



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

OCT 09 2014

The Honorable Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Commissioner Gist:

This letter is in response to Rhode Island's May 12, 2014 request for a one-year extension of flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA flexibility), so that Rhode Island may continue to implement ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year.

Our team has reviewed Rhode Island's request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend Rhode Island's ESEA flexibility request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. My decision to extend Rhode Island's ESEA flexibility request is based on my determination that ESEA flexibility has been effective in enabling Rhode Island to carry out important reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest. I have also determined that Rhode Island'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 the amendments to Principles 1 and 2 that Rhode Island proposed that align with the requirements of ESEA flexibility. A summary of Rhode Island's approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and Rhode Island's amended request will be posted on the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) website.

This extension is subject to Rhode Island's commitment to continue working with ED on Rhode Island's requested amendments to its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. Rhode Island's progress in implementing its approved ESEA flexibility request during the 2014–2015 school year, as well as Rhode Island's continued work with ED on its requested amendments to Principle 3, will inform ED's decision regarding renewal of Rhode Island's ESEA flexibility after the 2014–2015 school year.

Rhode Island 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.

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<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.*

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I am confident that Rhode Island 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 Todd Stephenson of my staff at: [todd.stephenson@ed.gov](mailto:todd.stephenson@ed.gov).

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deborah S. Delisle".

Deborah S. Delisle  
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: David V. Abbott, Deputy Commissioner/General Counsel



## **Approved Amendments to Rhode Island's ESEA Flexibility Request**

The following is a summary of approved amendments to Rhode Island's ESEA flexibility request. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) approves these amendments because Rhode Island'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](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)) for Rhode Island's complete ESEA flexibility request.

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

Revision: Rhode Island amended its request to clarify the number of consecutive years a school must miss the same Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) before being placed into the Warning classification.

Revision: Rhode Island amended its request to indicate that AMO targets will be reset following school year 2014-2015 based on the baseline data from the new assessments.

Revision: Rhode Island amended its request to indicate that for the 2015–2016 accountability cycle priority and focus schools will hold the same classification as the 2014–2015 school year, and no new schools will be identified as Warning, Typical, or Leading. Rhode Island indicated that it will continue to ensure that its local educational agencies (LEAs) are providing incentives and supports to Warning schools identified in the 2014–2015 school year.

Revision: Rhode Island amended its request to indicate that during the 2014–2015 school year, elementary, middle, and high schools will not use one of the seven metrics that make up a school's index score. Specifically, schools will not be assigned points based on their progress to 2017 targets, and the ten points assigned to that metric will be reapportioned proportionately across the remaining metrics.

### **Priority Schools (Principle 2.D)**

Revision: Changes the priority school exit criteria. In addition to other measures, a priority school must meet 80 percent of its AMOs—including all missed targets substantially contributing to the school's original priority status—in order to exit. Please note that ED will examine the impact of this change when reviewing Rhode Island's request for renewal of ESEA flexibility in the spring of 2015.

### ▪ **Focus Schools (Principle 2.E)**

Revision: Rhode Island amended its request to indicate that it will monitor focus schools quarterly, versus bi-annually.

Revision: Changes the focus school exit criteria. In addition to other measures, a school must meet 80 percent of its AMOs—including all missed targets contributing to the school's

original focus status—in order to exit. Please note that ED will examine the impact of this change when reviewing Rhode Island’s request for renewal of ESEA flexibility in the spring of 2015.

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

Revision: Rhode Island amended its request to clarify the number of schools identified as Warning schools for the 2012–2013 school year, and to provide additional detail about expanded monitoring efforts for these schools.