

HIGHLIGHTS OF LOUISIANA’S ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Louisiana adopted rigorous English language arts and math standards now in place in 45 other states and the District of Columbia, with a strong transition plan that includes developing implementation checklists for districts, coordinating work around standards implementation with work on teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, and working with the Gates Foundation on preparing materials aligned with the new standards. Louisiana will use the results of an alignment study comparing their current standards to the new standards to target areas of need. The state is establishing working groups to address the needs of English Learners and students with disabilities and teams to work with institutions of higher education to ensure teacher preparation programs are aligned with the new standards.

IMPROVED STATE AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL STUDENTS

A-F Grading System based on High Expectations and Multiple Measures: Louisiana gives each school a grade (A-F) based on an index that includes student achievement, graduation rate, and ACT scores. Louisiana will also report on a number of other college-readiness measures, including AP/IB participation and performance, dual enrollment, industry certifications, EXPLORE/PLAN performance, and educator effectiveness. Louisiana will focus on the growth of students who score below proficient by giving bonus points in a school’s grade when these students exceed expected growth.

Ambitious Performance Targets: Louisiana is maintaining the expectation of 100% proficiency by 2014, but also setting targets for improvement based on its index and the growth of non-proficient students.

Aggressive Plan for Turning Around the Lowest-Performing Schools: Louisiana will identify the lowest-performing schools in the State as “Priority schools” and ensure that districts implement meaningful interventions in these schools. Louisiana is identifying as Priority schools any school that has been reassigned to the SEA-operated Recovery School District (RSD) because of consistent low performance (4 consecutive years of F performance). The RSD provides authority to address all aspects of a school’s performance, including building a high quality instructional team, modifying the instructional program, and adjusting the use of time. Schools in the RSD are operated directly by the RSD, as charter schools, as university partnerships, or through management agreements with service providers. The State has also recently passed a parent trigger provision that allows a majority of parents whose children attend persistently failing schools to transfer their school to the RSD.

Renewed Focus on Closing Achievement Gaps: Louisiana will identify additional schools with the greatest challenges as “Focus schools” and demand interventions to improve student performance. Louisiana identifies as Focus Schools any F school not in the RSD and high schools with a graduation rate less than 60%. The subgroups in these schools are among the lowest performing in the State. Focus schools will be required to examine data and complete a needs assessment, with assistance from the State to identify appropriate interventions. In addition, any

school in the state not meeting its performance targets for a particular group of students will not receive incentive funding for growth in performance.

Building Capacity for School Improvement: Louisiana is building Network Teams to support districts in analyzing data, setting goals, and targeting supports to low-performing schools and students with a focus on closing achievement gaps. The Network Teams, staffed by education experts, will work collaboratively with districts and schools to:

- (a) Set goals using student performance data summarized for all students and broken out into specific subgroup performance – particularly those subgroups for which significant achievement gaps exist;
- (b) Organize and target financial and human resources to more effectively support student growth for students performing below proficiency and students included in low-performing subgroups;
- (c) Support cross-district planning; and
- (d) Strategically support capacity-building in schools and classrooms focused on implementing new high standards, educator evaluation systems, and addressing school/district performance gaps.

Transparently Reporting on Students' Progress: Louisiana will continue to report all current data by subgroups, including AYP, on report cards and school performance reports, as well as letter grades, index scores, achievement of growth targets, college- and career-readiness measures (AP/IB participation and performance, dual enrollment, industry certifications, EXPLORE, PLAN), and educator effectiveness.

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

Louisiana has developed guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that will be in place for all educators in the 2012-13 school year. Louisiana piloted the system in the 2011-12 school year, and is making improvements based on the results of the pilot. The system incorporates multiple measures for evaluating teachers and principals including classroom observations, teaching artifacts, State-certified common assessments, expanded State benchmark assessments aligned to college- and career-ready standards, and periodic assessments and/or goal-setting. Evaluation results will be used to inform professional development, certification decisions, teacher placement into high-needs schools, and teacher preparation programs.