



# ESEA Flexibility Waiver



State Board of Education  
October 18, 2011

# Why Should Florida Request a Waiver?

- Better align federal and state accountability systems to ensure one cohesive system understood by all Floridians
- Focus on improving student learning and increasing quality of instruction (Florida's Race to the Top Theory of Action)
- Continue recognition of progress made in student achievement and closing the achievement gap
- USDOE is committed to ensure federal law supports state reform, not act as a barrier



# Background and Overview

- Over the last several years, **states like Florida have taken the lead on college and career ready policy reforms**, including standards (Common Core), assessment, accountability, etc.
- **ESEA reauthorization** may progress further in the Senate and House, but final passage in the near future remains unlikely.
- On September 23, President Obama announced that USDOE is formally inviting states to apply for "**ESEA flexibility**" (**waivers**) in exchange for state leadership on several college and career-ready reforms including state accountability systems and educator evaluation systems.
- This focus on state leadership provides the basis for a new state-federal partnership with a **focus on state innovation**, as opposed to compliance with federal law.
- **This is not a competition.** There are not winners and losers. The USDOE will work with all states until waivers are approved and beyond.



# Four Principles

1. Adopt and implement college and career-ready standards and aligned assessments
2. Design and implement a rigorous statewide accountability system
3. Design, pilot, and implement a system of teacher and leader evaluation based on achievement, over a number of years
4. Evaluate and adjust as necessary state-level administrative and reporting requirements to reduce burden on districts and schools



# Florida Accomplishments Related to Principles

- Adopted Common Core State Standards
- Joined common assessment consortia
- Differentiated Accountability pilot state
- All LEAs are implementing revised teacher evaluation systems and revising principal evaluation systems in 2011-12
- Annual Paperwork Reduction requirements



# Principle 1

## College and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students

- A. Adopt college and career-ready standards**
- B. Transition to college and career-ready standards
- C. Develop and administer annual, statewide, aligned assessments that measure student growth in knowledge and skills**

**Florida** has already adopted Common Core State Standards (A) and joined two assessment consortia (B) – Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and National Center and State Collaborative (alternate assessment)

- We will submit documentation of the above and include our transition plan for standards implementation.
- Aligns with our Race to the Top student achievement goal to double the percentage of high school students that graduate, enter postsecondary, and earn at least a year's worth of college credit.



# Principle 2

## State-Developed, Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support

- A. Develop and implement a state-based system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support
- B. Set ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives
- C. Identify Reward Schools (highest-performing)
- D. Identify Priority Schools (lowest-performing), including new turnaround principles
- E. Identify Focus Schools (achievement gaps/lowest-performing subgroups)
- F. Provide incentives and supports for other Title I schools
- G. Build SEA, LEA, and School Capacity to Improve Student Learning



# Principle 2 (continued)

**Florida is a Differentiated Accountability (DA) pilot state and plans to enhance the existing structure through this waiver.**

Proposals:

- Reduce categories from 6 to 4
- Use Florida's Accountability System (school grades) to define the DA model
  - Intervene entrance criteria changed to a school grade of F
  - Intervene exit criteria are:
    - Earn school grade of C
    - Meet proficiency targets in math and reading set by the State Board of Education
  - Establish a "Hold Status" for no longer than two years if only one of the exit criteria are met



# Principle 3

## Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership through Educator Evaluation

- A. Develop and adopt guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems**
- B. Ensure LEAs implement evaluation and support systems**

**Florida** has accomplished this through:

- Race to the Top – Great Teachers and Leaders Assurance Area (revising evaluation systems, using evaluation results to inform decisions, educator preparation, professional development)
- Student Success Act – SB 736



# Principle 4

## Reducing Duplication and Unnecessary Burden

“The state agrees to evaluate and, based on that evaluation, revise its own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on districts and schools.”

**Florida** looks at this annually:

- Paperwork Reduction Task Force (2005)
- House Bill 7087 (2006)



# Use of Waivers

Required waivers focus on:

- 2014 timeline for achieving 100% proficiency
- School and district improvement and accountability requirements
- Increased flexibility in use of federal funds
- Removing poverty threshold of 40% for priority and focus schools

There is one optional waiver:

- Using 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funds for extended learning time during the school day



# USDOE Categorization of Schools Within the Flexibility Waiver

1. **“Reward Schools”** – Highest-performing and high-progress Title I schools
  - Must publicly recognize and reward
2. **“Priority Schools”** – Lowest-performing 5% of all Title I schools in the state based on achievement of all students, Title I high schools with graduation rates less than 60%, or a Tier I or Tier II school using School Improvement Grant funds to implement a school intervention model.
  - Must implement meaningful interventions aligned to turnaround principles
3. **“Focus Schools”** – 10% of Title I schools with the largest within-school achievement gaps, graduation rate gaps, or subgroups with low performance or low graduation rates.
  - Must identify specific needs and interventions



# Florida Categorization Proposal

- Use school grades to categorize all schools:

School Grade	ESEA Category	DA Category
F	Priority	Intervene
D	Focus	Correct
C		Prevent
A, B		Not in DA

- Use Florida School Recognition Program to reward schools with a grade of A and those improving at least one letter grade



# USDOE Turnaround Principles

LEAs must implement meaningful interventions designed to improve academic achievement of students in priority schools that are aligned with these new principles and selected with family and community input:

- Provide strong leadership by: (1) reviewing current principal performance; (2) replacing the principal or demonstrating the current principal has a track record of improving achievement; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility.
- Ensuring teacher effectiveness by: (1) reviewing the quality of staff and retaining only those who are effective; (2) preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and (3) providing job-embedded ongoing professional development
- Redesigning the school day/week/year for additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration
- Strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring instruction is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with state standards.
- Using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement
- Establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other non-academic factors that impact student achievement
- Providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement



# Florida Existing Turnaround Options

These four options are in Florida law (s.1008.33, F.S.) and align with Differentiated Accountability, Race to the Top, School Improvement Grant, and the ESEA Flexibility Turnaround Principles:

1. Convert to district-managed turnaround school
2. Reassign students to another school and monitor progress
3. Close the school and reopen as one or more charter schools
4. Contract with an outside entity



# Timeline

- Stakeholder Outreach: October-November 2011
  - The state must reach engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders and communities in the development of its request
- Waiver Proposal Due to USDOE: November 14, 2011
- Peer Review Process: November 2011-January 2012
- Anticipated Announcement of Status: January 2012
- Florida Legislative Session: January-March 2012



