



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

OCT 09 2014

The Honorable Chris L. Nicastro
Commissioner of Education
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Commissioner Nicastro:

This letter is in response to Missouri's June 26, 2014 request for a one-year extension of flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA flexibility), so that Missouri may continue to implement ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year.

Our team has reviewed Missouri's request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend Missouri's ESEA flexibility request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. My decision to extend Missouri's ESEA flexibility request is based on my determination that ESEA flexibility has been effective in enabling Missouri to carry out important reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest. I have also determined that Missouri's monitoring next steps have been adequately addressed through submission of documentation and other information, including high-quality plans for implementation in the 2014–2015 school year. This letter also provides my approval of Missouri's proposed amendments to Principle 2 of its ESEA flexibility request that are summarized in the enclosure to this letter. Missouri's approved request will be posted on the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) website.

ED is aware that Missouri will administer different assessments to students in the 2014–2015 school year than the assessments identified in Missouri's previously approved ESEA flexibility request. Because of that, Missouri must provide a description and, as needed, evidence of the steps that it took to determine that the assessments it plans to administer in the 2014–2015 school year in grades 3–8 and at least once in high school in reading/language arts and mathematics are high quality consistent with the definition of "high-quality assessment" in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility* (available at: <http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility/documents/esea-flexibility-acc.doc>). ED will work with Missouri regarding the information Missouri will need to provide.

This extension is subject to Missouri's commitment to continue working with ED on Missouri's requested amendments to its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, which may require additional flexibility. Missouri's continued work with ED on its requested amendments to Principle 3 as well as Missouri's progress in implementing ESEA flexibility, including administering high-quality assessments, during the 2014–2015 school year will inform ED's decision regarding renewal of Missouri's ESEA flexibility after the 2014–2015 school year.

400 MARYLAND AVE., SW, WASHINGTON, DC 20202

<http://www.ed.gov/>

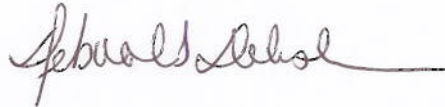
The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Missouri continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its districts are in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in their implementation of ESEA flexibility. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

I am confident that Missouri will continue to implement the reforms described in its approved ESEA flexibility request and advance its efforts to hold schools and school districts accountable for the achievement of all students. If you need any additional assistance to implement your ESEA flexibility request, please do not hesitate to contact Susan Wilhelm of my staff at: susan.wilhelm@ed.gov.

Thank you for your commitment and continued focus on enhancing education for all of Missouri's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deborah S. Delisle", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Margie Vandeven, Assistant Commissioner

Approved Amendments to Missouri's ESEA Flexibility Request

The following is a summary of approved amendments to Missouri's ESEA flexibility request. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) approves these amendments because Missouri's ESEA flexibility request, as amended, continues to be aligned with the principles of ESEA flexibility. Please refer to ED's website (www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility) for Missouri's complete ESEA flexibility request.

- **State-Developed Recognition, Accountability, and Support System (2.A.i)**

Revision: Missouri amended its request to indicate that it will no longer include additional EOC assessments as a measure of High School college- and career-readiness. The SEA will adopt the ACT as an 11th grade measure of college- and career-readiness.

- **Focus Schools (Principle 2.E)**

Revision: Missouri amended its request to update its plans for monitoring focus schools.

Revision: Missouri amended its request to change one of the criteria focus schools must meet in order to exit status. Missouri revised the criterion of decreasing the number of non-proficient students by 25 percent to 10 percent.

- **Provide Incentives and Supports to Other Title I Schools (Principle 2.F)**

Revision: Missouri amended its request to update its plans for identifying Title I schools not meeting annual measurable objectives or graduation rate targets over a number of years, and updated its plans for supporting and monitoring these schools.