



MARYLAND ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

SUMMARY PROVIDED BY COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS (CCSSO)

Maryland is committed to ensuring that every student is prepared to graduate from a Maryland public school with the content knowledge and learning skills to be successful in the future, whether in post-secondary education, job training, or an immediate career. The State recognizes that the grid of measures mandated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) may have reflected the state of the art in 2002, but educators now know that the simplistic annual yearly progress measure could tell only a very limited story of achievement for each school. Through a decade of hard work, leaders have increasingly seen the value of expanding accountability indicators to encompass better real-time feedback via the analyses of data features, particularly within student growth and subgroup performance gap data, all of which Maryland incorporates into its new system. ESEA Flexibility gives Maryland the opportunity to build on the work already underway in the state and to reset its focus on the lowest-performing schools and to support those efforts vigorously, with a drive toward rigorous, realistic goals.

Maryland's ESEA Flexibility request aligns with the State's long-range education priorities and goals. It builds on the leadership states have demonstrated to advance reform efforts to raise the bar beyond current requirements of NCLB in order to achieve college and career readiness for all students through a comprehensive, interconnected plan for education in the State. The State sets clear, high expectations, thoughtfully collects information to determine if those expectations are being met, then works with schools and districts to provide the necessary supports and interventions to improve outcomes. Maryland's rigorous system uses an important combination of data for both academic achievement and growth toward proficiency to determine if schools and districts are meeting their goals. The State maintains a critical focus on traditional subgroups, with a continued commitment to publicly reporting disaggregated data for all subgroups and targeting supports to any group that is not meeting its targets. Maryland's system incentivizes continuous improvement for all schools and districts, and is particularly focused on intensive supports and interventions for schools that are struggling the most.

Summary of Maryland's Request

What standards does Maryland use?

Maryland adopted the Common Core State Standards in June 2010. As part of this effort, the State extended its standards down to Pre-K. The State has also joined the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium that is providing English language proficiency standards and assessments. Through a multi-year, multi-dimensional transition process involving significant district engagement and planning, the State is developing the new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum (with two primary components – the Curriculum Frameworks and the Online Curriculum Toolkit) and will achieve full implementation of the standards and curriculum during the 2013-2014 school year.

What targets has Maryland set for its schools and districts?

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) have been set such that by 2017 each school is expected to reduce its percent of non-proficient students for each ESEA subgroup and at the "All Student" level by 50% (Option A). Schools are evaluated on a continuous scale that reflects school performance relative to a target.

How is Maryland measuring the performance of schools and districts?

The Maryland School Performance/Progress Index is based on two rigorous multi-measure performance frameworks — one for elementary and middle schools (grades PreK-8) and one for high schools (grades 9-12).

The State has set clear, ambitious targets for each element of the index:

- Student proficiency;
- Gaps between the highest and lowest performing subgroups;
- Growth (in elementary and middle school only); and
- College- and career readiness (high school only).

Each framework includes three elements (based on multiple assessments and other measures) with assigned weights.

The Elementary and Middle School Index includes:

- Student Achievement (reading, math, science)-30%
- Growth (reading, math)-30%
- Gap (reading, math, science)-40%

The High School Index includes:

- Student Achievement (Algebra/Data Analysis, English, and Biology)-40%
- College- and Career-Readiness (Graduation Rate, Career Attainment, Attendance)-20%
- Gap (Algebra/Data Analysis, English, and Biology)-40%

Each school receives a School Performance/Progress Index score. Based on the analysis of this data, cut scores will be established for the placement of each school into one of 5 performance strands. Strand 1

is made up of the highest performing schools and with minimal subgroups missing AMOs. Strand 5 is made up with the lowest performing schools overall and with schools that are missing their AMOs for multiple subgroups. The State will provide recognition, support, and interventions accordingly as described below.

What is Maryland doing to support its lowest-performing schools?

Maryland's persistently lowest-performing schools (including Priority Schools) will work with the State's Breakthrough Center and their district leadership to select one of the four approved turnaround models, using a state-provided template to develop a turnaround plan. The Breakthrough Center is the entity created through an organizational redesign within the State education agency to serve as the statewide system of supports. It serves as the interface for the State with local education agencies (LEAs) and chronically underperforming schools, offering both "basic" and "deep" support based on school needs. Each LEA has a Turnaround Office with dedicated staff to support school improvement.

The State is improving upon NCLB by moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach for all schools to a system where Focus Schools will have to complete a needs assessment and select from a set of targeted strategies designed to meet identified needs (i.e., staff capacity building, staff collaboration and planning time). Schools will receive technical assistance from their LEA in the development and implementation of a school improvement plan. These schools can also access technical assistance through the Breakthrough Center in the form of a school support team that will assist with analysis of the school's operation, development of recommendations for improving student performance, and support for plan implementation.

Priority and Focus Schools will also undergo the specific monitoring associated with their respective Strands to which they are assigned. In addition, Priority Schools will be monitored by School Improvement Grant (SIG) Monitoring Teams and new Priority Schools Monitoring Teams. Priority Schools will enter into an MOU with the Breakthrough Center codifying their agreement on the support that is needed. Focus Schools will have annual Title I reviews with random visits from the State to one or more Title I schools (random visits of this type are carried out for schools in each Strand). The lowest 5% of non-Title I schools will also undergo additional periodic monitoring and there will be a focus on teachers' individual professional development plans.

What is Maryland doing to support schools and districts beyond the lowest-performing?

Maryland annually assesses school, student, and student group performance against established targets. Each of the State's 24 LEAs must submit a Master Plan to the SEA that details the strategies it will use for meeting ESEA and State education goals, with a particular focus on strategies to improve the performance of any subgroup not meeting targets. Every Maryland school participates in the State's School Improvement Process leading to the development and implementation of a school improvement plan ensuring that all schools are demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement.

A tiered system of oversight and support will be based on the 5-Strand ratings system, including differentiation among schools on the basis of subgroup performance. The State's Breakthrough Center works closely with each LEA, including dedicated meetings with the two LEAs that have Priority schools. Maryland is committed to ensuring that all subgroups meet expectations and LEAs will provide additional technical assistance to Title I schools that do not meet AMOs or that have large achievement gaps. This can include assistance with data analysis, parental involvement, and professional development.

What is Maryland doing to maintain focus on subgroups and target support to subgroups?

Maryland will ensure a continued focus on subgroup performance through its AMOs (including separate targets for each subgroup), its Strand designations, its Focus School categorization, and a requirement that any school in which a subgroup misses an AMO target analyze and address the needs of that subgroup in its school improvement plan (SIP). In addition, all schools and districts will publicly report disaggregated data on the performance of all subgroups.

What is Maryland doing for top performing schools?

Maryland will reward all high achieving schools, with additional recognition for those that overcome considerable challenges. Maryland will announce both its High Progress and High Performing Reward schools via press releases and media announcements. Special Certificates of Recognition will be awarded for display at the school. In addition:

- Title I Distinguished Highest Performing Reward Schools will receive a special plaque of recognition.
- Superlative Highest Performing Reward Schools will be recognized by the State Board of Education and Governor's Office. These schools will be invited to present their best practices at the State's annual Title I meeting and will have their best practices highlighted in publications and videos.

How does Maryland report information to the public?

As it moves to the new Maryland School Performance/Progress Index, the State will continue to make a wide array of data available to the public via the report card website (www.MDReportCard.org). This includes school, school system, and State level data on aggregated and student subgroup performance. From this site, the public will be able to monitor the progress and improvement of schools, including with regard to progress toward AMOs.

How is Maryland supporting effective instruction and leadership?

Maryland's Education Reform Act 2010 laid the foundation for the State to develop an Educator Evaluation System that sets a rigorous standard for what constitutes an effective teacher and principal in the State. This legislation requires that teachers and principals show they can successfully improve student learning in order to be effective and makes student growth a significant factor (50%) in evaluation. The evaluation systems being piloted in accordance with this legislation will provide meaningful feedback to educators, support efforts to ensure effective professional development, and serve as the basis for making personnel decisions.

Maryland began piloting its evaluation system in seven districts in 2011-12. The State Board of Education promulgated regulations for the system in March 2012 and approved those regulations on June 26, 2012. The state will continue to field test through 2012-13 with full statewide implementation in 2013-14.