

Overview of New Hampshire's ESEA Flexibility Waiver Renewal Request

This overview summarizes the New Hampshire Department of Education's (NH DOE's) approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver Renewal as submitted in final version on July 28, 2015.

ESEA Flexibility Waiver Renewal

On March 31, New Hampshire submitted its ESEA Flexibility Waiver Renewal application to the U.S. Department of Education (US ED) requesting that the state be granted continued flexibility with regard to certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the federal education law more commonly known as No Child Left Behind. In 2013, the NH DOE was granted its first flexibility waiver which allowed us to move forward with state and local reforms designed to **improve academic achievement and increase the quality of instruction for all students**. The US ED approved this application on August 6, 2015. The continuation of the waiver will allow us the ability to focus efforts on closing the achievement gaps, increasing equity and improving educational outcomes for all students.

Why did New Hampshire develop its ESEA waiver application?

ESEA flexibility waives certain aspects of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that was enacted in 2001 and was due for reauthorization in 2007. The majority of the waived ESEA provisions relate to school and district accountability, including: adequate yearly progress (AYP) reporting; the identification of schools for improvement, corrective action, and restructuring; the implementation of supplemental educational services (SES); associated funding requirements; highly qualified teacher improvement plans; and limits on the transfer of federal funds.

ESEA flexibility has allowed New Hampshire the ability to implement a school and district accountability and assistance system that **better meets the needs of our local school districts** and target supports for schools that are experiencing academic challenges.

What are the new waiver renewal components?

The NH DOE and school districts around the state believe we must think differently about assessment and accountability, and that continuous improvement is driven and accomplished at the local level. NH DOE is not making many significant changes to its original waiver, except in two areas that recognize this belief:

- the request to use the **College Board's SAT** for the state's high school statewide assessment; and
- the addition of the state's recent approval to allow four districts to pilot the **Performance Assessment for Competency Education (PACE) Pilot**.

In addition, the renewal draft updated the waiver to include the work accomplished over the last two years, as well as plans for the continuation of the current proposals. The renewal allows us to rethink some components of the original waiver such as requirements for Focus Schools. The renewal provides educators in those schools the space to concentrate their efforts on achievement gaps. In addition, further information is provided to the US ED regarding the NH model for educator support and evaluation systems and the progress made in schools regarding this effort. Finally, the state is requesting a "year of pause" to its accountability determinations (for the 2015-16 school year) to allow for multiple years of data to be used.



What are the principles of the NH ESEA Flexibility Waiver and its renewal?

Dedicated leaders, teachers and students in New Hampshire have a long history of educational excellence. This excellence is derived from a strong commitment to a shared vision for student achievement and the state and local school districts have been regularly recognized for their leadership and an overall quality education system. However, as times change New Hampshire's strategies need to evolve. The state must continually improve its system to ensure a better educational experience for all learners in a rapidly changing world – one that will result in more students reaching higher levels of learning and being better equipped to succeed beyond high school. The NH DOE's ESEA Flexibility Waiver describes its vision for innovative approaches to improve student learning outcomes.

With this flexibility come assurances that New Hampshire will concentrate efforts on four principles. These principles include:



Principle 1: College- and career-ready expectations for all students

- Ensuring all students have access to high quality academic content standards
- Implementing next generation assessment systems focused on understanding student mastery of skills and knowledge
 - Performance Assessment for Competency Education
 - College Board's SAT
 - Statewide measures

Principle 2: Identifying, recognizing, and supporting New Hampshire schools

- Focusing on moving from improvement to innovation and through a NH Networked Strategy
- Setting school-based annual learning targets
- Focusing efforts on improving achievement for all students including subgroup achievement and graduation rates
- Concentrating resources on schools that have academic challenges
- Recognizing schools that are high performing and making the most progress

Principle 3: Supporting effective instruction and leadership

- Using the guidelines from the Principal Evaluation Task Force and the Educator Effectiveness Task Force, which includes over a hundred educators and three years of development
- Focusing on support and professional learning for principals and educators
- Allowing for time to build local support in a local system
- Including a significant measure on student learning and other multiple measures

Principle 4: Reduce Paperwork Burden