

ESEA Flexibility FAQs

Principle 1:

- 1. How will social studies assessments (4th grade and 7th grade DCAS; US History end-of-course exams) be used to support the waiver, if at all?**

Delaware's ESEA Flexibility Waiver application addresses the required assessment areas of Reading/ELA and Mathematics since they constitute the basis for school and district AYP calculations and Annual Measureable Objectives. Although not explicitly mentioned in the Flexibility application, Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) Social Studies assessment at Grades 4 and 7, along with the End of Course assessment in US History will continue.

- 2. Is the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) being replaced?**

Delaware is a governing state in the SBAC Multi-state Assessment Consortium. SBAC was awarded test development funds by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to support development of next generation student assessments in reading and mathematics. A similar states-led effort, referred to as the PARCC Assessment Consortium, is also engaged in test development. Based on the timelines that SBAC and PARCC have submitted to USDOE, participating states will actively participate in field testing these new standardized assessments during the 2013-2014 school year. When the assessments are fully ready in spring 2014, states will have the opportunity to adopt these assessments in place of, or in addition to their existing state assessments. Delaware Department of Education anticipates a thoughtful and inclusive discussion and decision-making process over the next two years regarding the role of DCAS and the potential role SBAC assessments could play in assessing student achievement.

- 3. How will the state test change when Common Core Assessment is implemented?**

Delaware launched its implementation of Common Core Standards during the 2010-2011 school year following the adoption of these standards in Reading and Mathematics by the Delaware State Board of Education. Orientation sessions for teachers, specialists and school administrators were provided during that year, followed by the current efforts to (1) develop exemplary units and lessons based on the Common Core Standards, and (2) engage teachers and specialists in reviews of existing instructional plans within the reading and mathematics content areas and at elementary, middle school, and high school levels. As this curriculum technical assistance moves along, DDOE assessment specialists are engaged in work with our assessment vendor- the American Institutes of Research- to reposition existing test items where necessary and introduce new test items so that the DCAS evolves into an assessment fully aligned to the Common Core Standards. Based on alignment studies of the DCAS completed over the past 1 ½ years, DDOE believes the DCAS already measures certain elements of the Common Core Standards. With the introduction of the repositioned and new items over the next two years, the DCAS will become fully aligned to the Common Core. As this transformation takes place, students and teachers will note more challenging test items at each grade.

Principle 2:

- 1. Related to Focus schools, gaps and subgroups: What if the school's student population is homogeneous, such as 99% African American?**

Delaware has homogeneous schools that would not be identified using an achievement gap method. However, this plan allows for schools to be identified for the Focus category based on either a large achievement gap or low performing subgroups. Thus homogeneous schools could be identified with the low-performing subgroup method. In practice, the low-performing subgroup method did identify a few such schools. In addition, some schools that were more heterogeneous did not show up near the top of the achievement gap list because all subgroups were relatively low performing. However, the low-performing subgroup method identified a few of these schools as well. The two methods used together would greatly enhance the state's ability to identify schools in need of greater support.

- 2. Regarding lowest performing for "the most recent year": Why not use trend data similar to Partnership Zone? What about historically low-performing schools? Why can't more than one year performance be used for focus schools?**

U.S. Department of Education's guidance requires the use of trend data for the achievement gap method but not the low-performing subgroup method. Before determining whether to use trend data for the low-performing subgroup method, DDOE created a list of schools using trend and recent performance for the achievement gap between low income and non-low income students. What we learned from creating that list is that a number of schools did not have sufficient trend data either because they were newly opened schools or they were granted new school status for accountability due to changes in the grade configurations or feeder patterns of the school. Such schools had to be excluded from the achievement gap method analysis due to lack of trend data. Because U.S. Department of Education requires that we evaluate all schools for possible Focus school identification, we decided that we would only use the most recent year of testing data to identify low-performing subgroup schools. Using trend data for both methods would have excluded some schools from consideration altogether, which would not have met the federal requirements of the flexibility application.

- 3. Is the performance that is considered for the sub-group performance for Focus schools the average scaled score or percent proficient? Was reading and math counted 50% each?**

Schools were ranked for Focus school status using the percent proficient. A combined percent proficient for reading and mathematics was obtained by taking the sum of the number of proficient scores in reading and the number of proficient scores in mathematics and dividing by the sum of the number of tested students in reading and the number of tested students in mathematics. In practice, this approximately gives a 50% weight to reading and mathematics for ranking purposes.

4. When will we get information on how schools exit from Focus status?

DDOE is in the process of vetting options based on input received to date.

5. Why aren't schools that made adequate yearly progress excluded from being considered a Focus school?

The federal government is offering this opportunity for a new method for identifying schools in need of improvement that is not based on AYP. The method is designed to identify schools that are persistently low achieving (Partnership Zone), have largest achievement gaps (Focus) or have the lowest performing subgroups (Focus), regardless of their current designation under AYP.

6. Do we have the option of stating we do not have the capacity for the Focus status (like is done for Partnership Zone)?

Secretary Lowery may consider the district and school's capacity to implement the required reforms prior to selecting a school for the Partnership Zone. Once a Partnership Zone school is selected by the Secretary, the school cannot use capacity as a reason not to participate in the Partnership Zone. Similarly, once a school is selected as a Focus school, capacity cannot be used as a reason not to participate or implement the required reforms.

7. Why were the 2011 adequate yearly progress cut scores (floor) used instead of the true baseline for sub-groups that performed under the floor?

The draft showing the 2011 AYP cut scores as the floor was used to get feedback from constituents. The reasoning behind using that for the draft was to not present an assumption that the state was "lowering the bar" for these groups with the Flex application given that the floor of actual performance for those specific groups is lower than the AYP target for the year. Again, this is only a draft and feedback will drive the final version.

8. Because the floor is 2010-11 data, what schools are in each classification?

The Superintendents and/or Charter Directors who had schools in the draft run of our calculation for Focus Schools were notified.

9. If the purpose is to have "ambitious but achievable" targets, what has the discussion been to what is "achievable" for special education students and who has been part of that process?

We received much feedback on this particular target for this particular group in most settings where we shared the draft application—from the State Board, to county town halls, to advocacy groups, to our Delaware Education Advisory Group.

10. Why do we have to use 2010-2011 data to identify focus schools (why can't it be current year) and why would they remain in that status for the duration of the waiver?

U.S. Department of Education requires the state to identify Focus schools and include the list of identified schools with the application at the time of submission. There will be criteria for Focus schools that may allow a school to exit that status prior to the end of the flexibility period. However, it is important to keep in mind that the flexibility period is for three years only and the first year of the flexibility is 2011-12.

11. When can we get the exact calculation for focus schools?

We will have the final calculation once we complete the vetting of all feedback and have our final version of the application to send to USED by mid-February.

12. From the explanation, it appears Reward schools will be named based on last year's data and then set for the period of the flexibility waiver. Is that true? Why is this so? Is this the same for Recognition schools? How would schools that perform well in the interim be recognized? Are tier I, II, and III schools also locked for 3 years like the Focus, and Partnership Zone schools?

A list of Reward schools will be named for the 2011-12 school year based on historical assessment data including spring 2011 DCAS data. The Reward status is for a period of one year (i.e., 2011-12). In 2012-13, schools will be evaluated once again for Reward status based on historical assessment data including Spring DCAS 2012. Recognition schools will also be identified in 2012-13 based on historical assessment data including Spring DCAS 2012. The process will be repeated for 2013-14 for both Reward and Recognition. Therefore, schools that perform well in interim years will have an opportunity to be selected as Reward or Recognition schools. Only the Focus and Partnership classifications locked, though they too can exit if they meet the criteria. All the schools can move between levels of state support based on their year-to-year performance.

13. Will any of the automatic requirements of No Child Left Behind be set in place? Does this mean districts do not need to do the set asides of transportation, Supplemental Educational Services and professional development?

If our plan is approved, it would eliminate all current requirements associated with "school improvement" as outlined in Section 1116 of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act. If the state is granted ESEA flexibility the following school improvement related set asides would no longer be required: 1) the 20 percent local level set aside associated with Choice related transportation and Supplemental Educational Services (SES) required when a local education agency had any Title I schools classified as Under Improvement, Corrective Action or Restructuring; 2) the 10 percent district level set aside for professional development required when a district was classified as Under improvement or Corrective Action; and 3) the 10 percent school level set aside required when a Title I school was classified as Under Improvement, Corrective Action or Restructuring. The non-improvement related set asides would remain in place under the ESEA Flexibility. As

such, districts and charter schools still would be required to set aside 1 percent of their Title I allocation (if they receive \$500,000 or more) for parent involvement activities. Districts also would be required to continue to set aside funds to provide equitable services to eligible students attending private schools. Finally, local education agencies still will be required to set aside funds to meet the needs of homeless students.

14. Schools have been submitting Success plans for years. How do we use these to inform decisions? Are we duplicating efforts?

DDOE is in the process of vetting options based on input received to date.

15. A concern I continue to have is a school can make 26/27 (cells) and not make adequate yearly progress (AYP). A school can make 8/8 and make AYP. Diverse schools have a harder task, and one student can populate many cells. How are these discrepancies figured into the data?

To make AYP, a school must still meet the annual measurable objective targets with or without confidence intervals, meet safe harbor targets with or without confidence intervals or meet growth model targets for all subgroups that meet the minimum N-count of students in order to make AYP. The flexibility does not change this requirement in the current ESEA law.

16. Is it possible Red Clay will receive less money next year for our Title 1 schools?

The ESEA Flexibility does not affect the amount of Title I funding that a local education agency receives through the LEA Consolidated Grant. The amount of Title I funds allocated to LEAs is primarily based on census poverty provided to Delaware Department of Education each year by the U.S. Department of Education. Because census poverty across LEAs can vary from year to year, an LEA's funding amount can change from year to year as well. This would be true regardless of the ESEA Flexibility.

Principle 3:

1. Several school districts are using professional learning community evaluations in lieu of teacher evaluation. Apenas SD in Michigan will give you a good flavor. It is based on C. Danielson. If we value PLCs with fidelity and collaboration, as opposed to a more corrective approach.

Delaware uses a statewide evaluation system that is based on Charlotte Danielson's work. Professional learning community work does not impact all teacher and specialist groups. PLCs focus mainly on assessment and data analysis. Teacher evaluation is based on many more components, as Danielson describes. Planning, instruction, environment, and professional responsibilities are all part of Delaware's evaluation system and are not the focus on PLC work.

- 2. When a teacher is rated highly effective and decides to leave his or her current school to work at a lower achieving school and the lower achieving school does not make adequate yearly progress, will the highly effective teacher lose his or her highly effective rating? Also, the same question, a teacher who is highly effective is transferred from a school because the school lost a unit due to declining enrollment, this highly effective teacher is now transferred to a school that has not made AYP, will this teacher lose his or her highly effective rating?**

Component 5 is computed each year for each teacher regardless of the location of the teacher. So this teacher would be rated the next year in the school of record. Because school adequate yearly progress ratings are not at this time part of the policy plan, the school's AYP rating would not be a factor for consideration anyway.

Principle 4:

No questions

Other:

- 1. How do demographic shifts play into the calculations?**

Demographic shifts in a school's population over time, past or future could certainly change overall performance of a school and perhaps change the subgroups for which a school is responsible. If a previous demographic shift was sufficiently large from one year to the next, the school could have applied for new school status. That would eliminate the school from the achievement gap method due to insufficient trend data. However, it is more likely that shifts would occur over a period of years so that new school status is not an option. In such cases, any changes in performance due solely to the demographic shifts would not be taken into account in the trend analysis for the achievement gap method. There is probably no easy way to take them into account for ranking purposes. However, it would not affect the low performing subgroup method because it does not use trend data. If a school is identified for the Focus category, a thorough needs analysis should include any demographic shifts that have created new challenges for the school. The school's subsequent plan could then include effective strategies for meeting the needs of students in the new or changing demographic groups.

- 2. When will the feedback be used to determine what changes would be made to the state's application?**

DDOE is in the process of vetting options based on input received to date and will share out the next draft as soon as possible.

- 3. Are student consequences on the table? I know there are monetary rewards- a step to grow effective classroom leaders would be to pay for Board Cert Process.**

DDOE is currently working on creating a draft plan for student consequences outside of this ESEA Flexibility application. The Flexibility application deadline is too soon to determine/include student consequences in that document.

4. Perhaps there is a break in the communication chain. How were local school boards part of this process?

DDOE provided drafts of the ESEA Flexibility Application to the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA) in December 2011. DDOE offered to meet with DSBA multiple times.

5. Was Delaware State Parent Advisory Council involved in this process?

DDOE met with representatives of the DSPAC on January 23, 2012 and members of Delaware's parent advocacy groups attended various other public vetting opportunities.

6. I am interested, however, to learn how stakeholders were selected for the Innovation Action Team? I'm a school psychologist, founder and past president of the Meadowood Program PTA, a Red Clay School Board member, a DSEA union member and a parent of three school age children one with significant disability (special ed) issues yet I never heard of DDOE collaborating with stakeholders for this team to develop this plan. Can DDOE please email out a list of IAT members?

The groups represented on the Innovation Action Team (IAT) were determined approximately three years ago. While the specific persons who represent those organizations may have changed, all previous groups are members of the IAT. Please contact Dan Cruce for additional information regarding the IAT, including a list of the member groups.

7. What parents were a part of this process? Did you have parents who represented the sub groups that you were referring to last night in your PowerPoint presentation (ELL programs, Spec Ed programs etc.)? Did local school boards have members on this committee?

All of those groups had representatives at multiple public vetting opportunities across the state. Individual meeting opportunities were also offered.

8. I appreciate that the State PTA will be a part of this process trying to get more parental involvement, but what about the schools that do not have a PTA, maybe have PTO or no parent group at all, how is the state/districts/schools going to see that these parents have a voice, be more involved etc.? Many parents want to be involved but do not know how to become involved, how are we going to make this happen?

The county public forums were intended to provide an in-person opportunity to address this need. We also conducted multiple other public engagement opportunities for feedback. Finally, we continually shared the electronic methods for constituents to share feedback and or questions in that manner.

