

November 13, 2014

Dear Chief State School Officer:

In September 2011, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) offered each State educational agency (SEA) the opportunity to request flexibility on behalf of itself and its local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools. This voluntary opportunity provided educators and State and local leaders with flexibility 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), in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive State-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. SEAs have used this flexibility to design and implement innovative, locally-tailored strategies to address their most pressing education challenges and better support their students. Now, three years later, I invite each SEA with an approved request that will expire at the end of the 2014-2015 school year to request a three-year renewal of ESEA flexibility, through the 2017-2018 school year. As discussed below, certain SEAs will be invited to request a four-year renewal, through the 2018-2019 school year.

Accompanying this letter are two documents. The first, titled *ESEA Flexibility Guidance for Renewal Process*, provides useful information about the substantive requirements for receiving renewal as well as information about the renewal process. The second, titled *ESEA Flexibility Renewal Form*, should be used by an SEA to request renewal of ESEA flexibility.

An SEA must submit its request for renewal of ESEA flexibility no later than March 31, 2015. SEAs that were approved to implement ESEA flexibility beginning in the 2012-2013 school year (Windows 1 or 2 SEAs), that are meeting their commitments to the original timelines and principles of ESEA flexibility, will be eligible for a four-year renewal through the 2018-2019 school year and will be invited to participate in an expedited review process if they submit their requests by January 30, 2015. SEAs that are eligible for a four-year renewal of ESEA flexibility may request that four-year renewal regardless of whether or not they choose to participate in the expedited review.

The Department will continue to provide technical assistance throughout the renewal process, including the following:

- November 20, 2014: ED will conduct a webinar for all SEAs eligible for ESEA flexibility renewal. This will be an opportunity for you and your staff to ask questions, gain clarity, and learn more about the ESEA flexibility renewal process.
- In the coming weeks, ED will release *Frequently Asked Questions* that will provide additional information on how an SEA can request and receive renewal of ESEA flexibility.
- ED will also conduct additional webinars over the next several months to support SEAs in the development of their renewal requests.

Additionally, given the range of State and local educational strategies being implemented under ESEA flexibility, the Department is interested in working with SEAs to evaluate and learn from different State and local approaches, including providing some funding for such

evaluations. The purpose of these evaluations would be to increase understanding of how different State approaches and strategies (including implementation of college- and career- ready standards, differentiated accountability systems, and teacher and principal evaluation and support systems) contribute to improving educational outcomes for all students. In December, after further consultation with SEAs and research experts, the Department will share additional information on the process by which States can propose evaluations of innovative approaches to improving student achievement and increasing the quality of instruction.

Should you have any questions regarding ESEA flexibility or the renewal process, please do not hesitate to reach out to your ESEA flexibility State contact or to send questions by e-mail to [eseaflexibility@ed.gov](mailto:eseaflexibility@ed.gov).

Thank you for your commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students in your State. I look forward to our continued partnership in this critical work.

Sincerely,

Deborah S. Delisle  
Assistant Secretary