

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW YORK'S ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS FOR ALL STUDENTS

New York adopted rigorous English language arts and math standards now in place in 45 other states and the District of Columbia. New York contracted with the College Board to conduct alignment studies to identify “gaps” between the State’s current English language arts and math standards and the new college- and career-ready standards. The College Board’s recommendations led to the State asking all districts to organize implementation of the new standards around 12 core “shifts” in instructional practice to better align practice with research-driven methods that result in college-ready student performance. New York raised the standard for proficiency on its current assessments as it transitions to more rigorous standards and assessments that measure student mastery of those assessments. The new standards indicate a level of proficiency reflective of college readiness. New York established Network Teams with expertise in curriculum, data analysis and instruction to work directly with schools to deliver sustained, intensive professional development, including strategies for English Learners and students with disabilities, in order to support implementation of new standards, curriculum and assessments and provide comprehensive, ongoing support.

IMPROVED STATE AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL STUDENTS

Coordinating Reform Across State Initiatives: Through ESEA flexibility, New York is coordinating Statewide reform efforts around its Regents Reform Agenda, its Race To the Top grant, and ESEA Flexibility principles to sharpen the focus and maximize impact. Together, these Statewide reform efforts focus on more rigorous standards and assessments that measure student performance of those standards, stronger accountability for the lowest-performing schools and schools in which subgroups persistently perform poorly, and teacher and leader evaluation built around instruction that address the standards and student mastery of them based on student performance.

Ambitious Performance Targets: New York established new performance targets for reading, math, and science that will cut the achievement gap in half within six years.

Renewed Focus on Closing Achievement Gaps: New York will identify the districts in the State with the greatest challenges for groups of students as “Focus districts” and demand interventions to improve student performance. To facilitate the work in its Focus districts, the State will assign Integrated Intervention Team to each district. The role of the Integrated Intervention Team will be to assess the district and schools using the new Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness to inform district and school intervention plans. The teams will consist of New York Department of Education staff, district staff, external educational experts, and content and/or subgroup specialists. All schools that persistently fail to make targets for any subgroup will be identified as a “Local Assistance Plan” (LAP) school. New York takes into account the past achievement of schools in identifying LAP schools.

Aggressive Plan for Turning Around the Lowest-Performing Schools: New York will identify the lowest-performing schools in the State as “Priority schools” and ensure that districts implement meaningful interventions in these schools. New York identifies as its Priority schools those currently implementing School Improvement Grants (SIG), those among the lowest-performing five percent of schools in the State, and those with graduation rates below 60 percent over last three consecutive years. All Priority schools not implementing one of the four SIG models are required to create a Comprehensive Education Plan.

Building Capacity for School Improvement: New York will develop and implement a single tool, the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness, to help schools and districts identify how student performance, instructional programs and services, and teacher and leader effectiveness compare to the ideal performance levels sought. The tool will ensure the State, districts, schools, and the general public have a common understanding and language to communicate next steps for improvement and/or sustainability efforts. This single tool will replace the multiple diagnostic tools currently used by State program offices.

Increased Accountability and Support for Districts: The State will require districts that do not have Priority or Focus schools but do have schools with persistently low-achieving subgroups or large achievement gaps to develop plans, to be reviewed and approved by the State, and to indicate how the school and district will address the needs of these schools. .

Transparently Reporting on Student’s Progress: New York will continue to report student performance as required on its school, district, and State report cards. With respect to student growth, the State will report the actual percent proficient as well as the percent of students on track to be proficient in three years or by grade 8.

Creating a Well-Rounded Education: To encourage schools to focus on a well-rounded curriculum, New York will be holding schools accountable for student performance in science, in addition to English language arts and math.

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

New York provided flexibility to districts by negotiating a teacher and principal evaluation system which includes 40 percent weighting of student growth, including 20 percent locally-determined growth measures. New York established financial incentives for districts to implement approved evaluation systems in the 2012-2013 school year. Information from the evaluation system will be used to improve instruction and drive professional development.