



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

February 25, 2014

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I am writing to request a one-year extension of Mississippi's ESEA flexibility, so that Mississippi can continue to implement ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014-2015 school year.

Mississippi seeks to extend ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014-2015 school year because Mississippi's schools have greatly benefitted under the flexibility. First, schools have additional time beyond the NCLB 2014 mandate to ensure that all students and student subgroups increase outcomes and reach proficiency. Further, the differentiated accountability model, in contrast to the ESEA Adequate Yearly Progress measure, more clearly and accurately recognizes school success.

Extension of Mississippi's ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014-2015 school year is also in the public interest because Mississippi has been enabled to design a more responsive, less fragmented approach to school accountability.

As part of the extension process, Mississippi proposes changes to its currently approved ESEA flexibility request. Attached please find the following documents:

- (1) a completed amendment request template, reflecting the necessary consultation of stakeholders and describing any substantive amendments the State is making to its approved request, including those required to address ESEA flexibility Part B monitoring "next steps," conditions on the State's request, high-risk status, or any optional substantive amendments proposed;
- (2) a redlined version of Mississippi's currently approved ESEA flexibility request reflecting all proposed changes; and
- (3) any additional evidence or documentation required to support the extension request.

I understand that these documents will be reviewed to ensure that they comply with the principles and timelines of ESEA flexibility.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carey M. Wright".

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education



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February 25, 2014

Deborah DeLisle
Assistant Secretary of Education
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Assistant Secretary:

I am writing on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to request approval to amend the State's approved ESEA flexibility request. The relevant information, outlined in the *ESEA Flexibility Amendment Submission Process* document, is provided in the table below.

Flexibility Element(s) Affected by the Amendment	Brief Description of Element as Originally Approved	Brief Description of Requested Amendment	Rationale	Process for Consulting with Stakeholders, Summary of Comments, and Changes Made as a Result
2.A—State-Developed Recognition, Accountability, and Support System	Originally, MDE proposed a Differentiated Accountability (DA) model using a Quality of Distribution Index (QDI) as a performance measure for success.	In 2013, the Mississippi legislature passed a state law requiring a single accountability system and prohibited the use of QDI as a measure. The amendment outlines the legislated system and adjusts language to mirror the intent of state statute and Board policy.	The new system reduces the duplication of some federal labels, providing a single statewide accountability system for all schools, regardless of federal funding participation. The new system also meets the requirements of state law, which the currently approved DA model does not, due to the use of QDI measures.	<p>MDE engaged stakeholders through regional meetings, focus groups, an extensive series of webinars, an accountability task force and technical advisory committee, and the Mississippi Administrative Procedures Act to garner public input. MDE utilized methods including email to all LEAs inviting comment and posting a public notice on the website.</p> <p>Comments were received in support of the amendment, specifically supporting the need to create a single accountability system.</p> <p>Attached are LEA comments submitted in response to the invitation to comment.</p>

Flexibility Element(s) Affected by the Amendment	Brief Description of Element as Originally Approved	Brief Description of Requested Amendment	Rationale	Process for Consulting with Stakeholders, Summary of Comments, and Changes Made as a Result
2.B Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives	AMO tables with objectives through 2017	Adjusted AMO tables to include the end goal of 100% proficiency by 2023	Mississippi's original AMO tables stopped at 2017, and implied that Mississippi does not hold the same expectations for all students.	See above.
2.C Reward Schools	Reward Schools not aligned to letter grades	Reward schools are aligned to letter grades.	Mississippi's amendment makes adjustments to mirror the intent of state statute and Board policy.	See above.
2.D Priority Schools	Priority Schools not aligned to letter grades	Priority schools are aligned to letter grades.	Mississippi's amendment makes adjustments to mirror the intent of state statute and Board policy.	See above.
2.E Focus Schools	Focus Schools not aligned to letter grades	Focus schools are aligned to letter grades.	Mississippi's amendment makes adjustments to mirror the intent of state statute and Board policy.	See above.
2.F Provide Incentives and Support for Other Title I Schools	Other Schools not aligned to letter grades	Other schools are aligned to letter grades.	Mississippi's amendment makes adjustments to mirror the intent of state statute and Board policy.	See above.

Attached to this letter is a redlined version of the pages from our approved ESEA flexibility request that would be impacted with strikeouts and additions to demonstrate how the request would change with approval of the proposed amendment. Please contact Dr. Kim Benton, State ESEA Contact, at kbenton@mde.k12.ms.us or by phone at 601/359-3077 if you have any questions regarding this proposed amendment. MDE acknowledges that the U.S. Department of Education may request supplementary information to inform consideration of this request. Thank you for your prompt and careful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education