Delaware Department of Education

ESEA Flexibility Request Amendment Proposal

ESEA Flex Team
2/25/2014
Summary

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) is proposing to submit three amendments to the current ESEA Flexibility Request application. The purpose of this document is to explain the amendments. The amendments build on current Delaware law and are meant to streamline and improve state systems of accountability aligned to our College- and Career- Readiness (CCR) goals, lessons learned and promising practices, emerging federal flexibility, and to continue to align policy in a manner that best serves Delaware’s state education goals and context.

The DDOE will submit a “redlined” or track changes document to the U.S. Department of Education (USED); however for ease of reading, this document summarizes the critical elements of the amendments.

Amendment Area #1

Classification of Schools and Districts

Federal law requires a single statewide system of accountability and supports for all public schools and districts. Based on the current ESEA Flexibility Request, Delaware utilizes closely related but different criteria for accountability/identification of Priority schools, Reward schools, Focus schools, and Recognition schools, which are often based predominantly on “AYP.” Through our work on the Academic Framework described below, we have developed a comprehensive and authentic structure for school and district performance that incorporates multiple measures related to college and career readiness for all students, including AYP. Our goal is to use this single, improved system for all accountability determinations, thereby improving determinations, reducing complexity, with the goal of College- and Career- Readiness for all students.

The purpose of this section of the document is to outline how the Academic Framework (AF) can be used to identify required categories of schools under ESEA Flexibility; identify state Recognition schools; place LEAs in tiers of supports; and establish criteria for transitions or movement of LEAs within the levels. The intent is to align the classifications using the base methodology within the Academic Framework.

The Academic Framework includes measures that can evaluate school or district academic performance and outcomes. Specifically, the framework answers the evaluative question: Is the academic program a success?

The Academic Framework is an index measure and is made up of eight (elementary and middle schools) to ten (high schools) individual measures. These include:

- Reading and Math Growth for all students
- Reading and Math Growth for the lowest quartile of students
- Reading and Math Growth to Proficiency within 3 years
- Reading and Math Proficiency for all Students
- Reading and Math Proficiency for Subgroups
- Reading and Math Proficiency Compared to the District in which the School Resides
- Reading and Math Proficiency Compared to a Statistically similar School
- AYP (all AMOs met)
- SAT Scores (high schools only)
- Graduation Rate (high schools only)

Each of the measures contributes to a weighted value toward the overall index. Scores on the index range between 25 and 100 with higher scores indicating better overall performance.
The Academic Framework (AF) was originally developed to evaluate the performance of Delaware’s charter schools. The proposal is to expand its use to all schools and districts. The AF guidance document may be found [here](#).

For each category, a summary of the key aspects of its definition is provided based on the official definitions from the document *ESEA Flexibility* dated June 7, 2012. For each ESEA Criterion there is a suggested way in which the AF can be used to meet the ESEA Criterion. If the definition has “or” criteria, they are handled separately. This methodology will be used for the identification of a new cohort of Priority schools¹, at least two Reward schools, and up to 15 Recognition schools for 2014-15. A new cohort of Focus schools will not be identified for 2014-15 but the proposed new methodology is included to indicate how future cohorts may be identified.

**Priority Schools** – Delaware has named 10 Partnership Zone Schools to date. Eight of these schools were identified as Priority schools for ESEA Flexibility.

USED required states to identify 5% of its Title I schools as “Priority schools” as part of the original ESEA Flexibility Request application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESEA Criteria (Proficiency)²</th>
<th>How criteria can be met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lowest 5% of Title I schools in achievement of the “all students” group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments | • Title I Status of School  
• Low performance based on overall AF score |
| Over a number of years in the “all students” group | • Lowest 5% performance based on the average overall AF score of the most recent year and the preceding year. |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESEA Criteria (Graduation Rates)³</th>
<th>How criteria can be met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Title I-participating high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent | • Title I Status of School  
• Graduation rate from AF (4b) |
| Title I-eligible but not participating high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent | • Title I Eligibility Status of School  
• Graduation rate from AF (4b) |
| Over a number of years | • Graduation rate below 60% for two of the past three years |

¹ The DDOE will add up to 5% of its Title I schools to the Priority list.
² See footnote 1 above. The DDOE has a similar and aligned accountability process with a stringent system of consequences for Charter schools. This similar and aligned process uses the AF as well Financial and Organizational performance indicators for Charter schools. Because of the aligned accountability process and system of consequences and supports such as non-renewal, formal review, probationary status, corrective action or closure, the Secretary may choose these options rather than Priority school status.
³ The SEA has the option to make these schools Priority schools. If the SEA chooses to not make them Priority schools, it must make them Focus schools if they are Title I Schools. Schools that are Title I-eligible but not participating do not need to be made Priority or Focus schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DDOE Criteria (SAT)</strong></th>
<th><strong>How criteria can be met</strong></th>
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</table>
| Title I-participating high school or Title I-eligible but not participating high school among the lowest 5% in percent of students meeting SAT criteria. | • Title I Status or Eligibility Status of School  
• Percent of students with combined score of 1550 on the SAT (4a). |
| Over a number of years | • Within lowest 5% in the most recent year and in the lowest 10% in the preceding year. |

**Focus Schools – Delaware currently has 13 Focus schools named.**

USED required states to identify 10% of its Title I schools as “focus schools” as part of the original ESEA Flexibility Request application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ESEA Criteria (Schools with Low Performing Subgroups based on Proficiency)</strong></th>
<th><strong>How criteria can be met</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| At least 10% of Title I schools contributing to the State achievement gap due to one or more low-achieving subgroups. | • Title I Status of School  
• Low individual subgroup proficiency for the Special Ed, ELL, Low Income, African American or Hispanic subgroups from the AF (2b) in the most recent year |
| Over a number of years | • Lowest 10% of schools based on average individual subgroup proficiency for the Special Ed, ELL, Low Income, African American or Hispanic subgroups from the AF (2b) for the current and preceding year |

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4 The USED definition for Priority schools does not include the performance of students on the SAT. Delaware proposes to allow the Secretary to use this criterion for the identification of Priority schools. The SAT is one of the state’s College- and Career- Readiness indicators. The SAT 1550 (critical reading, mathematics and writing sections combined) benchmark was selected because this indicates a 65 percent likelihood of achieving a B- average or higher during the first year of colleges (source: College Board).
Reward School – Delaware currently names 2 Reward schools in the fall.

USED currently requires states to identify two categories of Reward schools, “highest- performing” and “high- progress” annually.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESEA Criteria (Schools identified as Highest-Performing)</th>
<th>How criteria can be met</th>
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</table>
| Title I school among the Title I schools in the State that have the highest absolute performance over a number of years for the “all students” group | • Title I Status of School  
• Among the top 10% in performance based on overall AF score in the most recent year |
| Have the highest absolute performance over a number of years for all subgroups | • Among the top 15% in individual subgroup proficiency from the AF in the most recent year (2b) |
| Is also among the Title I schools with the highest graduation rates | • Among the top 15% in graduation rate from AF in the most recent year (4b) |
| Must be making AYP (AMOs) for the “all students” group and all of its subgroups | • Meets AYP in AF in the most recent year (3a) |
| A school may not be classified as a “highest-performing school” if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups that are not closing in the school | • All eligible subgroups in AF (2b) are green in the most recent year (i.e., “meets” or “exceeds” the state average). |
| Over a number of years | • Must meet all criteria above for the most recent and preceding year. |
| Additional DDOE Criteria (not a USED requirement) | • The school is not currently a Focus or Priority school  
• The school is not reconfigured as a new school for AYP during the most recent two years |

5 Schools meeting the criteria will be ranked based on a weighted score of the AF overall score in the most recent year (80%) and Percent of Population in At-risk Groups (students in one or more of the groups African American, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, ELLs and Low Income) in the most recent year (20%). For example, a school with an overall AF score of 90 and 84% of its population in the at-risk groups, would have a weighted score of $(90 \times 0.80) + (84 \times 0.20) = 88.8$. This ranking will be used for prioritizing schools for Reward Status. A school may not be recognized a Reward school in consecutive years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESEA Criteria (Schools Identified as High-Progress)</th>
<th>How criteria can be met</th>
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</table>
| Title I school among the 10% of Title I schools in the State that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the “all students” group over a number of years on the statewide assessments | • Title I Status of School  
• Among the top 10% in gains based on overall AF score in the most recent year compared to previous year |
| Is among the Title I schools in the State that are making the most progress in increasing graduation rates | • Title Eligibility Status of School  
• Among the top 25% in gains in graduation rate from AF (4b) in the most recent year compared to previous year |
| A school may not be classified as a “high-progress school” if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups that are not closing in the school | • All eligible subgroups in AF (2b) are green (i.e., “meets” or “exceeds” the state average); or  
• Gains in all eligible subgroups proficiency from the AF (2b) in the most recent year compared to previous year |
| Additional DDOE Criteria (not a USED requirement) | • The school is not currently a Focus or Priority school  
• The school is not reconfigured as a new school for AYP during the most recent two years |

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6 Schools meeting the criteria will be ranked based on a weighted score of gain in overall AF score in the most recent year compared to previous year (80%) and Percent of Population in At-risk Groups (students in one or more of the groups African American, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, ELLs and Low Income) in the most recent year (20%). See footnote 5 for an example of the calculation of the weighted score. This ranking will be used for prioritizing schools for Reward Status. A school may not be recognized a Reward school in consecutive years.
Recognition Schools – Delaware currently names up to 15 Recognition schools in the fall. (This is a Delaware developed category and can include both Title I and non-Title I schools)

The following is a proposal for Delaware’s category of Recognition. This is not a requirement of USED, but added in the state’s ESEA Flexibility Request. We believe that it is better to have a separate way of using the AF for this category because (1) the criteria for Reward greatly limit the number of schools, (2) it allows us to use the DESS Advisory recommended weighting factor for the percent of “at-risk” students in the schools, and (3) it allows for non-Title I schools. Title I Distinguished schools would also be selected from this group of schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DDOE Criteria (Exceptional Performance)</th>
<th>How criteria can be met</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school is among the top 20% of schools in the state.</td>
<td>• Among the top 20% performance based on overall AF score in the most recent year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be making AYP (AMOs) for the “all students” group and all of its subgroups in the most recent two years.</td>
<td>• Meets AYP in AF in the most recent year and preceding year(3a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is not reconfigured as a new school for AYP during the most recent two years.</td>
<td>• Accountability office records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DDOE Criterion (Closing the Gap)</th>
<th>How criterion can be met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Percent Proficient in ELA and Math for the All Students group has stayed the same or improved in the current year as compared to the prior year</td>
<td>• The same or improved performance in AF all students proficiency (2a) in the most recent year compared to previous year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Percent Proficient in ELA and Math for the subgroups has improved in the current year as compared to the prior year.</td>
<td>• Improved percentile score in subgroup proficiency (2b) in the most recent year compared to previous year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be making AYP (AMOs) for the “all students” group and all of its subgroups in the most recent two years.</td>
<td>• Meets AYP in AF in the most recent year and preceding year(3a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is not reconfigured as a new school for AYP during the most recent two years.</td>
<td>• Accountability office records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7 Schools meeting the criteria are ranked based on a weighted score of AF overall score in the most recent year (80%) and Percent of Population in At-risk Groups (students in one or more of the groups African American, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, ELLs and Low Income) in the most recent year (20%). See footnote 5 for an example of the calculation of the weighted score. This ranking will be used for prioritizing schools for Recognition Status. A school may not be recognized a Recognition school in consecutive years. A school that was a Recognition school in the previous year will be designated as a “Schools of Continuing Excellence” if it makes the list in the current year.

8 Schools meeting the criteria are ranked based on a weighted score of AF percentile score in subgroup proficiency in the most recent year (80%) and Percent of Population in At-risk Groups (students in one or more of the groups African American, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, ELLs and Low Income) in the most recent year (20%). See footnote 5 for an example of the calculation of the weighted score. This ranking will be used for prioritizing schools for Recognition Status. A school may not be recognized a Recognition school in consecutive years. A school that was Recognition schools in the previous year will be designated as a “Schools of Continuing Excellence” if it makes the list in the current year.
Other Title I Schools – These are Title I schools that are not one of the other categories (Priority, Focus, Reward or Recognition)

As described in our ESEA Flexibility Request recent extension submission, Delaware has a statewide system of supports for all schools, including all Title I schools, which works with and through our LEAs to best serve the full range of schools beyond those that are Priority schools, Focus schools, Recognition schools and Reward schools. The extension provided the process our LEAs will employ for these other schools.

District Levels of Support

As part of the ESEA Flexibility Request, the state has developed a system of tiered support for districts. This is referred to as district "Levels of Support." The proposal is to use the Academic Framework (AF) to assign districts into a level of support and also to use the AF to move or transition a district to a different level of support if warranted. This improvement supports the goal of a single streamlined and aligned system for support and accountability.

The proposal is to average a district’s school Academic Framework scores into a district Academic Framework score. A weighted average is used so that a larger school (e.g., a high school) with larger enrollment numbers carries more weight in the final district AF than a smaller school (e.g., an elementary school). In order to determine the variability from the current methodology, the DDOE applied the AF to the 2012-13 district and school data. This analysis demonstrated congruence to the current methodology; with some variation. In reviewing the data, the DDOE believes the AF provides more valid assignment.

In addition, the proposal is to move from four levels of support to three levels of support. This is based on feedback from DDOE staff as well as the experience with the districts over the last two year. The DDOE feels strongly that the districts can be better served by assignment in the three levels. This is explained further in Amendment Area #2.

State Accountability and Ongoing Improvements

Delaware’s statewide system of accountability and supports will continue to evolve, as it should, to best reflect and advance college and career ready outcomes for all students. The Academic Framework reflects part of that movement to promote multiple measures, alignment of state accountability systems, and we will build on this framework to continuously improve as new college and career ready measures and data emerge.
Amendment Area #2

District Interactions - Assignment to Levels of Support, Schedule of Formal Performance Routines, and Transitions

The DDOE is modifying the formal interaction process with the districts for support and accountability. The first year of the modification will be in the 2014-15 school year and based on the 2013-14 data. The formal process is generally referred to as “district routines” and is the process the DDOE and the districts engage to discuss data, programmatic updates, and development of strategies at the various levels to meet goals.

The modifications are based on the feedback and operation of the district performance routines over the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years and include: 1) streamlining the number and format of the routines; and 2) modifying the methodology for assignment of a district to a level of support and how a district may transition to a different level of support. This is also reducing burden on the districts.

Current Level of Support – Assignment and Transition

For the last two years (2012-13 and 2013-14), the DDOE has assigned districts to one of four levels of differentiated support – Intense, Advanced, Moderate and Minimal. Within each of these levels, there is an associated set of routines by which DDOE monitors districts and charter schools. The following is a graphical representation of both assignment and number of performance routines with the districts. The performance routines consist of either a Progress Review or a Performance Evaluation.

Graphic #1

LEA Support Matrix
Proposed District Assignment and Transition Methodology

As noted in Graphic #1, districts were assigned to a level of support based on size and performance. The DDOE is proposing to change this methodology. The change is reflective of the goals of continuous improvement and alignment to other data used to classify schools. The change will provide more effective and tailored support, and not reduction in support.

The DDOE plans to use the Academic Framework for this purpose (see amendment area #1). The assignment to a level of support includes: 1) average of the total numeric result of the Academic Framework for each school within the district, weighted by enrollment; and 2) relative final result to other districts. Cut points for each level will be determined based on 2013-14 data. Movement from one level of support to a different level of support will be based the final result in subsequent years and how the district performs relative to the cut points.

Proposed District Levels of Support

As a response to the Part B Monitoring report, the DDOE highlighted changes made to the monitoring routines for the 2013-14 school year. The routines continue to be improved based on feedback from internal staff as well as district staff. For example, the DDOE has continued to have the pre-routine meetings with internal cross agency staff (e.g., federal programs, English Learners (EL), Students with Disabilities (SWD), climate, career and technical education (CTE), curriculum, assessment, etc) but is also having those staff attend the district monitoring meetings to discuss areas of challenge or priority. This creates a culture that there is shared ownership across DDOE and at the district level. This allows conversations to occur that did not necessarily occur in the past. This also provides the opportunity to align initiatives to ensure the greatest impact on student outcomes.

The DDOE is also using other, supplementary metrics as part of the performance routines. These metrics, while not all specifically academic in nature, are also critical for better student achievement and outcomes. For example, the percentage of students suspended or expelled; the percentage of educators who rate the school positively based on a school culture survey; the percentage of students seamlessly enrolling in college; and percentage of students with chronic absences.

Beginning in 2014-15, each district will be assigned to one of three levels of differentiated support Intense, Moderate and Minimal. Within each of these levels, there is an associated set of performance routines by which DDOE will monitor the districts and charter schools. The following is a graphical representation of the number of routines with the districts based on the assignment to one of the three levels of support. The routines consist of either a Progress Review or a Performance Evaluation.

**District Level of Support and Corresponding Routine Schedule – 2014-15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PR (optional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PR (optional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PR = Progress Review
PE = Performance Evaluation
For Districts:
- The Minimal level of support will have 2 performance routines.
  - The first of these is an optional/ discretionary Progress Review that takes place in January; this review is formative. Upon reviewing the district’s status and progress, the DDOE team can choose to exercise or forego the January routine,
  - The second, summative routine is the mandatory Performance Evaluation that takes place in June.
- The Moderate level of support will have 3 routines.
  - The first of these is a mandatory Progress Review that takes place in November or December; this review is formative.
  - The second is an optional/ discretionary Progress Review that takes place in March; this review is formative. Upon reviewing the district’s status and progress, the DDOE team can choose to exercise or forego the March routine,
  - The third and summative routine is the mandatory Performance Evaluation that takes place in June.
- The Intense level of support will have 3 routines.
  - The first of these is a mandatory Progress Review that takes place in October; this review is formative.
  - The second is a mandatory Progress Review that takes place in February; this review is formative.
  - The third and summative routine is the mandatory Performance Evaluation that takes place in June.

All routines consist of both formal and informal documentation and a meeting; documentation is prepared by both the DDOE and the District and varies depending on the level of support and specific routine.

For Charters:
The Charter School Office is in the process of building out tiered monitoring systems for all of its charter schools. All charter schools are bound by Performance Agreements wherein they promise to meet levels of performance outlined in the Performance Framework. The Charter School Office engages in ongoing reviews of charter school compliance, using its own data and data gathered by other departments across DDOE. There is collaboration among staff at DDOE to provide support and technical assistance. Charter schools are also required to provide an annual performance report to the DDOE, which in turn leads to a State Annual Report that is published on the DDOE website.

Charter schools are subject to more intense monitoring during the period leading up to renewal and during formal review, when each school’s performance record is reviewed in detail.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Charters</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PR = Performance Review: Academic, Financial and Organizational (desk audits)
CA = Comprehensive Analysis (desk audit)

Optional Routines
- All DOE-discretionary: dependent on internal review by DOE Charter Office
- Only for Organizational and Financial components

RR = Renewal Review
- Every 4 years for new charter schools
- Every 5 years for existing charter schools
Revised System of Support to align with three Levels of Support

The following is the new graphical representation of the Supports that is based on three levels rather than four levels. None of the services or supports have been eliminated:

### Delaware Education Support System (DESS) of Monitoring and Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimal</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Intense</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier I Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>These services are provided to all LEAs in all levels (Minimal, Moderate, and Intense)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier II Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>These services are available to all LEAs in all levels; however, the LEA data through monitoring protocols will drive the technical assistance and support provided.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier III Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>These services are available to all LEAs in all levels; however, priority given to LEAs identified as Intense.</td>
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Amendment Area #3

New Set of Priority/Partnership Zone Schools to be identified

Prior to the opportunity for states to apply for ESEA Flexibility, Delaware had existing regulation and requirements for school improvement in the lowest performing Title I schools. Delaware referred to these schools as Partnership Zone schools. USED refers to these schools as “Priority” schools. This amendment seeks to clarify that Delaware will use the USED terminology of Priority schools in place of Partnership Zone.

This amendment builds on Delaware’s existing Priority school requirements and seeks to codify the system for identification and support of Priority schools based on lessons learned, emerging federal flexibility, and upcoming federal requirements.

This amendment includes modifications to areas of the current language in the ESEA Flexibility Request:

1) Naming a new cohort of Priority schools for 2014-15;
2) Method for identification;
3) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
4) Modification of the exit criteria; and,
5) Funding structure.

The DDOE plans to identify up to 5% of its Title I schools as new Priority Schools by September 1, 2014. The 2014-15 school year will be the planning year, with implementation beginning 2015-16. A newly named school will be a Priority school for a minimum of 4 years, with year 1 as a planning year. A school may remain as a Priority school for longer than 4 years, as explained later in this document.

The schools will be selected from the lowest performing Title I schools on the Academic Framework (AF) and may also include any Title I participating or Title I eligible secondary schools, with a graduation rate of less than 60% for the All Students category over a number of years or are among the lowest 5% in percent of students meeting SAT criteria.

These newly identified schools will be required to follow the processes outlined in current regulation here, as well as any other process outlined in this document that may be in addition to or in lieu of the regulation as currently promulgated.

The regulation provides an approach for turning around low-achieving schools that combines authority with flexibility, and that promotes rapid reform within a collective bargaining environment. This authority allows the state to intervene in its low-achieving schools. The regulation describes the processes an LEA must take when one of its schools is selected as a Priority school. This is a critical component of the ongoing work to identify what works and what will have the most profound effect on improving outcomes for these schools.

The DDOE has reviewed the delineated processes over the past several years, and found areas that can be improved. The processes that will be improved include: 1) the interaction between the DDOE and the LEAs in the execution of an approved Memorandum of Understanding; 2) clear identification of roles and responsibilities of the DDOE, LEAs and schools in the implementation of the approved MOU and the PZ school’s plan; 3) alignment of exit criteria to the AF; and 4) further actions if exit criteria are not met.

A school that had been previously named a PZ school or a Focus school may be selected for this cohort of Priority schools.

The School Turnaround Unit (STU) will continue to be responsible for technical assistance and oversight of the Priority schools.
Funding Structure

LEAs with Priority schools can set aside a portion of their regular Title I, Part A allocations and may be eligible for State School Improvement funds, Title I 1003(a) School Improvement funds or Title 1003(g) School Improvement funds for activities to support Priority schools. The LEAs will also be provided a planning grant for the first year (2014-15) of approximately $15,000. Approximately, $10,000 of this will be used for the Comprehensive Success Review (CSR) in the fall. The remaining funds will be used for other planning activities.

Supports for Priority Schools

The DDOE intends to conduct a Comprehensive Success Review (CSR) of the identified Priority schools using a research-based school level diagnostic tool. This is a process that DDOE has used for all current Priority schools and focus schools. This review identifies and prioritizes challenges in the areas of Leadership, Budget and Resources, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment and Accountability, Professional Development, School Environment, and Stakeholder Engagement. The DDOE provides technical assistance to the school and its LEA in developing strategies to address identified areas of need.

Identification of new cohort of Priority Schools schools

For purposes of this new cohort of Priority schools, the definition in the regulation is no longer operational because of its reliance of the NCLB construct of schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. As noted in amendment area #1, the Academic Framework will be used to determine the Priority schools.

Specific Requirements, Timelines, Memorandum of Understanding and Agreements

LEAs that have Priority schools must, in partnership with the State, select one of the four intervention models. The regulation requires that the DDOE and the LEA enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the selection of the model – closure, restart, turnaround, or transformation – as well as regarding the details of the implementation of the plan. For each of the four options, certain elements are mandated by regulation.

In addition, no matter which model is chosen, the requirements establish a shared reporting structure whereby the school leadership reports to the district and the state, and DDOE will be establishing clear protocols in this regard to ensure appropriate state reporting and support as part of the revised MOU that each Priority school, its district, and the state must complete. [Note that we are deleting the current MOU from the ESEA waiver.] Further, under any model, the Priority school strategy must be based on solid evidence of what critical elements must be addressed to ensure the greatest likelihood of success to dramatically improve student achievement, exit Priority school status, and become a high-performing school. This includes, for example, implementing such strategies as recruitment, induction, and coaching of teachers and school leaders; increasing opportunities for promotion and career growth; establishing schedules and implementing strategies that provide increased learning time that is student centered; giving the school sufficient operational flexibility; and other elements as determined by the Secretary that evidence shows supports great teaching and leading and dramatically improving student achievement toward college and career-ready outcomes, particularly with regard to high-poverty students and schools. As our experience and evidence in school turnaround improves – both in Delaware and nationwide – so, too, must our expectations and requirements for evidenced-based actions. In particular, Delaware will expect all Priority schools to have a leadership team with experience and evidence of success in turning around underperforming schools, including through an Education Management Organization (EMO), Charter Management Organization (CMO), or principal leader. This is particularly true for Priority schools that have not improved over time or are in districts that are themselves underperforming.

Once a plan is agreed upon and implemented, the regulation provides the State with the authority to intervene to ensure rapid improvements in performance.
Exit Criteria

The regulation as currently written provides that if, after two years of operations, the school has not made AYP, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process will be repeated. For purposes of the cohort selected in 2014, the exit criteria will be aligned to the Academic Framework and any additional criteria established by the Secretary that are appropriate given the needs of the school. The Priority school shall, at a minimum, show an aggregate Academic Framework (AF) score that reaches the threshold of "meets" or "exceeds" at the end of the 3rd year of implementation to exit Priority school status.

Schools remain as Priority schools for the full three years of implementation, regardless of achievement during earlier years. A district that has a school that does not meet its exit criteria at the end of the 3rd year of implementation will be required to renegotiate the MOU with the Secretary.