers and administrators to implement a comprehensive educator evaluation system began in 2010. MDE recognized early on that the success of M STAR hinged on two factors—*stakeholder input* and *buy in*, and we have remained steadfast in our determination to ensure that the voices of Mississippi educators are heard on this important initiative.

We have sought the advice, guidance, and input from more than 2,000 teachers, principals, and other stakeholders at the following events:

- 2010–2012 Statewide Teacher Evaluation Council meetings (convened four times),
- 2011–2012 Teacher of the Year Symposiums,
- 2011–2012 TIF district meetings,
- 2011–2012 TIF Master Teacher training sessions,
- 2011–2012 MS Association of School Superintendents Annual Conferences,
- 2011–2012 MS Association of Educators Conferences ,
- 2012 MS Association of School Administrators Annual Conference,
- 2012 MS Professional Educators Best Practices Symposium, and
- 2011–2012 Regional Principal Meetings.

In addition, from January to May, 2012, MDE held twenty focus group sessions statewide to provide Mississippi's teachers and administrators the opportunity to review and comment on the new system.

Summer 2012: Mississippi identified a cohort of trainers to attend an intense one week M STAR training session. Attendees participated in three days of classroom instruction and two days observing and evaluating teachers in local schools to ensure inter rater reliability. Trainers successfully completed training and obtained a training credential before providing training services to districts.

2012–2013: Through Mississippi's five regional service agencies, trainers from the cohort are training district administrators on M STAR and providing technical assistance to ensure inter rater reliability.

2013 – 2014: All districts/schools were required to field test M STAR.

MDE has worked since the Spring of 2012 to garner input on the Mississippi Principal Evaluation model. Handouts that have been shared through focus groups,

including the draft indicators and a sample principal report, are included in **Attachment 11f**.

MDE has a process for reviewing and approving an LEA's teacher and principal evaluation and support systems to ensure that they are consistent with the state's guidelines.

To ensure consistent statewide implementation, MDE established procedures to communicate and deliver training to teachers and administrators on the educator evaluation systems. The process included focus group sessions held across the state to gather additional input from teachers and principals about the systems. Feedback has been and will continue to be used to ensure consistency and alignment with teacher and administrator standards. The training began during the summer of 2012, and topics included evaluation protocols, expectations, and implementation guidelines to establish inter rater reliability and consistency. Further, training focused on the use of results to support professional growth.

MDE has a process for ensuring that an LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems with the involvement of teachers and principals.

The state received a TIF grant to assist schools with improving the outcomes of students and improving the instructional practices of teachers. The grant schools participated in a process that allowed each teacher to provide input. Teacher feedback encompassed implementing the evaluation system, student growth measures, professional development, and performance based compensation.

The state began training on the system in January 2012 for evaluators and representative teachers from the pilot sites. Additionally, focus groups of teachers from around the state received informational overviews of the process. Specific technical training took place during the summer 2012. All LEAs were required to pilot the MSTAR system at the same time during school year 2013 2014.

The state began redesigning the Principal Evaluation System in January 2012 to be used in all LEAs beginning in 2013 2014. The developmental stage, through the spring of 2012, included extensive work with practitioner focus groups and committees in the process adoption. Training on the system took place during the summer of 2012 and piloting during the 2012 2013 school year. Additional focus groups met in the Spring and Summer of 2013 to review the process and make further recommendations for statewide use. Full implementation on the system took place in 2013 2014. Throughout the process, practitioner feedback was utilized to refine the standards and procedures.

MDE will ensure that all measures used in an LEA's evaluation and support systems are valid, meaningful measures clearly related to increasing student academic achievement and school performance and implemented in a consistent and high-quality manner across schools

within an LEA (i.e., process for ensuring inter-rater reliability).

The teacher appraisal system was piloted in ten TIF grant schools and thirteen SIG grant schools implementing transformational models (which include eight high schools) across the state. During this time period, the schools participated in a validation process to ensure inter rater reliability and clarity of the process. The implementation process was monitored by appraisal coaches and external evaluators to ensure consistency and quality.

Prior to use in the pilot districts, a team of Mississippi teachers participated in the validation process for the observation rubric. **Attachment 11c** includes the validation plan conducted through AIR. The principal evaluation system will also go through a similar validation process.

Finalizing the Student Growth Model

Mississippi began finalization of its student growth model in June 2012 for use in pilot schools. Dr. Damian Betebenner of the National Center for the Improvement of Education Assessment processes the data and the SBE determines the final weighting of the growth factor in measuring teacher effectiveness. The pilot schools will implement the Student Growth Model after the 2012-2013 school year. The weighting for teachers of tested subjects is 50% M STAR data, 30% teacher level student growth, and 20% schoolwide student growth. The weighting for non tested subject teachers is 50% M STAR data, 30% Student Learning Objectives, and 20% school wide student growth.

Every LEA and school in the state of Mississippi will implement the Statewide Mississippi Educator Evaluation System, including teacher and principal components. Thus, Mississippi can ensure that all LEAs have educator evaluations and support systems that include as a significant factor data on student growth for all students, consistent with the definition for student growth in ESEA Flexibility. In 2013-2014, Mississippi field tested M STAR in all districts/schools. Districts will be required to submit observation findings to MDE. The state's new data system will match growth data to observation findings to determine levels of teacher effectiveness.

Using Growth Percentiles to Measure Student Level Growth

*The Process for Determining Student Level Growth
MDE will:*

- Track overall student achievement.
- Measure, from one year to the next, student progress in the context of the student's *academic peers*.
- Use multiple years of a student's test scores to indicate progress from year to year and to estimate the student's expected future academic performance.
- Share the data with Mississippi educators.

How Teachers Will Use the Growth Model Data

1. Analyzing student data will help teachers plan lessons to ensure that the needs of their students will be met.
2. Analyzing student data will encourage teachers to reflect on the following questions:
 - Did a student make a year's worth of progress in a year?
 - Is the student growing appropriately to meet state standards?
 - Is the student growing as much in reading as math?
 - Did the student grow as much this year as last year?
3. Looking at year to year results in math and reading will allow teacher to spot trends in a student's learning and react appropriately.
4. Teachers will be able to develop strategies to meet specific student needs.
Example: A student's scores could be low, but the student grew significantly in the past. With that knowledge, the teacher would incorporate strategies for the student that would be different than those the teacher would use on a student that had low, flat scores

How Principals Will Use the Growth Model:

1. Analyzing the data will help principals identify teachers' areas of challenge which will support their efforts to provide target professional development to improve teacher performance.
2. Sharing the data will encourage open conversations between teachers and principals.

How Parents, Schools and Policymakers Will Use the Growth Model:

1. Stakeholders can focus on quality schools that are moving students forward.
2. Stakeholders can identify schools that may need intervention if students are not growing.

MDE is developing a process for ensuring that teachers working with special populations of students, such as students with disabilities and English Learners, are included in the teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.

The state convened a committee of stakeholders representing specific non tested areas to share their input regarding possible measures to use. In the TIF pilot sites, the non tested content teachers decided to work in partnership with tested area teachers.

Ensuring system includes teachers of English learners and students with disabilities

In 2011 12, all TIF teachers were evaluated using M STAR. In 2013 2014, M STAR was field tested in all MS school districts/schools and all teachers were evaluated by this process.

Development and Implementation Timeline

The full timeline for the implementation of the Teacher Appraisal System is in **Attachment 11e.**

Teacher Appraisal System Timeline:

Intensive training for pilot site evaluators and teachers on the use/scoring of the rubric	January August 2012
Training for evaluators	July August 2012
Training for teachers via online videos, podcasts, and district level training	September 2012 August 2013
Field Test Statewide (M STAR and Student Growth only)	September 2013 June 2014
Development and Initial Training on SLOs	September 2013 July 2014
Full Implementation (M STAR and Student Growth only)	August 2014 (SY 14 15)
Training and Field Test of SLOs and PGGs	August 2014 July 2015
Add SLOs to Statewide Appraisal System	August 2015 (SY 15 16)

Principal Evaluation System Timeline:

Review of Draft System	February 2012
Focus Group Review and Feedback	May 14, 15, 21, & 22, 2012
Presentation to SBE	May 16, 2012
Initial Refinement of System	May June 2012
Overview for Potential Pilot Sites	June 18, 2012
Presentation for MASS (Superintendents Association)	July 9, 2012
Training for Pilot Sites	July 17 18 2012
Implementation in Pilots	2012 2013 School Year
Refinement of System	May June 2013
Training for Full Implementation	June July 2013
Full Implementation	Fall 2013

Guidance and other technical assistance

The state will provide training for representatives from each LEA using a train the trainer model. Each team of representatives will be responsible for training at the district and school level.

Currently, the teacher appraisal system is being piloted in ten schools across the state. The first pilot will allow the state to gather sufficient data to inform any revisions before going statewide. The second pilot will include all LEAs in the state and will provide opportunities for broader input.

The principal evaluation system was implemented on an accelerated timeline, with full implementation in the 2013 14 school year. Additionally, the resultant training encompassed a smaller population of educators. While receiving the TIF grant allowed the work on the teacher system to begin earlier, the feedback received through several stakeholder sessions highlighted the value of a school leader emulating the evaluation process. While resources were limited, MDE was so committed to demonstrating the value of stakeholder feedback that former State Superintendent Dr. Tom Burnham prioritized available funds to ensure the principal system would be in place and positively impact the teacher appraisal process.

Full Implementation of the Principal Evaluation System in Fall 2013

MDE continually refined the implementation of the project to ensure Fall 2013 full implementation. Over 50 districts volunteered to pilot the program in 2012-2013 school year, in addition to the SIG grant schools. All districts were invited to participate in the Overview for Potential Pilot Sites presentation on June 18, 2012. The 2012-13 pilot included over 200 schools in 35 districts across the state. The principal evaluation system was fully implemented in the 2013-14 school year.