



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

MAR 12 2014

The Honorable Patricia I. Wright
 Superintendent of Public Instruction
 Virginia Department of Education
 P.O. Box 2120
 Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Superintendent Wright:

On September 30, 2013, a team from the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted Part B monitoring of the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE's) implementation of its approved Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) flexibility request. Part B monitoring aims to continue the collaborative relationship that began during the request approval process, provide ED with a deeper understanding of each State educational agency's (SEA's) goals and approaches to implementing ESEA flexibility, and ensure that the SEA has the critical elements of ESEA flexibility in place to continue implementation of its plan.

The review focused on the following ESEA flexibility elements:

- SEA Systems and Processes, including Monitoring, Technical Assistance, Data Collection and Use, and Family & Community Engagement and Outreach
- Transitioning to and Implementing College- and Career-Ready Standards
- Adopting English Language Proficiency Standards
- Developing and Administering High-Quality Assessments
- Developing and Administering Alternate Assessments
- Developing and Administering English Language Proficiency Assessments
- Annually Reporting College-Going and College-Credit Accumulation Rates
- Developing and Implementing a State-Based System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support
- Reward, Priority, Focus, and Other Title I Schools
- State and Local Report Cards, and
- Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support Systems

Enclosed is a summary report based on this review. The report includes highlights of VDOE's implementation of ESEA flexibility and, for each indicator, a snapshot of VDOE's progress in implementing ESEA flexibility. If appropriate, the report also includes "next steps" that were discussed with the SEA during an exit conference conducted on November 13, 2013, to ensure that VDOE implements flexibility consistent with its approved request and the timelines and principles of ESEA flexibility. VDOE should respond to the "next steps" through the ESEA flexibility extension process. This report will be posted on the ESEA flexibility website. Additionally, in the coming months ED will

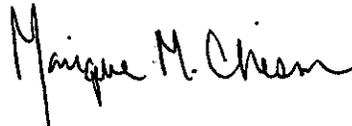
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issue a comprehensive summary of each SEA's implementation of ESEA flexibility that includes information gathered through the Part B monitoring process and provides more detail about the innovative practices and common challenges that States are facing as they engage in the effective implementation of ESEA flexibility.

I want to thank you and your staff for the hard work you have undertaken to implement ESEA flexibility. If you have any questions or there are ways that ED staff can provide you additional support as you move forward in implementing your ESEA flexibility request, please feel free to reach out to your SEA's ESEA flexibility contact.

I look forward to continuing our work with you as you implement your ESEA flexibility request. Thank you for your commitment to Virginia's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monique M. Chism". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Monique M. Chism, Ph.D.
Director
Student Achievement and
School Accountability Programs

Enclosure

cc: Veronica Tate, Virginia Department of Education

ESEA FLEXIBILITY PART B MONITORING REPORT

MONITORING VISIT INFORMATION	
State Educational Agency (SEA)	<i>Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)</i>
Request Approved	<i>July 24, 2012</i>
Request Amended	<i>March 5, 2013</i>
ESEA Flex Monitoring Activity	<i>Part B Desk Monitoring</i>
Monitoring Review Date(s)	<i>September 30, 2013</i>
Exit Conference	<i>November 13, 2013</i>
Interviews Conducted	<i>Mark Allan, Bethann Canada, John Eisenberg, Susan FitzPatrick, Gabie Frazier, Marsba Granderson, Sam Hollins, Yvonne Holloman, Christopher Kelly, Shelley Loving-Ryder, Chris McLaughlin, Beverly Rabil, Lynn Sodat, Kathleen Smith, Carol Sylvester, Veronica Tate, Linda Wallinger, Susan Williams</i>
U.S. Department of Education (ED) Monitors	<i>Elizabeth Witt Christina Imbalt</i>

OVERVIEW OF ESEA FLEXIBILITY MONITORING

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is committed to supporting State educational agencies (SEAs) as they implement ambitious reform agendas through their approved ESEA flexibility requests. Consistent with this commitment, ED has designed a monitoring process to assess an SEA's implementation of the principles of ESEA flexibility and the State-level systems and processes needed to support that implementation.

Part B Monitoring

In Part B monitoring, SEA implementation of ESEA flexibility was reviewed across several key areas: State-level Systems and Processes, Principle 1, Principle 2, and Principle 3, as outlined in the *ESEA Flexibility Part B Monitoring Protocol*. In each broad area, ED identified key elements that are required under ESEA flexibility and are likely to lead to increased achievement for students. Through examination of documentation submitted by the SEA and interviews with SEA staff, ED assessed the effectiveness of implementation of ESEA flexibility by identifying the extent to which an SEA:

1. Is ensuring that implementation is occurring consistent with the SEA's approved request and the principles and timelines of ESEA flexibility.
2. Is continuing to review and make adjustments to support implementation.
3. Is establishing systems and process to sustain implementation and improvements.

The report contains the following sections:

- *Highlights of the SEA's Implementation.* This section identifies key accomplishments in the SEA's implementation of ESEA flexibility.
- *Status of Implementation of ESEA Flexibility.* This section indicates whether or not the SEA has met expectations for each element of ESEA flexibility.
- *Elements Requiring Next Steps.* When appropriate, this section identifies any elements where the SEA is not meeting expectations and includes Next Steps that the SEA must take to meet expectations.

- *Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation.* This section provides recommendations to support the SEA in continuing to meet the principles and timelines of ESEA flexibility and strengthening implementation.
- *Additional Comments.* When appropriate, this section includes any additional information related to the SEA’s implementation of ESEA flexibility not included elsewhere.

HIGHLIGHTS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ESEA FLEXIBILITY

The SEA’s work includes the following key accomplishments relating to the implementation of ESEA flexibility and/or efforts to engage in a process of continuous review and analysis, particularly for those elements receiving a comprehensive review:

- The VDOE is employing successful interventions in its priority schools. Ten School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools that were on the priority school list in School Year (SY) 2012-13 have exited priority status because they are no longer among the State’s 5 percent of lowest performing schools.
- The VDOE is using data from student assessments to determine which local educational agencies (LEAs) need to improve the alignment of their curricula to new State assessments and standards. It has created numerous tools and technical assistance opportunities for identified LEAs to assist them in improving alignment as a means to improve student achievement.

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ESEA FLEXIBILITY

SEA Systems & Processes

Element	Status
Monitoring (EDGAR 80.40 and 2.G)	Meeting Expectations
Technical Assistance (2.G)	Meeting Expectations
Data Collection & Use (§9304(a)(6))	Meeting Expectations
Family & Community Engagement and Outreach (Implementation Letter)	Meeting Expectations

Principle 1

Element	Status
Transition to and Implement College- and Career-ready Standards (1.B)	Meeting Expectations
Adopt English Language Proficiency Standards (Assurance 2)	Meeting Expectations
Develop and Administer High-Quality Assessments (Assurance 3)	Meeting Expectations
Develop and Administer Alternate Assessments (Assurance 3)	Meeting Expectations
Develop and Administer English Language Proficiency Assessments (Assurance 4)	Meeting Expectations
Annually Reports College-going and College-credit Accumulation Rates (Assurance 5)	Meeting Expectations

Principle 2

Element	Status
Develop and Implement a State-Based System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support (2.A)	Meeting Expectations
Reward Schools (2.C)	Meeting Expectations
Priority Schools (2.D)	Not Meeting Expectations
Focus Schools (2.E)	Meeting Expectations
Other Title I Schools (2.F)	Meeting Expectations
State and Local Report Cards (§1111 of the ESEA; 2.B and Assurance 14)	Not Meeting Expectations

Principle 3

Element	Status
Teacher Evaluation and Support Systems (3.B)	Meeting Expectations
Principal Evaluation and Support Systems (3.B)	Meeting Expectations

ELEMENTS REQUIRING NEXT STEPS

Element	Priority Schools (2.D)
Summary and Status of Implementation	<p>The VDOE is adding schools to its priority schools list to replace schools that exit priority status. It has identified a new cohort (Cohort 4) of priority schools for SY 2013-14. VDOE considers SY 2013-14 to be the first year of implementation of interventions aligned with the turnaround principles for these new priority schools. These schools are in the process of planning and will implement a SIG transformation model by the Spring. However, it is not clear that LEAs with new priority schools have met the requirement to review the performance of the current principal and either replaced the principal if such a chance was necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrated to the SEA that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort. In order to be considered the first full year of implementation, the principal leading the school beginning at the start of the year must be the one who has already been determined to be the appropriate principal to lead the turnaround effort.</p> <p>A subset of the newly identified priority schools may not have met this timeline for counting SY 2013-14 as the first year of implementation. If any of the newly identified priority schools have not met this timeline, they may not count SY 2013-14 as the first year of implementation of priority school interventions.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Through the ESEA Flexibility extension process, the VDOE must submit evidence demonstrating that the SEA has ensured or has a plan to ensure that all priority schools identified in Cohort 4 that are considering 2013-2014 as the first of three years of required implementation of interventions aligned with the turnaround principles had in place at the start of that school year a principal who was determined to be appropriate to lead the turnaround effort. This evidence should demonstrate that, prior to the start of the school year, LEAs</p>

Element	Priority Schools (2.D)
	<p>with newly identified priority schools had done one of the following: (1) reviewed the performance and qualifications of the principal, made a determination regarding whether to keep or replace the principal, and either demonstrated to the SEA that the current principal has a track record of improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort or replaced the principal, as appropriate; (2) hired a new principal within the last two years as part of a school reform effort for those schools implementing either the transformation or turnaround models as described under the SIG program; or 3) implemented either the restart or closure model under the SIG program.</p> <p>If any of the newly identified priority schools have not met the requirement above, the VDOE must provide evidence that SY 2014-15, rather than SY 2013-14, will be counted as the first year of implementation of priority school interventions.</p>

Element	State and Local Report Cards (§1111 of the ESEA; 2.B and Assurance 14)
<p>Summary and Status of Implementation</p>	<p>The SEA and LEA report cards that the SEA published based on data from SY 2012-13 did not include all information required under §1111 of the ESEA. In particular, those report cards were missing the following: State, LEA, and school-level data on the percentage of students not tested for migrant students and disaggregated by gender; State-level data on the number of recently arrived English Learners exempted from State assessments; State and LEA-level achievement data for migrant students; State, LEA, and school-level graduation rate data for Virginia's combined subgroups; State, LEA, and school-level data comparing student academic achievement and new Annual Measurable Objectives for major racial and ethnic subgroups, English Learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students; State, LEA, and school-level data related to the other academic indicator; and lists of reward, priority, and focus schools.</p>
<p>Next Steps</p>	<p>Through the ESEA Flexibility extension process, the VDOE will submit evidence that it has a plan and a timeline in place to ensure that future report cards include all information required for ESEA and ESEA flexibility, consistent with ED's February 8, 2013 guidance.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN IMPLEMENTATION

The following recommendations are provided to support the SEA in continuing to meet the principles and timelines of ESEA flexibility and strengthening implementation through continuous improvement and the establishment of systems and processes to sustain implementation and improvement.

- While the SEA's method for monitoring the implementation of its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems adheres to what it described in its approved ESEA flexibility request, the monitoring method is not as robust as the more systematic monitoring the State has implemented for gauging progress on other parts of its ESEA flexibility request. The SEA should consider strengthening how it monitors implementation of LEAs' educator

evaluation and support systems so as to better assess how well LEAs are implementing systems that are consistent with the State guidelines. The SEA should consider working with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders on ways to make its monitoring effort more effective.

- While the State is making some efforts to reach out to the English Learner community, those efforts could be strengthened. The State should, for example, make more extensive use of existing advisory groups supporting this community and non-English language media outlets. In addition, the State could make more extensive use of the expertise of the SEA's Title III staff to assist in this effort.
- The State should consider ways in which it can make better use of its identified reward schools to help other schools improve performance.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

In its approved request, the State indicated that it would collect and report LEA- and school-level data on educator evaluation systems by collecting data required under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) program. Since the SFSF program has ended, ED no longer collects these data from States. While it is clear that the State no longer reports SFSF data to ED, it is not clear whether or not Virginia continues to collect these data from all schools and LEAs in the State, and whether or not it uses these data to review the implementation of LEA evaluation systems. As a result, it is not evident that the SEA is able to adequately analyze and assess the quality of the evaluation systems that LEAs are implementing or to fully determine if the LEA systems meet State requirements. Therefore, in its ESEA flexibility request for extension, Virginia must clarify its current practice in regards to the collection of data on educator evaluation systems. It must either provide evidence that the SEA continues to collect the SFSF data or, if the SEA no longer collects these data from all LEAs and schools in the State, develop an alternative plan and a timeline for monitoring and evaluating implementation of LEA evaluation systems.