



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

AUG 2 1 2015

Mr. Don Soltman
President
Idaho State Board of Education
650 West State Street, Suite 307
Boise, ID 83720

The Honorable Sherri Ybarra
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Idaho State Department of Education
650 West State Street
Boise, ID 83720

Dear President Soltman and Superintendent Ybarra:

I am writing in response to Idaho's request for renewal of flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA flexibility), so that Idaho may continue to implement ESEA flexibility.

Our team, including my staff and other senior leaders at the U.S. Department of Education (ED), reviewed Idaho's request dated July 31, 2015. Pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to renew approval of Idaho's ESEA flexibility request through the end of the 2015–2016 school year, as requested by the Idaho State Department of Education.

My decision to renew approval of Idaho's ESEA flexibility request is based on my determination that ESEA flexibility has been effective in enabling Idaho to carry out important reforms to improve student achievement and that this renewal is in the public interest. With this renewal, Idaho will be able to continue implementing its plan to promote innovative, locally tailored strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. Idaho's approved request will be posted on ED's website.

This letter also provides my approval of Idaho's amendments to its ESEA flexibility request, except for one pending amendment. A summary of Idaho's pending amendment and other significant amendments is enclosed with this letter.

I have also determined that Idaho's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems meet the requirements for Principle 3 as articulated in ED's June 7, 2012 document titled, *ESEA Flexibility*.

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

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

This renewal is subject to Idaho’s commitment to:

- Demonstrate, during ED’s monitoring and follow-up of ESEA flexibility implementation, that it meaningfully collaborates with stakeholders on the implementation of Idaho’s ESEA flexibility, including with community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing English learners, and institutions of higher education.
- Demonstrate, by October 31, 2015, that Idaho identifies both highest-performing and high-progress Reward schools in accordance with all ESEA flexibility requirements.
- Demonstrate, during ED’s monitoring and follow-up of ESEA flexibility implementation, that Idaho is implementing the plan set forth in its ESEA flexibility request, including timeline and milestones, that will lead to: (1) inclusion of student growth in the teacher and principal evaluation and support systems based on State assessments administered in the 2016–2017 school year and each year thereafter; and (2) the use of summative ratings, based on 2016–2017 school year data and data from each year thereafter, to inform personnel decisions.

Idaho continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its local educational agencies (LEAs) 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 Idaho will continue to implement the reforms described in its approved ESEA flexibility request and advance its efforts to hold schools and LEAs 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 Karen Dorsey Hargrove or Laura Thomas of my staff at: OSS.Idaho@ed.gov.

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

Sincerely,

/s/

Ann Whalen
Delegated the authority to perform the functions
and duties of Assistant Secretary for Elementary
and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: Marcia Beckman, Associate Deputy Superintendent, Federal Programs

Pending Amendment to Idaho's ESEA Flexibility Request

As outlined in its ESEA flexibility request, Idaho intends to submit an amendment no later than March 31, 2016, outlining its new system of differentiated recognition, accountability and support for local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools. Idaho plans to use this new system to generate school ratings for the 2016–2017 school year for all LEAs in the State and for all Title I schools in these LEAs.

Approved Amendments to Idaho's ESEA Flexibility Request

The following is a summary of significant amendments that Idaho included as part of its request for renewal of ESEA flexibility. ED approved these amendments because Idaho's ESEA flexibility request, as amended, continues to be aligned with the principles of ESEA flexibility. Please refer to ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/map/id.html>) for Idaho's complete ESEA flexibility request.

- **State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support (Principle 2)**

Revision: Idaho will not assign schools new ratings under the State system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support, its five-star system, based on assessments administered in the 2014–2015 school year. Idaho will resume assigning ratings based on assessments administered in the 2015–2016 school year using its new differentiated recognition, accountability and support system (see above “Pending Amendment”).

Revision: Idaho will temporarily use the ESEA flexibility definitions to identify Reward, Priority, Focus, and Other Title I schools that require interventions and supports based on assessments administered in the 2014–2015 school year, for implementation in the 2016-2017 school year.