



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUL 31 2014

The Honorable John D. Barge  
State School Superintendent  
Georgia Department of Education  
205 Jesse Hill Junior Drive, SE  
Atlanta, GA 30034

Dear Superintendent Barge:

This letter is in response to Georgia's March 3, 2014 request for a one-year extension of flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA flexibility), so that Georgia may continue to implement ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year.

Our team has reviewed Georgia's request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend Georgia's ESEA flexibility request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. My decision to extend Georgia's ESEA flexibility request is based on my determination that ESEA flexibility has been effective in enabling Georgia to carry out important reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest. I have also determined that Georgia's monitoring next steps have been adequately addressed. This letter also provides my approval of Georgia's proposed amendments to Principles 1 and 2 of its ESEA flexibility request, including amendments to Georgia's exit criteria for priority and focus schools. However, when submitting a request for renewal of ESEA flexibility in the Spring of 2015, Georgia must provide evidence that the revised exit criteria are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that these schools have made significant progress in improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps. A summary of Georgia's approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and Georgia's amended request will be posted on the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) website.

After receiving approval to implement ESEA flexibility, Georgia requested additional waivers of the following requirements: (1) ESEA sections 1116(a)(1)(A)-(B) and 1116(c)(1)(A) and the corresponding regulatory provisions that require each local educational agency (LEA) and the State educational agency (SEA) to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all schools and LEAs, respectively; and (2) ESEA sections 1113(a)(3)-(4) and 1113(c)(1) and the corresponding regulatory provisions 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. I granted these waivers for a two-year period on June 15, 2012.

Pursuant to section 9401(d)(2), I am extending the waivers of these requirements for one additional year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year, because they have been effective in helping Georgia carry out, through ESEA flexibility, reforms to improve student achievement and they are in the public interest. In implementing these waivers, Georgia must continue to comply with the assurances contained in my letter of June 15, 2012.

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<http://www.ed.gov/>

Georgia has submitted high-quality plans to meet certain next steps identified during Part B monitoring as part of satisfying the requirement that it resolved these next steps. Georgia's progress in implementing its high-quality plans during the 2014–2015 school year, as well as evidence demonstrating that Georgia's amended exit criteria for priority and focus schools are rigorous, will inform ED's decision regarding renewal of Georgia's ESEA flexibility after the 2014–2015 school year. Additionally, if Georgia remains on track to fully implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that meet all the requirements of Principle 3 in the 2014–2015 school year, Georgia will be eligible for consideration for a longer renewal of ESEA flexibility in the Spring of 2015.

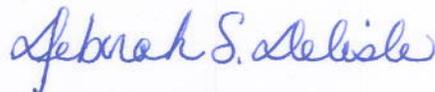
Georgia continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its districts are in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in their implementation of ESEA flexibility. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

I am confident that Georgia will continue to implement the reforms described in its approved ESEA flexibility request and advance its efforts to hold schools and school districts accountable for the achievement of all students.

If you need any additional assistance to implement your ESEA flexibility request, please do not hesitate to contact Jessica Skrebes at: [jessica.skrebes@ed.gov](mailto:jessica.skrebes@ed.gov) or Eric Larson at: [eric.d.larson@ed.gov](mailto:eric.d.larson@ed.gov).

Thank you for your commitment and continued focus on enhancing education for all of Georgia's students.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle  
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Martha Reichrath, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Accountability

## **Amendments to Georgia's Approved ESEA Flexibility Request**

The following is a summary of amendments to Georgia's approved ESEA flexibility request. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) approves the following amendments because Georgia's ESEA flexibility request, as amended, continues to be aligned with the principles of ESEA flexibility. Please refer to ED's website for Georgia's approved ESEA flexibility request ([www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)).

- **Transition to College- and Career-Ready Standards**

Revision: Describes the rolling implementation of the high school mathematics Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Georgia implemented mathematics CCGPS in grades K-9 in 2012–2013 and is adding these standards in one additional grade level each year. This phased approach allows students who began high school mathematics coursework under the prior Georgia Performance Standards to complete this sequence.

- **Develop and Implement a State-Based System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support (2.A)**

Revision: Provides additional guidance and best practices regarding the Flexible Learning Program that all local educational agencies (LEAs) with priority and focus schools are required to implement.

Revision: Reduces the required set-aside for professional development in priority schools from 10 percent of a school's Title I allocation to 3-5 percent.

- **Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) (Element 2.B)**

Revision: Removes AMOs for Mathematics I and Mathematics II and adds AMOs for Coordinate Algebra. Sets the first year of AMOs for Coordinate Algebra at the average score for the State and requires schools to cut the gap in half between this point and 100 by the 2016–2017 school year.

- **Reward Schools (Element 2.C)**

Revision: Lowers the minimum n-size for calculations in the identification of reward schools from 30 to 15 and revises the criteria to include full academic year (FAY) status.

- **Priority Schools (Element 2.D)**

Revision: Lowers the minimum n-size for calculations in the identification of priority schools from 30 to 15 and revises the criteria to include FAY status.

Revision: Changes the priority schools exit criteria. In addition to other requirements, schools must reduce the percentage of non-proficient students by 18 percent over three years.

- **Focus Schools (Element 2.E)**

Revision: Changes the focus schools exit criteria. In addition to other requirements, schools must reduce the percentage of non-proficient students in the subgroup(s) resulting in focus school identification by 18 percent over three years.

- **Provide Incentives and Supports for Other Title I Schools (Element 2.F)**

Revision: Changes the methodology for identifying alert schools to include the lowest sixth to ninth percent of schools based on achievement. Lowers the minimum n-size for calculations in the identification of alert schools from 30 to 15 and revises the criteria to include FAY status.

- **Build SEA, LEA, and School Capacity to Improve Student Learning (Element 2.G)**

Revision: Reduces the district set-aside for professional learning from 10 percent to 5 percent.