



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Steven R. Staples, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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June 16, 2015

Dr. Monique Chism  
Director  
Office of State Support  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Dr. Chism:

In January 2015, Virginia submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for a four-year renewal of waivers from certain requirements of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), as amended by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), also known as the ESEA flexibility plan. Virginia's January 2015 renewal application included an amendment to remove the first criterion below to exit focus status after implementing the required two-year interventions, while maintaining the second criterion below:

1. *The proficiency gap group(s) for which the school was originally identified meet(s) the AMOs for two consecutive years; and*
2. *The school no longer falls into the bottom 10 percent of Title I schools for the subsequent school year based on proficiency gap points.*

On March 31, 2015, USED granted Virginia a four-year renewal of the state's ESEA flexibility plan through the 2018-2019 school year under the condition that Virginia revise its criteria for exiting focus schools to include at least one criterion requiring these schools to demonstrate academic progress before being allowed to exit the status. In response to USED's request, Virginia will use the following revised criteria to determine whether focus schools that have completed the required two-year intervention exit the status:

1. *The school has made academic progress by decreasing the overall proficiency gap points at the end of the second year of identification; and*
2. *The school no longer falls into the bottom 10 percent of Title I schools for the subsequent school year based on proficiency gap points.*

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A school's overall proficiency gap points are calculated based on the difference in the performance of the proficiency gap groups in reading and mathematics as compared to the annual measurable objectives for both subjects. Please see Attachment A, excerpted from Virginia's ESEA flexibility application, for a description and example of the overall gap points calculation. Under the proposed exit criteria above, 34 of the 50 focus schools that exited the status for the 2014-2015 school year would still have exited the status. Of the remaining 16 schools, seven schools would have exited because they were no longer Title I schools in 2014-2015, and nine schools would have remained in the status.

The use of overall proficiency gap points to determine whether a focus school has made academic progress aligns with the data used to identify focus schools for entry into the status. It also incentivizes focus schools to provide comprehensive support to all of their proficiency gap groups in both reading and mathematics during the duration of their identification as focus schools in order to reduce or eliminate their overall proficiency gap points and become eligible to exit the status.

Based on USED's approval of Virginia's revised focus school exit criteria as described herein, the state will begin using the revised criteria to identify focus schools beginning with assessment results from the 2014-2015 school year for accountability status in the 2015-2016 school year. Questions about the revised criteria should be addressed to Veronica Tate, director, Office of Program Administration and Accountability, at (804) 225-2870 or [veronica.tate@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:veronica.tate@doe.virginia.gov). Thank you for your timely consideration of and response to Virginia's revised focus school exit criteria.

Sincerely,



Steven R. Staples, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

SRS/slr/vt  
Attachment

c: Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement  
Bev Rabil, director, Office of School Improvement  
Veronica Tate, director, Office of Program Administration and Accountability

**Virginia's ESEA Flexibility Plan  
Calculation of Proficiency Gap Points**

Virginia calculates overall proficiency gap group points using the steps below:

- Calculate for each school the difference between the AMO target and each gap group's performance in reading and mathematics to determine proficiency gap points.
- Exclude from each school's calculation any gap group that meets or exceeds the AMO target.
- Sum the proficiency gap points in reading and mathematics and divide by the number of gap groups that did not meet the AMO target(s).

<b>School #1: Example of School Proficiency Gap Performance</b>						
<b>Gap Group</b>	<b>Reading Target</b>	<b>Reading Performance School-level</b>	<b>Reading Performance Gap Points</b>	<b>Mathematics Target</b>	<b>Mathematics Performance School-level</b>	<b>Mathematics Performance Gap Points</b>
Gap Group 1	76	70	6	47	37	10
Gap Group 2	76	66	10	45	41	4
Gap Group 3	80	64	16	52	75	NI*
<b>Sum of Proficiency Gap Points</b>	add point differences for each gap group		32	add point differences for each gap group		14
<b>Average Proficiency Gap Points</b>	divide sum by number of gap groups that did not meet the targets		11	divide sum by number of gap groups that did not meet the targets		7
<b>Total Average Proficiency Gap Points</b>	(add average proficiency gap points)					<b>18</b>