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# **ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST**

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November 14, 2011

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LABEL	LIST OF ATTACHMENTS
1	<a href="#">Notice to LEAs</a>
2 (NA)	Comments on request received from LEAs (if applicable)
3	<a href="#">Notice and information provided to the public regarding the request</a>
4	Evidence that the State has formally adopted college- and career-ready content standards consistent with the State's standards adoption process for <a href="#">Reading</a> and <a href="#">Math</a> .
5	<a href="#">Memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs) certifying that meeting the State's standards corresponds to being college- and career-ready without the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level (if applicable)</a>
6 (NA)	State's Race to the Top Assessment Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (if applicable)
7	<a href="#">Evidence that the SEA has submitted high-quality assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review, or a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review (if applicable)</a>
8	<a href="#">A copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010-2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the "all students" group and all subgroups (if applicable)</a>
9	<a href="#">Table 2: Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools</a>
10	A copy of any guidelines that the SEA has already developed and adopted for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems: <a href="#">1</a> , <a href="#">2</a> , <a href="#">3</a> , <a href="#">4</a> , <a href="#">5</a>
11 (NA)	Evidence that the SEA has adopted one or more guidelines of local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems
12	<a href="#">Comments from Special Education community on standards-setting</a>
13	<a href="#">Standard Setting Technical Report for Minnesota Assessments</a>
14	<a href="#">The Scope of Work for the 2011-12 assessment contract with AIR</a>
15	<a href="#">Functional Requirements for the 2011 NCLB AYP Calculations</a>
16	<a href="#">Functional Requirements for the 2011 Minnesota Growth Calculations</a>
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18	Principal Evaluation Work Group <a href="#">Membership</a> and <a href="#">Schedule</a>

## COVER SHEET FOR ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

Legal Name of Requester:  Minnesota Department of Education	Requester's Mailing Address: 1500 West Highway 36 Roseville, MN 54113
State Contact for the ESEA Flexibility Request  Name: Sam Kramer  Position and Office: Federal Education Policy Specialist, No Child Left Behind Programs  Contact's Mailing Address: 1500 West Highway 36 Roseville, MN 54113  Telephone: 651-582-8454  Fax: 651-582-8727  Email address: samuel.kramer@state.mn.us	
Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Dr. Brenda Cassellius	Telephone: 651-582-8204
Signature of the Chief State School Officer:  	Date: 11-14-2011
The State, through its authorized representative, agrees to meet all principles of the ESEA Flexibility.	

**WAIVERS**

By submitting this flexibility request, the SEA requests flexibility through waivers of the ten ESEA requirements listed below and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements by checking each of the boxes below. The provisions below represent the general areas of flexibility requested; a chart appended to the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Frequently Asked Questions* enumerates each specific provision of which the SEA requests a waiver, which the SEA incorporates into its request by reference.

- ☒ 1. The requirements in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(E)-(H) that prescribe how an SEA must establish annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) to ensure that all students meet or exceed the State's proficient level of academic achievement on the State's assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the end of the 2013–2014 school year. The SEA requests this waiver to develop new ambitious but achievable AMOs in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to provide meaningful goals that are used to guide support and improvement efforts for the State, LEAs, schools, and student subgroups.
- ☒ 2. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) for an LEA to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, a Title I school that fails, for two consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and for a school so identified and its LEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA and its Title I schools need not comply with these requirements.
- ☒ 3. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(c) for an SEA to identify for improvement or corrective action, as appropriate, an LEA that, for two consecutive years or more, fails to make AYP, and for an LEA so identified and its SEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that it need not comply with these requirements with respect to its LEAs.
- ☒ 4. The requirements in ESEA sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) that limit participation in, and use of funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) programs based on whether an LEA has made AYP and is complying with the requirements in ESEA section 1116. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA that receives SRSA or RLIS funds may use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of whether the LEA makes AYP.
- ☒ 5. The requirement in ESEA section 1114(a)(1) that a school have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more in order to operate a schoolwide program. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA may implement interventions consistent with the turnaround principles or interventions that are based on the needs of the students in the school and designed to enhance the entire educational program in a school in any of its priority and focus schools, as appropriate, even if those schools do not have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more.

- ☒ 6. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved under that section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs in order to serve any of the State's priority and focus schools.
- ☒ 7. The provision in ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) that authorizes an SEA to reserve Title I, Part A funds to reward a Title I school that (1) significantly closed the achievement gap between subgroups in the school; or (2) has exceeded AYP for two or more consecutive years. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may use funds reserved under ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) for any of the State's reward schools.
- ☒ 8. The requirements in ESEA section 2141(a), (b), and (c) for an LEA and SEA to comply with certain requirements for improvement plans regarding highly qualified teachers. The SEA requests this waiver to allow the SEA and its LEAs to focus on developing and implementing more meaningful evaluation and support systems.
- ☒ 9. The limitations in ESEA section 6123 that limit the amount of funds an SEA or LEA may transfer from certain ESEA programs to other ESEA programs. The SEA requests this waiver so that it and its LEAs may transfer up to 100 percent of the funds it receives under the authorized programs among those programs and into Title I, Part A.
- ☒ 10. The requirements in ESEA section 1003(g)(4) and the definition of a Tier I school in Section I.A.3 of the School Improvement Grants (SIG) final requirements. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may award SIG funds to an LEA to implement one of the four SIG models in any of the State's priority schools.

*Optional Flexibility:*

An SEA should check the box below only if it chooses to request a waiver of the following requirements:

- ☐ The requirements in ESEA sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to activities provided only during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (*i.e.*, before and after school or during summer recess). The SEA requests this waiver so that 21st CCLC funds may be used to support expanded learning time during the school day in addition to activities during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session.

**ASSURANCES**

By submitting this application, the SEA assures that:

- ☒ 1. It requests waivers of the above-referenced requirements based on its agreement to meet Principles 1 through 4 of the flexibility, as described throughout the remainder of this request.
- ☒ 2. It will adopt English language proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to the State's college- and career-ready standards, consistent with the requirement in ESEA section 3113(b)(2), and that reflect the academic language skills necessary to access and meet the new college- and career-ready standards, no later than the 2013–2014 school year. (Principle 1)
- ☒ 3. It will develop and administer no later than the 2014–2015 school year alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that are consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2) and are aligned with the State's college- and career-ready standards. (Principle 1)
- ☒ 4. It will develop and administer ELP assessments aligned with the State's ELP standards, consistent with the requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(7), 3113(b)(2), and 3122(a)(3)(A)(ii). (Principle 1)
- ☒ 5. It will report annually to the public on college-going and college credit-accumulation rates for all students and subgroups of students in each LEA and each public high school in the State. (Principle 1)
- ☒ 6. If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and uses achievement on those assessments to identify priority and focus schools, it has technical documentation, which can be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments are administered statewide; include all students, including by providing appropriate accommodations for English Learners and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2); and are valid and reliable for use in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system. (Principle 2)
- ☒ 7. It will report to the public its lists of reward schools, priority schools, and focus schools at the time the SEA is approved to implement the flexibility, and annually thereafter, it will publicly recognize its reward schools. (Principle 2)

- ☒ 8. Prior to submitting this request, it provided student growth data on their current students and the students they taught in the previous year to, at a minimum, teachers of reading/language arts and mathematics in grades in which the State administers assessments in those subjects in a manner that is timely and informs instructional programs, or it will do so no later the deadline required under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. (Principle 3)
- ☒ 9. It will evaluate and, based on that evaluation, revise its own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on LEAs and schools. (Principle 4)
- ☒ 10. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its request.
- ☒ 11. Prior to submitting this request, it provided all LEAs with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request and has attached a copy of that notice (Attachment 1) as well as copies of any comments it received from LEAs (Attachment 2).
- ☒ 12. Prior to submitting this request, it provided notice and information regarding the request to the public in the manner in which the State customarily provides such notice and information to the public (*e.g.*, by publishing a notice in the newspaper; by posting information on its website) and has attached a copy of, or link to, that notice (Attachment 3).
- ☒ 13. It will provide to the Department, in a timely manner, all required reports, data, and evidence regarding its progress in implementing the plans contained throughout this request.

**If the SEA selects Option A or B in section 3.A of its request, indicating that it has not yet developed and adopted all guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, it must also assure that:**

- ☒ 14. It will submit to the Department for peer review and approval a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year. (Principle 3)



## INTRODUCTION

On August 16, 2011, due in part to unique conditions and delayed reporting created by the state's government shutdown, Minnesota applied for a limited and conditional waiver from certain provisions of No Child Left Behind. Shortly after, President Obama authorized Secretary Duncan to offer every state the opportunity to apply for waivers from the current No Child Left Behind law. As a result of the larger waiver opportunity and resulting guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, the Administration did not take action on Minnesota's temporary waiver request.

Due to the careful thought and consideration put into the initial waiver request, Minnesota was primed and ready to take on the challenge of implementing a better approach to school accountability. The waiver request we submit today presents a bold and creative accountability plan that we believe is better and more appropriate for the needs of Minnesota.

It is no secret that Minnesota ranks at the top of states in overall student achievement on many indicators, including our NAEP and ACT performance. However, we also know those results are not reflective of the academic performance of all Minnesota children. Our state ranks among the worst in the nation for our large achievement gaps. This is untenable and unacceptable. It is notable that among other measures, our new accountability plan measures progress on narrowing achievement gaps as one very important indicator of school performance.

When Secretary Duncan visited Minnesota in January of 2011, he remarked on Minnesota's seeming lack of urgency to aggressively tackle this most pressing issue. That lack of urgency is no more. It has been replaced by a deep and compelling urgency, and a commitment to lead the nation on the important work of replacing outdated accountability measures with a plan that provides a true picture of school performance and sets high expectations for every student in our state. It is a plan that makes sense for our teachers, our schools, our stakeholders, and most importantly, for our children.

## CONSULTATION

**An SEA must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders and communities in the development of its request. To demonstrate that an SEA has done so, the SEA must provide an assurance that it has consulted with the State’s Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in the request and provide the following:**

- 1. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from teachers and their representatives.*
- 2. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from other diverse communities, such as students, parents, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing students with disabilities and English Learners, business organizations, and Indian tribes.*

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) engaged stakeholders through a formal process in order to solicit input on its request. These stakeholders referred to as the ESEA Flexibility Work Group represented a wide array of interest groups and consisted of representatives from the following interests:

- Teachers (representatives from the statewide teachers’ union and the Minneapolis teachers’ union)
- Business
- Superintendents
- Higher Education
- Charter Schools
- School Boards
- Legislators
- Parents
- Minority Groups (Asian, Hispanic, African-American, American Indian)
- Principals
- Rural School Districts
- Title I Practitioners
- Assessment Directors
- Special Education
- English Learners

The Work Group met weekly for one month to discuss all aspects of Minnesota's request. These all day meetings allowed for stakeholder input on the various components of the request. Meetings were open to the public and were well-attended by both Work Group members and other interested parties. The Work Group was presented with different options particularly as they related to element two in the request form and was given an opportunity to express their preferences. This included having the opportunity to look at different scenarios for how to measure schools for differentiated recognition, support, and accountability.

For the entire period during which the Work Group met, MDE maintained a [website](#) where handouts from meetings were available to members and the public. Work Group members were encouraged to contact MDE staff with questions and feedback during the week leading up to each meeting, and this feedback was incorporated and discussed during meetings. The Work Group also received periodic electronic communications providing clarification on points that were unresolved during previous meetings.

Prior to the Work Group's final meeting, members of the Work Group were sent a decisions form that summarized every policy proposal MDE planned to include in its final Request. Members were encouraged to review the form and submit comments and questions electronically or during the final Work Group meeting. During that meeting, Work Group members and public observers had an opportunity to ask questions about every aspect of MDE's proposal and provide input. Based on this input, MDE made final adjustments to its proposal to reflect the preferences of the Work Group.

MDE's stakeholder engagement went beyond the Work Group. In the weeks leading up to Minnesota's official request submission, the Commissioner of Education and MDE staff took advantage of several opportunities to present aspects of the proposal to stakeholders from a variety of groups. These included (but were not limited to) minority groups, LEAs, representatives from rural schools, principals, and regional education groups. The Commissioner of Education and MDE staff members also engaged legislators of both the Senate and House K12 Education Committees on Oct. 17, 2011 whereby the legislators were provided time to give feedback and assess the need for any legislative action. More formally, the Commissioner and staff testified to the content of the

proposal in a public hearing in the Minnesota House of Representatives on Nov. 2, 2011. Testimony was posted to the MDE website, Facebook and Twitter accounts and was widely covered by the media. Additionally, information on the Request was shared with all superintendents in the state by email each week. Furthermore, the Commissioner presented on the waiver at the Minnesota Rural Education Association annual conference on Nov. 3, 2011, and MDE staff presented information to the Association of Metropolitan School Districts on Nov. 4, 2011. This was filmed and put on YouTube, posted to all MDE social media, and sent directly to superintendents and our education associations.

The Title I Committee of Practitioners (COP) was also consulted during this process. A representative of the COP served on the Work Group to ensure that the COP had the opportunity to provide input in crafting Minnesota's proposal. All members of the COP were also sent information and materials on the various options. Once a final proposal was in place, the COP was consulted through a conference call that allowed for participation of all COP members around the state. Prior to the conference call, COP members were provided with an outline of Minnesota's proposal. During the conference call, members of the COP were given opportunity to ask questions and provide input. Members were supportive of the Request and asked to be involved in the implementation of changes related to the Request.

MDE will continue its stakeholder engagement subsequent to its official ESEA Flexibility Request. MDE will tour the state to educate schools and members of the public on changes being made to the state's accountability system. MDE will also produce online tutorials and videos to explain aspects of the Request. This effort will be aimed at teachers, principals, parents and members of the public with the goal of ensuring the legitimacy of the state's plan.

## EVALUATION

The Department encourages an SEA that receives approval to implement the flexibility to collaborate with the Department to evaluate at least one program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs implement under principle 1, 2, or 3.

Upon receipt of approval of the flexibility, an interested SEA will need to nominate for evaluation a program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs will implement under principles 1, 2, or 3. The Department will work with the SEA to determine the feasibility and design of the evaluation and, if it is determined to be feasible and appropriate, will fund and conduct the evaluation in partnership with the SEA, ensuring that the implementation of the chosen program, practice, or strategy is consistent with the evaluation design.

☒ Check here if you are interested in collaborating with the Department in this evaluation, if your request for the flexibility is approved.

**Provide an overview (about 500 words) of the SEA's request for the flexibility that:**

- 1. explains the SEA's comprehensive approach to implement the waivers and principles and describes the SEA's strategy to ensure this approach is coherent within and across the principles; and*
- 2. describes how the implementation of the waivers and principles will enhance the SEA's and its LEAs' ability to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement.*

Since the last reauthorization of the ESEA, Minnesota has raised academic standards, developed tools for holding schools accountable for improving the academic performance of students, and provided schools with support to improve the quality of instruction. The waivers and principles included in this Flexibility Request proposal will allow Minnesota to utilize these carefully developed tools for improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction.

Minnesota's academic standards are the core of our accountability system. Schools are accountable for all students meeting statewide college- and career-ready academic standards. All accountability efforts are, therefore, directed at increasing the likelihood that students will achieve proficiency on the assessments aligned to the state standards.

ESEA Flexibility will allow us to take advantage of a wider variety of data to better identify schools that truly need support. With legislative support, Minnesota has developed a growth model to measure students' academic performance from year-to-year. If approved, Minnesota will use growth metrics, along with proficiency status and graduation rates to identify schools for Priority, Focus and Reward. The addition of growth data to the accountability system will give the public a more complete picture of how schools are performing.

Minnesota's experience with No Child Left Behind has shown it that it is not enough to just measure schools for accountability. Schools need to put the right school improvement plans in place, and have the necessary support from the state, and other education partners. School improvement requires teams of dedicated working together. With the help of such teams, Priority and Focus Schools will implement plans based on Turnaround Principles to change the

trajectory of the school. ESEA Flexibility will allow schools, LEAs and MDE to exercise financial and programmatic flexibility to implement essential activities at those schools that are most in need of support.

Because both high-quality leadership and instruction are critical to the continuous improvement of all schools, Minnesota has moved beyond No Child Left Behind's high-quality teacher requirements to implement a system of meaningful principal and teacher evaluation. These changes have legislative approval and will be in place within the timelines required for ESEA Flexibility.

Finally, ESEA Flexibility will allow Minnesota to reduce the administrative burdens of LEAs. The less time LEAs must spend on unnecessary requirements, the more time they have for ensuring that schools are continuously improving.

We are not looking for a pass on accountability. We are looking for the flexibility to use the systems and tools we have created to increase the quality of schools and to improve student achievement.

**1.A Adopt College- and Career-Ready Standards**

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option selected.

**Option A**

The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that are common to a significant number of States, consistent with part (1) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.

- i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. ([Attachment 4](#))

**Option B**

The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that have been approved and certified by a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs), consistent with part (2) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.

- i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)
- ii. Attach a copy of the memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of IHEs certifying that students who meet these standards will not need remedial coursework at the postsecondary level. ([Attachment 5](#))



## 1.B Transition to College- and Career-Ready Standards

- 1. B Provide the SEA’s plan to transition to and implement no later than the 2013–2014 school year college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for all students and schools and include an explanation of how this transition plan is likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with such standards. The Department encourages an SEA to include in its plan activities related to each of the italicized questions in the corresponding section of the document titled ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance, or to explain why one or more of those activities is not necessary to its plan.**

Minnesota law ([Minn. Stat. 120B.023, Subd.2](#)), establishes requirements for revising state academic standards in each subject to include an increased level of rigor that prepares students with the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and the skilled workplace.

This statute also sets forth a revision and implementation schedule. Minnesota’s current state academic standards in reading/language arts were aligned to college- and career-ready standards in 2010. Full LEA implementation for these standards is required by 2012-2013.

The University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System have certified the mathematics academic standards declaring that students who meet these standards will not need remedial coursework at the post-secondary level (See [Attachment 5](#)). This reflects the involvement of Minnesota’s Institutes of Higher Education in the standard-development process

In addition to reading/language arts and mathematics Minnesota will have a required series of college- and career-readiness standards to be implemented in LEAs by 2013-2014 as evidenced by the statutorily defined revision timeline below.

Minnesota Academic Standards Revision Timeline (Minn. Stat. § 120B.023, Subd. 2)			
Subject Area	Revision Year	Implementation Year	Next Revision
Mathematics	2006-2007	2010-2011	2015-2016
Arts	2007-2008	2010-2011	2016-2017
Science	2008-2009	2011-2012	2017-2018
Reading/Language Arts	2009-2010	2012-2013	2018-2019
Physical Education	2009-2010	2012-2013	2018-2019
Social Studies	2010-2011	2013-2014	2019-2020

- *1.B.1 Does the SEA intend to analyze the extent of alignment between the State's current content standards and the college-and career-ready standards to determine the similarities and differences between those two sets of standards? If so will the results be used to inform the transition to college- and career-ready standards?*

Minnesota has formally analyzed the alignment of the state academic standards to college- and career-ready standards through several initiatives. Our system of standards-based education has been influenced by Achieve, P-16 Education Partnership and Common Core State Standards. This work has informed the 2007 revision of the mathematics state standards leading to IHE certification and the 2010 revision of the reading/language state arts standards, which included Common Core State Standards among other state requirements. These initiatives are summarized below.

#### Achieve

In 2006, Minnesota joined the American Diploma Project (ADP) sponsored by Achieve. A chief goal was to ensure college- and career-readiness for all students through a system of standards and assessments aligned with the knowledge and skills required for success after high school. To this end, the state sent a team of K-12 educators, postsecondary educators, curriculum directors, MDE standards and assessment staff, and business representatives to a series of three ADP Alignment Institutes. Minnesota participants learned to design a process resulting in the development of rigorous K-12 standards in reading/language arts and mathematics that garners the trust of educators and the public. They researched the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers, and developed a plan for revising the state's 2003 reading/language arts and mathematics standards.

### P-16 Education Partnership

Following the involvement in the ADP Alignment Institutes, the Minnesota P-16 Education Partnership convened the College and Work Readiness Working Group to craft college- and work-readiness standards in reading/language arts and math. The group was comprised of K-12 and postsecondary instructors in each discipline and included members of the state's ADP team. The college- and career-ready standards for reading/language arts and mathematics, known formally as the *Minnesota College and Work Readiness Expectations*, were endorsed by Achieve and were included in the reading/language arts mathematics standards revisions in 2007 and 2010, respectively.

Minnesota's emphasis on creating and requiring standards that prepare all students to be college- and career-ready is evidenced by [Minn. Stat. 120B.023, subd. 1\(a\)](#). This statute sets forth a mandate that all students satisfactorily complete College- and Career-Ready (CCR) academic standards.

### Common Core State Standards

Minnesota's scheduled revision of the reading/language arts standards coincided with the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Led by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Common Core initiative promised to create K-12 standards that were:

- Research and evidence based
- Aligned with college and work expectations
- Rigorous
- Internationally benchmarked

Minnesota actively participated in the development of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Beginning with the draft College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards in the summer of 2009, the Minnesota Department of Education convened a series of educator focus groups. The groups provided detailed feedback on the CCR standards and each successive draft of the grade specific K-12 Standards until they were completed in June 2010. Many of the suggestions provided by Minnesota educators were incorporated into the Common Core State Standards. There is a close alignment between the Common Core State Standards and the *Minnesota College and Work Readiness*

*Expectations.*

- *1. B.2 Does the SEA intend to analyze the linguistic demands of the State's college- and career-ready standards to inform the development of ELP standards corresponding to the college- and career-ready standards and to ensure that English Learners will have the opportunity to achieve the college- and career-ready standards? If so, will the results be used to inform revision of the ELP standards and support English Learners in accessing the college- and career-ready standards on the same schedule as all students?*

To ensure high quality support for English Learners and their teachers, Minnesota has joined the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium. Our participation in WIDA was codified legislatively during the 2011 legislative session ([Minn. Laws SS 2011, Art. 1, Sec. 46](#)). MDE conducted an alignment study between the WIDA English language proficiency standards and the Minnesota content standards in math and science in November 2011 in order to gather information about the extent to which Minnesota's English language proficiency standards prepare English Learners to access content knowledge with minimal language support. MDE plans to use the results of the study to support English Learners in accessing the college- and career-ready standards on the same schedule as all students. Information from this alignment study will inform the next revision cycle of mathematics academic standards scheduled for 2015-2016.

There have been two alignment studies done for WIDA implementation in Minnesota. One between [WIDA and Common Core standards](#) and the other between [WIDA Standards and the ACCESS for English Learners](#).

The WIDA English language development standards are aligned with the national TESOL standards and address specific language development in core content areas. These are aligned to common core standards. Our 2011 reading/language arts standards are aligned to the common core standards. These common core, aligned, reading/language arts standards, in conjunction with the preK-12 WIDA ELD standards, provide a framework for teachers to scaffold instruction for English learners.

As a member of WIDA, Minnesota districts have access to the WIDA-ACCESS

Placement Test (W-APT™), which may also be used as a screener for identification purposes. Additionally, ACCESS for ELLs® will be administered annually, replacing Minnesota developed English Learners assessments. These tools will provide better measures for assessing how well English Learners are learning content needed to fully access the Minnesota academic standards, which are aligned to college- and career-ready standards.

- *1.B.3 Does the SEA intend to analyze the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities will have the opportunity to achieve to the college- and career-readiness standards? If so, will the results be used to support students with disabilities in accessing college- and career-ready standards on the same schedule as all students?*

A review of standards with a lens of access for students with disabilities is important to clarify the essence of each standard and to be explicit about where there is flexibility in instruction and assessment and where there is not. In past iterations of Minnesota academic content standards, there have been areas of mismatch between implied flexibility in instruction and the limitations felt by item writers and developers of statewide assessments based on a literal interpretation of the standards as written.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and frameworks have been used to guide the development of both the 2007 mathematics state standards and the 2010 reading/language arts state standards.

UDL principles provide for:

- Multiple and flexible methods of presentation to give students with diverse learning styles various ways of acquiring information and knowledge;
- Multiple and flexible means of expression and representation provide diverse students with alternatives for demonstrating what they have learned;
- Multiple and flexible means of engagement to tap into diverse learners'

interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.

Addressing UDL principles in the development of standards creates more consistent access in instruction and assessment for students with disabilities and increases their opportunities to demonstrate what they know. Current versions of Minnesota academic standards were written to reduce barriers for special needs students in representation, expression and engagement. Acceptable demonstration of standards mastery is compatible with a variety of learning styles and modes of receptive and expressive communication. The following examples illustrate UDL principles applied to the 2010 reading/language arts standards.

- Demonstrate understanding of text using vocabulary...
- Produce and expand complete sentences in response to questions and prompts.
- Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing).

Some traditional standard language needed adjustments to apply UDL principles. The following are examples from reading/language arts:

*Original:* Explain how the author of the text uses to structure information...

*Alternate:* Demonstrate an understanding...

*Original:* Speak audibly and clearly.

*Alternate:* Communicate clearly...

Examples of Math Standards:

*Original:* Use facts about angles to write and solve simple equations...

*Alternate:* Use facts about angles to develop and solve...

*Original:* Say the number word sequence to 100.

*Alternate:* Demonstrate understanding of...

Minnesota has data on the use of specific accommodations on statewide assessments and will continue to review and analyze this information annually. Assessment data is entered and recorded as a part of each student testing record.

This data can be pulled to review statewide usage trend data.

Minnesota's Accommodations Committee meets annually to address new accommodations requests that are not covered in assessment procedures manuals. The committee reviews and updates policies on accommodations annually as technology continues to develop and improve.

A comprehensive list of accommodations and codes for reporting their use is included annually in Chapter 5 of the Procedures Manual for Minnesota Assessments.

- *1. B.4 Does the SEA intend to conduct outreach and dissemination of the college- and career-ready standards? If so, does the SEA's plan reach the appropriate stakeholders including educators, administrators, families and IHE's? Is it likely that the plan will result in all stakeholders increasing their awareness of the state's college- and career-ready standards?*

The Minnesota Department of Education content specialists work with many of our state professional and research organizations to provide a wide variety of outreach and professional development opportunities related to dissemination of the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards, including the standards associated with college- and career-readiness.

### Stakeholders

Dissemination of the standards is provided through a variety of organizations including:

- Education Minnesota (Minnesota's teachers' union).
- Minnesota Academy of Reading
- Minnesota Administrators of Special Education
- Minnesota Assessment Group
- Minnesota Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education Programs
- Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs
- Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
- Minnesota Association of Curriculum and Staff Development

- Minnesota Association of School Administrators
- Minnesota Association of School Boards
- Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
- Minnesota Center for Reading Research
- Minnesota Council of Teachers of English
- Minnesota Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- Minnesota Curriculum Leaders, the Metro Area Curriculum Leaders
- Minnesota Elementary School Principal Association
- Minnesota Mathematical Association of Two Year Colleges
- Minnesota PTA/PTO
- Minnesota Reading Association
- Minnesota Rural Education Association
- Minnesota School Boards Association
- Minnesota System of Colleges and Universities
- Minnesota Writing Project
- State-Approved Alternative Programs

MDE also partners with the Target Corporation, United Way, and the McKnight Foundation as part of the *Blueprint for Literacy* implementation plan to reach a wider range of stakeholders and to coordinate efforts between institutes of higher education, our state agency, local school districts, and philanthropic organizations to share information on college- and career-ready standards and rigorous academic expectations for all students with the goal of closing the achievement gap.

The *Electronic Library for Minnesota* offers resources to help educators and the general public understand the Academic Standards.

The *Minnesota Parents Know* website offers families with children of all ages resources and information about the standards and academic success that will lead to college- and career-ready skills and knowledge.

MDE content specialists also work with our regional Education Service Cooperative Units (ECSUs) to provide a State-wide System of Support in a train



the trainer format. They provide professional development and technical assistance to ECSUs. These organizations then provide professional development and technical assistance aimed at assisting schools and districts in making Adequate Yearly Progress. These centers are located in Minnesota. The ECSUs host sessions provided by MDE and also provide follow-up training and support to districts in their service areas.

### Increasing Awareness of College- and Career -Ready Standards

Trainings provided by MDE staff range from sessions on the overview of the standards, to deep discussions and development of tools such as curriculum maps, gap analyses, and planning aids for reviewing instructional materials. These trainings allow the MDE content specialists to learn along with schools and districts as they strive to interpret and communicate the Academic Standards, particularly the more rigorous standards associated with college- and career-readiness. Often, this information is useful to other LEAs and becomes a valued resource created by peers for peers.

- *1. B.5 Does the SEA intend to provide professional development and other supports to prepare teachers to teach all students including English Language Learners, students with disabilities and low-achieving students to the new standards? If so, will the planned professional development and supports prepare teachers to teach to the new standards, use instructional materials aligned with those standards, and use data on multiple measures of student performance (e.g. data from formative, benchmark and summative assessments) to inform instruction.*

MDE regularly provides professional development for teachers to understand and implement standards enabling them to teach all students and to assess student learning related to the academic standards.

### Implementation

The theory of action driving professional development in Minnesota from the state level is to operationalize systemic change from within and intentionally connect the science of implementation to our standards work. This enables us build the capacity of districts, schools and early learning providers to meet the needs of all learners.

Implementation is synonymous with coordinated change at the system,

organization, program and practice levels. This is done by examining and understanding educational practices (the “what”) and developing the capacity (the “how”) to support those practices system-wide (Fixsen, Blase, Horner & Sugai, 2009). The implementation plan for supporting teachers with standards-based instructional practices is highlighted below:

<b>Minnesota’s Plan for Supporting Implementation of Academic Standards</b>		
<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule regional information sessions to disseminate information on the standards and considerations for implementation</li> <li>• Provide web-based information sessions to disseminate information on the standards with viewing guides</li> <li>• Host face-to-face and virtual conversations with district leaders on considerations for implementation</li> <li>• Post a Frequently Asked Questions document</li> <li>• Compose the Statement of Needs and Reasonableness for the Rulemaking Process</li> <li>• Partner with professional organizations to provide information on standards and resources applicable to the content areas related to the standards</li> <li>• Work cross-agency to communicate information on standards and align common initiatives related to standards-based instruction</li> <li>• Determine resources and other tools needed for schools and districts to fully implement standards</li> <li>• Provide targeted professional development as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule regional information sessions to support implementation of the standards</li> <li>• Provide web-based information sessions on standards implementation with viewing guides</li> <li>• Create resources on technical aspects of the standards to support schools and districts with implementation</li> <li>• Partner with professional organizations to provide</li> </ul>

<b>Year 3-4-5</b>		<p>content specific information on standards implementation and alignment to best practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work cross-agency to align common initiatives related to standards-based instruction and deliver consistent message to stakeholders</li> <li>• Determine resources and other tools needed for schools and districts to fully implement standards</li> <li>• Provide targeted professional development as needed</li> </ul>
	<b>Stage 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide on-going information as needed for full implementation of standards regionally and virtually</li> <li>• Continue to provide resources on technical aspects of the standards to support schools and districts with on-going implementation considerations</li> <li>• Partner with professional organizations to provide content specific information on standards implementation and alignment to best practices</li> <li>• Work cross-agency to align common initiatives related to standards-based instruction and deliver consistent message to stakeholders</li> <li>• Determine resources and other tools needed for schools and districts to fully implement standards</li> </ul>

#### Private Support for Professional Development

MDE is currently in discussions with local public television (PBS) networks and Clear Channel Communications concerning a proposal to provide virtual professional development, free of charge, to all teachers in Minnesota. Teacher Domain, available through PBS, is aligned to the Common Core Standards and provides on-demand training modules that support teachers in developing instructional materials to meet the needs of all learners.

#### State Program Support for Professional Development

Trainings by the MDE content specialists on academic standards are also provided through the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs, State-Approved Alternative Programs, Minnesota Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education Programs, the Superintendent's Conference, and MDE's Assessment Conference.

Training opportunities on the standards that are supported by other agency initiatives include coordinated efforts with our Q Comp teacher development/teacher compensation program, AYP support, Turnaround Schools, Alternative Programs, Alternative Delivery Systems Of Instructional Support, Service Learning, Research and Assessment, Special Education Policy, No Child Left Behind, Online Learning, and Charter Schools and Non-public schools programs.

### Differentiated Support for All Students

MDE offers on-going training specifically to support and prepare teachers to teach all students, including English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and low-achieving students to prepare teachers for full implementation of reading/language arts standards no later than the 2013-14 school year.

### *Professional Development for Teachers of English Learners*

As the Secretary noted on in a speech on November 3, 2011 “The future of the country rests on these students (ELs) doing really well”. ELs are the fastest growing population in MN. Meeting their learning needs is critical to meeting college- and career-readiness goals in the state.

As a member of the WIDA consortium, Minnesota has access to high quality professional development supports for teachers of ELs. In the spring of 2007, EL Program Directors from districts with 500 or more ELs met to discuss the status of Minnesota's ELD standards. A subcommittee analyzed three sets of ELD standards and recommended the 2006 TESOL/WIDA standards for adoption in Minnesota. Additionally, more than 1,000 principals, teachers, and teacher trainers were surveyed and approximately 40 participated in focus groups regarding ELD standards and standards implementation.

Data from survey responses revealed strong support for working with ELD standards to bring more specificity, clarity and applicability to standards implementation models so that educators can be more successful in working with ELs.

The Minnesota Department of Education English Learner Education Specialists work with many of our state professional and research organizations to provide a wide variety of outreach and professional development opportunities related to

dissemination of the preK-12 WIDA English Language Development Standards.

Trainings provided by MDE staff range from sessions on the overview of the standards, to deep discussions and development of tools such as transformations of model performance indicators, and planning tools for reviewing instructional materials. These trainings allow the MDE English Learner Education Specialists to learn along with schools and districts as they strive to interpret and communicate the WIDA English Language Development Standards. Often times this information is useful to other LEAs and becomes a valued resource created by peers for peers.

Trainings by the MDE English Learner Education Specialists are provided on academic standards through the Minnesota Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education Programs, the Superintendent's Conference, and MDE's Assessment Conference, and ESL, Bilingual and Migrant Education Conference.

Other training opportunities connected to the standards and supported within other agency initiatives include coordinated efforts within MDE's AYP support, Turnaround Schools, Alternative Programs, Alternative Delivery Systems of Instructional Support, Service Learning, Research and Assessment, Special Education Policy, Consolidated Federal Programs, Charter Schools and Non-public schools.

### Minnesota's Plan for Supporting Implementation of WIDA ELD Standards

Year 1  
2011-12  
Stage 1

- Schedule regional information sessions to disseminate information on the standards and considerations for implementation
- Provide monthly webinars to disseminate information on the standards with viewing guides
- Host face-to-face and virtual conversations with district leaders on considerations for implementation
- Form an English Learner Stakeholder Input Group to formulate an implementation framework
- Compose the Rulemaking Process
- Partner with professional organizations to provide information on standards and resources applicable to the content areas

Year 2  
2012-13  
Stage 2

- related to the standards
- Work cross-agency to communicate information on standards and align common initiatives related to standards-based instruction
- Determine resources and other tools needed for schools and districts to fully implement standards
- Provide targeted professional development as needed

- Schedule regional information sessions to support implementation of the standards
- Provide monthly webinars to disseminate information on the standards with viewing guides
- Create resources on technical aspects of the standards to support schools and districts with implementation
- Partner with professional organizations to provide content specific information and alignment to best practices
- Work cross-agency to align common initiatives related to standards-based instruction and deliver consistent messages to stakeholders
- Determine resources and other tools needed for schools and districts to fully implement standards
- Provide targeted professional development as needed

Years  
3-4-5  
Stage 3

- Provide on-going information as needed for full implementation of standards regionally and virtually
- Continue to provide resources on technical aspects of the standards to support schools and districts with on-going implementation considerations
- Partner with professional organizations to provide content specific information on standards implementation and alignment to best practices
- Work cross-agency to align common initiatives related to standards-based instruction and deliver consistent message to stakeholders
- Determine resources and other tools needed for schools and districts to fully implement standards

*Professional Development for Teachers of Students with Disabilities*

MDE is also working with Dr. Margaret Heritage to provide guidance and support to special educators on creating more effective reading standards-based IEPs. Through information and training provided by content specialists and special education policy staff, special educators will better understand grade level academic standards and how to scaffold learning opportunities so that all students have access to appropriate outcomes.

Additionally, the Minnesota *Blueprint for Literacy* provides a model plan for schools and districts to consult as they design a comprehensive literacy education system focused on academic success for all learners. The *Blueprint* links the Early Childhood Indicators of Success (for ages 3-5) to the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in reading, mathematics, and science. The purpose of this linkage is to highlight the importance of providing quality instruction throughout a child's academic experiences so that we can close achievement gaps and ensure that all students are ready for college and careers.

*Standards Revision Lens for Students with Disabilities*

MDE has developed a review process for standards revisions in which the Special Education Policy Division coordinates a review of the drafts to improve the accessibility of the standards for students with disabilities. This process was done for the 2007 Mathematics standards and the 2010 Common Core English Language Arts standards. Common themes across domain areas and previous revisions have helped improve the extent to which principles of Universal Design are incorporated into the standards. Comments from the last review process are included in [Attachment 12](#).

Teacher Licensure Standards in Special Education

The Board of Teaching is in the final stages of public rulemaking to revise and update the required knowledge and skill competencies for special education teachers. These standards are the basis for Institutions of Higher Education to design their teacher preparation programs and to receive program approval. A public hearing was held in September and the final decision regarding the need and reasonableness of the proposed rules is due from the Administrative Law Judge by the end of November, 2011.

One significant area of revision in the proposed rules relates to knowledge and



skills that special education teachers are expected to know regarding state academic content standards, particularly as they relate to instruction and a source of data to inform student progress. Examples of the proposed standards include:

- All special education teachers must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the relationship of special education to other components of the education system, including access to grade-level content standards, prevention efforts and early intervening services, Title 1, bilingual education, the education of English language learners, Section 504 accommodations, and gifted education ([Minn. Rule 8710.5000, Subp. 2, A, \(2\)](#));
- All special education teachers must be able to integrate multiple sources of student data relative to progress toward grade-level content standards from prior prevention and alternate instruction efforts into the referral process ([Minn. Rule 8710.5000, Subp. 2, B \(4\)](#));
- All special education teachers must be able to
  - adapt and modify curriculum and deliver evidence-based instruction, including scientific research-based interventions when available, aligned with state and local grade-level content standards to meet individual learner needs;
  - lead individual education plan teams through statewide assessment options and make appropriate decisions for a learner's participation within the statewide assessment system; and
  - apply evidence-based methods, strategies, universal design for learning, and accommodations including assistive technologies to meet individual student needs and provide access to grade-level content standards ([Minn. Rule 8710.5000, Subp. 2, C \(1-3\)](#));

#### Professional Development for Teachers of Low Achieving Students

Teachers seeking to improve the achievement of struggling students have at least two important kinds of support: 1) the *Minnesota RtI Community of Practice*, and 2) Minnesota's *Model Plan for Adolescent Reading Intervention and Development*.

The *Minnesota RtI Community of Practice* is an active community of RtI implementers and stakeholders who collaborate to build effective and sustained implementation of the RtI (Response to Intervention) framework at the local, district, regional, and state level. The Community focuses its attention on the complexities and challenges of implementing and sustaining RtI over time. The



functions of the Community are to:

- Develop a shared repertoire of resources, experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing implementation challenges.
- Apply collective knowledge to improve practice, inform policy decisions, and develop technical guidance that community members can use, scale-up and integrate with other evidence-based practices and systems of support.
- Provide positive examples at earlier stages of implementation for districts to observe.

RtI Community members come together as learners to share insight from lessons learned as well as solve burning issues of the day. The broader community of practice is made up of smaller work groups focused on resolving specific problems and implementation challenges. As the facilitator of the Minnesota RtI Community of Practice, MDE is often called upon to help bridge gaps in expertise by linking participants with specialists in particular fields. For example, in collaboration with the North Central Comprehensive Center (NCCC), MDE convened experts to help the community address critical issues surrounding struggling learners, many of which relate to classroom instructional practices.

A second kind of support that is especially helpful to educators with struggling students is the *Model Plan for Adolescent Reading Intervention and Development*. The plan is designed to meet the cognitive needs of adolescent students whose reading performance ranges from those significantly below expectations through those reading at or above grade level so that they can independently and proficiently read complex and rigorous texts in every content area.

In this model, core instruction is considered to be the standards-based instruction and curriculum all students receive in general education, academic classroom settings. All students participate in core instruction, whereas interventions are in addition to, and aligned with, this basic component of a comprehensive instructional framework.

Even though core instruction is designed to provide all students with rigorous and relevant curriculum, it may not sufficiently meet the needs of every learner. Some students will require intervention, additional support and instruction.

A systematic framework, such as this Model Plan, outlines how data can be used to determine those students who need additional support. Intervention then is based on the screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative data collected on students at risk, and instruction is provided with evidence- and research-based practices that are specific to the needs of an adolescent, struggling reader.

#### Professional Development Targeted to Implementation of Mathematics Standards

Following the 2007 revision of the state mathematics standards, a task force was formed to provide recommendations for structures to provide state-wide professional development for implementation of the new rigorous standards. Funds were appropriated and the *Minnesota Mathematics and Science Teacher Academy* was formed. The Academy consists of nine regional teacher centers located throughout the state. The teacher centers are not necessarily physical locations but rather partnerships between education organizations and higher education institutions to provide year-long professional development for teachers in mathematics and science.

The professional development is focused on content knowledge and pedagogy, including a job-embedded emphasis, particularly for professional learning communities. The goal of the program is to improve academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in mathematics and science by increasing instructional quality. Though each center began with an emphasis on algebra in grades 6-8 as this was the highest need with the new standards, currently each center provides an emphasis that is specific to the needs of that region.

#### Teacher Evaluation

Starting with a pilot during the 2013-14 school year, all Minnesota schools will implement teacher evaluation systems. These systems are intended to provide information about the quality of instruction in schools not only to local educational authorities but to the local community as well. The system is also intended to provide information for teachers regarding their performance. A portion of teacher evaluations must be based on assessment results, which are aligned to Minnesota's academic standards. Therefore, the teacher evaluation system will be another tool for improving teacher performance in teaching Minnesota's academic standards. Further information on Minnesota's teacher evaluation system can be found in Principle 3 of the ESEA Flexibility request.

- *1. B.6 Does the SEA intend to provide professional development and supports to prepare principals to provide strong, supportive instructional leadership based on the new standards? If so, will this plan prepare principals to do so?*

The Minnesota Department of Education offers professional development to prepare principals to provide strong supportive leadership based on the new standards through the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training. This training is also supported through several statewide professional organizations including:

- Minnesota Elementary School Principal Association
- Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
- Minnesota Curriculum Leaders
- Metro Area Curriculum Leaders
- Minnesota Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education Programs
- Minnesota Administrators of Special Education
- Minnesota Association of School Boards
- Minnesota Association of School Administrators,

#### Instructional Leadership Support

Minnesota law ([Minn. Stat. 120B.12](#)) requires all Minnesota districts to write local literacy plans to ensure all students are reading well by third grade. MDE offers a series of trainings and materials for principals, superintendents, and other instructional leaders aligned to the reading/language arts academic standards through in-person, virtual, and regional means.

MDE also partners with the Minnesota Association of School Administrators to provide training and information on a regular basis to support strong instructional leadership. Training supports include analysis tools to evaluate current alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the Minnesota Blueprint for Literacy, and on-site technical assistance for principals to better identify quality instructional practices aligned to academic standards, and aligning intervention programs to core instruction for students not at grade level.

In addition, Minnesota Law ([Minn. Stat. 122A.60](#)) defines Minnesota's Staff Development Program and district expectations for aligning staff development outcomes, plans and activities with education outcomes determined by the local school board. The legislation emphasizes establishing best practices such as professional learning communities, coaching and mentoring and using data for instructional decisions to improve teaching practice over time. Districts and schools are required to annually report their staff development goals, activities and results. Analysis of these reports demonstrates a growing trend in districts' use of job-embedded professional development activities with the adoption of professional learning communities, peer coaching and mentoring and ongoing use of student data to inform instruction.

### Principal Evaluation

Starting with a pilot during the 2013-14 school year, all Minnesota schools will implement principal evaluation systems. These systems are intended to provide information to local educational authorities and local community about the quality of instructional leadership in schools. The system is also intended to provide information for principals regarding their performance. A portion of principal evaluations must be based on assessment results, which are aligned to Minnesota's academic standards. Therefore, the principal evaluation system will be another tool for improving principal performance in providing leadership in teaching Minnesota's academic standards. Further information on Minnesota's principal evaluation system can be found in Principle 3 of the ESEA Flexibility request.

- *1. B.7 Does the SEA propose to develop and disseminate high-quality instructional materials aligned to with the new standards? If so, are the instructional materials designed (or will they be designed) to support the teaching and learning of all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and low achieving students.*

MDE works in collaboration with Minnesota content-specific organizations such as the Minnesota Reading Association, the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, the Minnesota Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Minnesota Center for Reading Research, the Minnesota Writing Project, the Minnesota Humanities Commission, the Minnesota History Center, and classroom teachers

to design and share lessons that align with college- and career-ready standards, making those materials available to schools and teachers throughout the state. Many of the professional organizations listed above post examples of instructional materials on their websites, share materials at conferences that are designed to support teaching and learning of all students, and give information on how to meet the needs of all learners in their newsletters and publications.

Minnesota LEAs have the authority to determine which instructional materials best meet the needs of their students. The role of MDE is to provide guidance on current best practices and pedagogy and alignment of instructional materials rather than restrict instructional material selection. MDE's efforts focus on the systematic approach to implementation and alignment of standards so that programs and practices are available to meet the needs of all learners, at every level in every content area. Some examples of what we offer in terms of support and guidance include:

#### Reading/English Language Arts Standards Instructional Materials Dissemination

MDE provides a number of instructional support materials specific to the Minnesota Reading/English Language Arts Academic Standards.

- A Model Plan for Adolescent Reading Intervention based on the principles of Response to Intervention (RtI) that provides guidance to districts and schools as they develop or revise reading intervention for students in grades 4-12 aligned to the 2010 Reading/English Academic Language Arts Standards.
- Balanced Literacy Instruction Examples offered on the MDE webpage illustrate the reading components of balanced literacy and the research that supports this framework for reading instruction, assessment and intervention.
- Resources consistent with [Minn. Stat. 122A.06](#) identifying scientifically-based reading instruction (SBRI) is offered on the MDE reading webpage and training is planned for Winter 2012 on connecting SBRI to the Reading/English Language Arts Academic Standards

*The Minnesota Comprehensive Birth through Grade12 Literacy Plan*

*Implementation Guide* is a comprehensive tool for schools and early learning providers that outlines the five essential elements of creating and maintaining a developmentally appropriate framework for all learners to reach their fullest potential. These elements are complemented by four foundational principles synonymous with coordinated change at the systems, organizational, programmatic and practice levels. This is done by examining and understanding educational practices and developing the capacity to support those practices system wide. The model provides a structure for schools to use to align curriculum, instruction, and assessments from the MN Indicators of Progress for Infants and Toddlers to the 2010 Minnesota K-12 Reading/English Language Arts Academic Standards and WIDA standards in order to prepare all students for the rigorous coursework. It also includes multi-tiered systems of support for students in tiered instruction from early learning through high school to support all learners in rigorous and relevant learning environments. The plan explains how partnering with families, communities and faith-based organizations can provide literacy opportunities for parents of youth during the school day and beyond to extend learning and create a culture of literacy. An emphasis on leadership and professional development at all levels creates and maintains an environment that supports powerful learning and high expectations for all learners. Data Driven Decision Making, Culturally- Relevant Pedagogy, Technology and Innovation, and Evidence-based Literacy Practices are the guiding principles for all programmatic choices based in this plan. These principles are imperative for creating a comprehensive literacy plan to meet the needs of all learners from birth to grade 12 and beyond.

#### Math and Science Standards Instructional Materials Dissemination

MDE provides a number of instructional support materials specific to the state's math and science standards. A recently launched initiative is an innovative online resource called the [Minnesota Mathematics and Science Frameworks](#). This website is designed to support professional development, curriculum planning and instruction for the revised standards. It provides supporting materials for both the mathematics and science standards, including an overview of each standard, student misconceptions, and vignette of classroom instruction with linked resources, sample assessment items and support for differentiation. The Frameworks are easily accessed in a searchable, web-based format that will continue to evolve as feedback is provided, materials are added, and connections are made to new resources.

### English Language Development Instructional Materials Dissemination

MDE provides a number of instructional support materials specific to the preK-12 WIDA English Language Development Standards. The MinneTESOL organization provided multiple training opportunities for 135 educators to transform model performance indicators of the WIDA standards and align them to materials used at school and district levels. The training focused on scaffolding rigorous content instruction across five levels of language proficiency and keeping cognitive engagement high regardless of levels of language proficiency in all four domains of language development. The teachers also learned how to design instructional frameworks to teach academic language and linguistic discourse for math, science, social studies, and language arts.

### Special Education Instructional Materials Dissemination

Historically, special education teachers have had limited and inconsistent access to roll-out activities when new academic standards are put into place. To improve outcomes for all students, including those with disabilities, we need to approach roll-out training and professional development in standards with the focus on all teachers who share responsibility for core instruction and targeted interventions in academic content areas. Without this focus, professional development and service delivery to students with disabilities will continue to be inconsistent and fragmented.

There are a number of current, cross-agency partnerships underway that will help improve the support for teaching and learning of students with disabilities, including:

- *Standards-Based IEPs*

MDE has developed a number of web-based professional development modules to support the implementation of standards-based IEPs, including promoting understanding of the grade-level content standards. MDE is currently field testing these materials and supplementing them with field-generated case studies. In addition, this content is being integrated into other special education professional development initiatives. Discussions are currently underway on how this process and these materials would be adapted to benefit teachers of



students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

- *Learning Progressions*

MDE has been working with a number of field practitioners, representatives from across MDE Divisions and Dr. Heritage from UCLA to articulate the essential understandings necessary to achieve proficiency in grade level standards. The outcome is that all teachers of students with disabilities will be able to map an instructional pathway, using learning progressions, from a student's present levels of performance to the enrolled grade level standard. This content, once pilot tested, will be embedded within the standards-based IEP training. In addition to this, plans are underway to develop training materials on formative assessment of the learning progressions.

- *Mitigating the Effects of the Disability on Achieving Grade-Level Standards*

Technical assistance is provided to special education teachers on how to use multiple sources of data to define the gap between a student's current performance level and grade level content standards. This content is foundational to training that is being provided on psychological processes that impact attainment of grade level standards. Following training, teachers will use this knowledge to target accommodations, modifications, and research-based strategies to mitigate the effects of the disability and allow student to make progress in the general curriculum.

- *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*

District teams have been trained to support local implementation of UDL principles in instruction across environments and student groups to further make grade level content standards accessible to all students, including students with disabilities.

- *Revision of Special Education Teacher Licenses*



These efforts have strengthened the knowledge and skill competencies of special education teachers relative to instruction and coordinating intervention with grade level content. These new competencies will improved pre-service teaching coursework and provide a more consistent language for instructional collaboration between general educators and special educators.

- *1. B.8 Does the SEA plan to expand access to college-level courses or their prerequisites, dual enrollment courses, or accelerated learning opportunities? If so, will this plan lead to more students having access to courses that prepare them for college and a career?*

Minnesota high school students have broad and varied access to college-level courses through a variety of low- or no-cost options through local, state, and national programs. These programs provide an opportunity for high school students to be better prepared for college and to earn college credit and/or advanced standing, thus saving students and their parents' time and money during postsecondary education.

#### Dual Credit Options

Minnesota supports dual credit options in partnership with postsecondary institutions through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) programs both on high school and college campuses. PSEO which served over 25,000 students in 2008. Career and technical education programs also offer dual credit opportunities for students throughout the state. Minnesota also supports STEM opportunities, and online course offerings are embedded in all of our dual credit opportunities.

Over the next five years, we will develop a comprehensive data system for all dual credit programs. This system will identify gaps and areas of need, creating better access for students of color and low-income students as well as increasing student success in these programs. As part of the commitment to preparing all Minnesota students to be ready for postsecondary training and education, the development of a shared data system between K-12 and postsecondary institutions across the state will create a more seamless transition for students and encourage more

rigorous and relevant educational opportunities at both the K-12 and higher education level.

### Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate

We have high participation and success levels in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. Support is provided to school districts for teacher training and exam cost subsidies. State statute supports training to develop instructor competence in using AP and IB research-based strategies to reach all students.

AP exams are open to all students, not just those who have taken an AP course, and most, if not all of the cost of these exams, as well as those taken through and IB, are covered through the legislative appropriation ([Minn. Stat. 120B.13](#)). The AP Course Credit Manual, available online, offer students and parents lists of AP courses accepted for college credit at in-state colleges and universities.

- In 2010, 256 public schools in Minnesota offered AP courses
- In May, 2011, 31,484 students took 50,605 exams with 64% earning a score of 3 or above on a scale of 1-5. (The US average is 56%)
- The five-year increase in the number of students earning a score of 3 or above:
  - White 41%
  - Black 49%
  - Hispanic 69%
  - Asian 57%

Students who score a 3 or higher on AP exams typically experience greater academic success in college and have higher graduation rates than comparable non-AP students.

The Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) grant, a collaborative effort partnering MDE with Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools, aims to increase the number of underrepresented and low-income students enrolling, testing, and scoring at proficient levels on Advanced Placement (AP) and International

Baccalaureate (IB) exams. The *Ready/Set/Go* Access and Equity website currently under development through an Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) federal grant is designed to provide information and support for students, parents and teachers to increase enrollment and proficiency in rigorous coursework. The site will be field tested by Minnesota students this winter and is scheduled to launch in June 2012.

International Baccalaureate numbers also reflect an increase of total students in the Diploma Program from 1,220 in 2004 to 2,196 in 2009. The total exams increased from 2,734 in 2004, then to 4,970 in 2010 and to 5,414 in 2011. The number of students of color participating increased from 273 in 2005 to 668 in 2009. Low-income student exam numbers increased from 243 to 498 in the same time period. In 2010 IB programs were in place in fifty schools, delivering the rigorous and challenging International Baccalaureate curriculum. Participants included nineteen high schools at the Diploma Program (DP) level, sixteen schools (both middle and high schools), and fifteen primary schools (PYP) at the elementary level. The high schools offering the Diploma Program enrolled 2,330 students.

Most of Minnesota's public and private colleges and universities have credit awarding policies for AP and IB course credits for exams taken by students.

Teacher training is a critical component to student success in AP and IB programs. MDE has worked closely with Augsburg College and Carleton College Summer Programs as well as the College Board to facilitate in-depth training for AP teachers. MDE has also worked with IB International to support training for IB teachers. Scholarships are available for public and nonpublic teacher training to initiate or improve AP and/or IB courses. In 2010 over 733 AP teachers attended in-depth training while 1,018 IB teachers participated in state-supported professional development.

#### Postsecondary Enrollment Options

Minnesota's the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act ([Minn. Stat. 124D.09](#)) allows high school students to enroll in college courses on a high school or college campus to earn credit for high school and college simultaneously. Each college and/or university that offers PSEO sets its own requirements for enrollment into the program. Students may take PSEO courses on a full- or part-time basis. Full-

time PSEO students who begin in their junior year may graduate from high school with enough college credits for an Associate's Degree. Minnesota was the first state, beginning in 1985, to offer this postsecondary opportunity to high school students. Enrollment in PSEO on the college campus has risen from 6,086 in 2005, to over 7,500 students across the state in 2009.

Concurrent Enrollment courses are taught during the regular school day and are offered through a partnership between a high school and a college or university. Qualified high school instructors or college faculty teach the courses. The same assessment methods and content are used as the equivalent sections taught on the college campus. Students can earn high school and college credit upon successful completion of the course or courses. In 2009, 17,581 concurrent enrollment students took 42,120 college level courses on their high school campuses.

These programs provide students with a greater variety of class offerings and the opportunity to pursue more challenging coursework than may be available at the high school. The tuition, fees and required textbooks are at no cost to students to increase access and equity.

The Minnesota Concurrent Enrollment Partnership (MNCEP) is working with MDE and the Minnesota State College and University System to plan a statewide professional development training plan for high school teachers and college faculty to increase student access.

### On Ramp Models

Statewide, on-ramp models, such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Admission Possible, provide students with the opportunity to develop college-readiness skills and knowledge. AVID is a college-readiness program targeting under-represented students. It is designed to prepare them to succeed in rigorous high school courses and enroll in four-year colleges. It provides a comprehensive approach that can be adapted for students in grades 8-12, integrating school-centered and student-centered strategies. The key component is an elective AVID class in which students focus on specific strategies and behaviors leading toward academic success.

The AVID model is grounded in the belief that all students can achieve in rigorous

classes if they are given social and academic supports. As of September 2009, approximately 35 schools from 11 districts were implementing AVID. MDE is collaborating with the East Metro Integration District and AVID to provide enhanced training opportunities for current AVID sites as well as support and planning opportunities for potential new sites.

### Early Graduation Scholarship

During the 2010-2011 legislative sessions, Minnesota passed the Early Graduation Scholarship Initiative. These are financial awards provided by the state to eligible students. Students who graduate early during the 2011-2012 school year are eligible to apply. Students who graduate one semester (two quarters) or two trimesters early are eligible for \$2,500, students who graduate two semesters (four quarters) or three trimesters early are eligible for \$5,000, and students who graduate three or more semesters (at least six quarters) or five or more trimesters early are eligible for \$7,500. The Achievement Scholarship must be used for postsecondary instruction.

### EXPLORE and PLAN College Readiness Assessments

The Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS), one of the components of the state *Get Ready, Get Credit* program, guides Minnesota students toward postsecondary success. School districts and charter schools voluntarily participate in the EPAS program funded by the state. EPAS provides a longitudinal, systematic approach to educational and career planning, assessment, instructional support and evaluation. It is an achievement assessment that includes components in language arts, reading, mathematics, science, and on course- and career-planning.

These assessments are linked to the ACT assessment used for college admission and allow students, teachers, schools, and parents to determine college readiness earlier than the junior or senior year in high school. Funding provided through a federal College Access Challenge Grant supports training provided by the Center for Postsecondary Success for middle and high school counselors and teams to analyze data from EPAS assessments. A grant extension will allow for enhanced technical assistance in 2011-2012.

- 90,522 Minnesota students participated in these assessments in 2010, an increase from approximately 85,000 in 2008
- Counselors from over 200 Minnesota districts have participated in

training

- 70% of Minnesota graduates took the ACT in 2010
- Minnesota's ACT average composite score of 22.9 increased by 0.2 in 2010. The national average composite score is 21.0
- Since the state began supporting EXPLORE and PLAN testing in 2005, the average composite ACT score has moved from 22.3 to 22.9
- In 2010, 346 more underrepresented students took the ACT than in 2009

### Middle School Supports

The *Your Choice, Your Future* campaign for eighth graders, initiated during 2010-2011, involved 58 middle schools around the state in an effort to address the opportunity gap by making students aware of the benefits of taking more rigorous courses in high school. The campaign targets students in middle school, especially students of underrepresented groups, encouraging them to take a rigorous, "college-prep" curriculum in high school. MDE hosted several college- and career-readiness forums for eighth grade students, provided workshops and distributed materials.

### Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership Task Force

Minnesota's P-20 Education Partnership has charged a task force to develop a statewide plan by December 2011 to ensure that all middle school and high school students take rigorous courses that prepare them for college and careers. The plan must:

- Analyze the number, type and quality of courses that secondary students currently take and how this relates to achievement patterns of student subgroups and students overall.
- Suggest strategies for ensuring that the following occur :
  - Educators, policy makers, business leaders and families understand the role of high expectations and support the achievement of all students;
  - All students are enrolled in and successfully complete rigorous courses;

- Minority students and those from low-income families have access to a rigorous college-prep curriculum, including but not limited to content typically taught in Algebra II;
- All students have opportunities to build the skills necessary for success in rigorous coursework throughout their K-12 experience (e.g. Springboard, AVID, etc.); and
- The content suggested by course titles is sufficiently challenging and not watered-down (e.g., the content in Algebra II is not advanced arithmetic).

### Minnesota Common Course Catalogue

The Minnesota Common Course Catalogue (MCCC) currently lists classifications for all the courses that could be offered in high schools across Minnesota. MDE is implementing the MCCC in response to federal and state legislation, including:

- Federal [HR 2272 America COMPETES Act of 2007 SEC. 6401](#). Required Elements of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System
- [Minn. Statute 120B.35](#) Student Academic Achievement Growth,
- [Minnesota Sessions Law 2009, Chapter 96, Article 2, Section 60](#)– Implementing Rigorous Coursework Measures Related to Student Performance.

The MCCC is also an essential component in updating and modernizing MDE's data collection systems. The MCCC data collections will track rigorous and dual credit courses students complete.

- *1.B.9 Does the SEA intend to work with the State's IHEs and other teacher and principal preparation programs to better prepare: Incoming teachers to teach all students, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students to the new college- and career-ready standards; and Incoming principals to provide strong, supportive instructional*

*leadership; on teaching the new standards? If so, will the implementation of the plan likely improve the preparation of incoming teachers and principals?*

#### Incoming Teachers

The Board of Teaching's pedagogical standards are required for all teacher candidates as part of their initial preparation. Current standards are based on the 1992 INTASC standards.

We will revise standards to align with the new INTASC standards which are "a set of model core teaching standards outlining what teachers should know and be able to do to help all students reach the goal of being college- and career-ready in today's world." The new INTASC standards also strongly and directly address the needs of English learners and students with disabilities.

Additionally, the Board of Teaching adopted new literacy standards for Elementary and Early Childhood Education teacher candidates as well as teacher candidates in 16 content-specific fields. These literacy standards also address the needs of all students and will strengthen the preparation of teachers to serve all students.

#### Incoming principals

The Minnesota Board of School Administrators initiated a study to review the licensing standards for principals. The study began in November 2010 and is funded by the Saint Paul Foundation and the Minnesota Community Foundation. It includes the following:

- Recruitment of Potential School Leadership.
  - Review and advise on targeted recruitment of leadership.
  - Design or identify models for leadership recruitment.
  - Design or identify "aptitude" and "attitude" pre-assessment tools to be used in part as an administrative license program screening devise.
- Pre-service Preparation Programs.



- Design or identify pre-administrative training internship or practicum experience to assist identifying promising principal program candidates.
  - Review existing policies and procedures related to licensure training programs.
  - Recommend alteration and streamlining of administrative competencies.
  - Design or identify specific principal competencies that will equip principals to lead instruction and create a school environment that will close the race and economic achievement gap for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students.
  - Advise the Minnesota Board of School Administrators on use of the National Board Principal Certification as an alternative to Minnesota Licensing for those who meet that standard.
  - Research and determine the feasibility of a principal-internship or residency program with a focus on the “real life” principal experience.
  - Design or identify a pilot, mandatory Performance Assessment for Initial Licensure for all School Principals.
  - Advise the Minnesota Board of School Administrators on possible modifications in the approval, regulation and oversight of higher education administrative licensure training programs.
- Licensing and Certification
  - Design or identify model policy language for Tiered Administrative Licensure
  - Design or identify model policy language for Alternative Principal Licensure. Authority exists under Minnesota Statute 122A.27.
- Continuing Professional Development
  - Design or identify model policy language for ongoing professional development linked with proposed Tiered Administrative Licensure

- Design or identify model for “state of the art” professional development with a focus on closing the academic achievement gap.

### Teacher Preparation

Revised literacy standards and subsequent preparation will directly and significantly impact teacher preparation in Minnesota. A revision of our broad pedagogical standards to align with the new INTASC standards will also strengthen our preparation system. We do not yet have target dates for initiating and completing this work, but will soon be engaging in preliminary discussions to establish potential timelines and work plans.

### Principal Preparation

The results of the Minnesota Board of School Administrators study will be presented no later than May 2012. The Board will then determine which of the studies’ recommendations will become recommendations for Minnesota Administrative Rule, the governing standard for training Minnesota Principals. The Minnesota Administrative Rule changes are to be in effect no later than July 1, 2013. The thirteen Minnesota Higher Education Institutions currently licensing new principals will be required to modify their curricular offerings based on the changes in the Minnesota Administrative Rule, thus improving the preparation of Minnesota principals.

- *1.B.10 Does the SEA plan to evaluate its current assessments and increase the rigor of those assessments and the alignment to the State’s college- and career-readiness standards, in order to better prepare students and teachers for the new assessments through one or more of the following strategies:*
- *Raising the State’s academic achievement standards on its current assessments to ensure that they reflect a level of post-secondary readiness, or are being increased over time to that level of rigor? (E.g., the SEA might compare current achievement standards to a measure of post-secondary readiness by back-mapping from college entrance requirements or remediation rates, analyzing the relationship between proficient score on*

*the State assessments and the ACT or SAT scores accepted by most of the state's 4 year public IHE;s or conducting NAEP mapping studies.)*

- Augmenting or revising current State assessments by adding questions, removing questions or varying formats in order to better align with the state's college- and career-ready standards?*
- Implementing another strategy to increase the rigor of current assessments, such as using the "advanced" performance level on state assessments instead of "proficient" performance level as the goal for individual student performance or using college-preparatory assessments or other advanced tests on which IHE's grant course credits to entering college students to determine whether their students are prepared for post-secondary success?*

*If so, is this activity likely to result in an increase in the State's current assessments and their alignment with college- and career-ready standards?*

Minnesota revises and updates its assessment program on a cycle that follows the standards revision timeline set forth in section 1.B.1 of this section. The new MCA III assessments are aligned to college- and career-ready standards as certified by a letter from the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges.

Minnesota chose to raise the level of its achievement standards through the standard-setting process. The Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) as described on page 8 of Attachment 13 reflect the efforts of Minnesota to increase rigor of the assessment and the alignment with college-and career-ready standards. This same ALD process will be used for all MCA III series assessments.

### Mathematics

Grades three through eight MCA III mathematics assessments are aligned to the 2007 academic standards. These standards are certified as meeting college- and career-readiness requirements by Minnesota IHEs ([Attachment 5](#)).

The standard setting activity for these assessments was conducted in June 2011. The Mathematics MCA-III, MCA-Modified, and MTAS in grades 3-8 have been peer reviewed.

### Reading/Language Arts

Minnesota's recently revised 2010 academic standards in reading/language arts are aligned to the common core state standards. These assessments will be operational for spring 2013 administration. From 2013 and beyond these assessments will be aligned to college- and career-readiness standards.

The Scope of Work for the 2011-12 assessment contract with AIR found in section 2 of [Attachment 14](#) provides further evidence for Minnesota's commitment to implement assessments aligned to college- and career-ready standards.

To facilitate an operational assessment in Reading MCA-III, Minnesota is conducting an online field test administration in February 2012. This field test includes item development consistent with the 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards in Language Arts, specifically increased Lexile readability, text sets, and technology-enhanced items to assess more cognitively complex concepts.

- *1. B.11 Does the SEA propose other activities in its transition plan? If so, is it likely that these activities will support the transition to and implementation of the State's college- and career-ready standards?*

MDE is developing several initiatives and tools that will support the implementation of college- and career-ready standards. First we are developing an implementation plan for aligning and fully implementing the *Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards*, the *Minnesota Academic Standards* as well as the *World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)* standards.

We are also using the innovative *Stages of Standards-Based Education* alignment tool. This rubric defines the stages of implementation for a system of standards-based education. It is based on the science of implementation and will guide the agency and school districts in the planning and implementation of systemic, standards-based education. Some of the areas addressed by the *Stages of Standards-Based Education* alignment tool are the following:

- Leadership
  - Decision makers / Who

- Vision
  - School culture
- Policies/ Structures
  - Common focus/Structure
  - Beliefs about time and resources
  - Evaluation (program)
  - Grading (student)
  - Teacher support and evaluation
- Professional development
  - Purpose
  - Characteristics of delivery
  - Evidence of effectiveness
- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
  - Curriculum development/mapping
  - Instruction
  - Assessment (formative, summative, diagnostic, other data as evidence of student learning)

MDE will also continue to support districts in the implementation of the *Blueprint for Literacy* Plan that builds upon the college- and career-ready literacy expectations for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners and is designed to ensure a seamless delivery system for B-12 literacy instruction. This state literacy plan addresses the value of clear academic standards that ensure equity of opportunity and academic achievement for all learners, guidance and support on evidenced-based literacy instruction, and an expectation that schools and districts use multiple data points to assess whether learners have achieved the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful readers and writers. In addition through its network of *Math and Science Teacher Centers*, the newly launched *Minnesota Math and Science Frameworks*, and extensive menu of other supports, Minnesota will continue to build district capacity in mathematics and science.

Minnesota has a long history of adopting, implementing, and supporting college- and career-ready standards. The purpose of Minnesota's system of standards-based education is to equip all students with the knowledge and skills for success in postsecondary education as well as advanced work and civic participation. Minnesota law requires that the standards identify the K-12 educational expectations for the achievement of all students across the state, including college- and career- readiness skills. While academic standards are determined at the state level, local school districts have flexibility to determine the curriculum, instructional methods, assessment tools and learning environments that will best help their students achieve the standards. MDE will continue to plan and implement systems of professional development and supports to ensure each school's success with its students.

### 1.C Develop and Administer Annual, Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth

#### Option C:

**If the SEA has developed and begun annually administering high-quality assessments in all LEAs and has set academic achievement standards, did the SEA attach evidence that the SEA has submitted these assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review ([Attachment 7](#)), or a timeline showing when the SEA will submit the assessments to the Department for peer review ([Attachment 7](#))?**

MDE is administering high quality assessments that have been peer reviewed. Proficiency, growth and growth gap reduction methodologies all use results from Minnesota's high quality assessments.

- Math grades 3-8 was submitted for initial Peer Review in June 2011. We are currently preparing follow-up documentation requested for submission in January 2012.
- Reading/language arts grades 3-8 will be submitted for peer review in August 2013 after the initial administration.
- Math grade will be submitted for peer review in August 2014 after the initial administration.

Documentation of the peer review process currently taking place for Minnesota's math assessments can be found in [Attachment 7](#).

## **2. A Develop and Implement a State-Based System of Differentiated, Recognition, Accountability, and Support**

**2.A.i Provide a description of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that includes all the components listed in Principle 2, the SEA's plan for implementation of the differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system no later than the 2012-2013 school year, and an explanation of how the SEA's Differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is designed to improve student achievement, school performance, close achievement gaps and increase the quality of instruction for students.**

Minnesota's proposed system of recognition, accountability and support has three goals:

1. Fairly and accurately measure the performance of all schools
2. Identify those Title I schools that need the most support
3. Give schools the data and tools they need to assess their needs and achieve meaningful school improvement.

At the core of this effort is the use of multiple measurements. Educators around the state have been asking to be judged not only by student proficiency rates but also by their ability to achieve high individual student growth, particularly with students from lower-performing subgroups. Minnesota's proposed system does that in a way that extends the information currently provided in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) system to provide a more complete picture of school performance.

**a) Does the SEA's accountability system provide differentiated recognition, accountability and support for all LEAs in the state and for all Title I schools in those LEA's based on(1) student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, and other subjects at the State's discretion for all students and all subgroups of students identifies in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II);, (2) graduation rates for all students and all subgroups; and (3) school performance and**



**progress over time, including performance and progress of all subgroups.**

Fair Measurements of Adequate Yearly Progress

Minnesota will continue to use its federally approved Adequate Yearly Progress Measures (AYP) measurements to provide Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for all LEAs and schools in the state. Our current AMOs model includes participation on statewide assessments, an index rating for determining proficiency on statewide assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics, and attendance or four-year on-time graduation for the other indicator. Using the same AMOs also allows for continuity between the current and future accountability systems. Targets will be adjusted according to the requirements outlined in Option A. A full discussion of this can be found in section 2.B. of this document.

*Annual Measurable Objectives*-Progress on each AMOs status component is published annually on the School Report Cards. A link to the Functional Requirements for the 2011 No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress Calculations, providing a full technical description of these computations, is included as [Attachment 15](#).

Even though the current AMOs system provides disaggregated information in each domain (participation, proficiency, attendance and graduation) for all eight required subgroups the underlying measurements do not include growth or credit for closing the achievement gap. A more complete picture is needed.

*Multiple Measurements of School Performance* - If approved, Minnesota will add an additional component to the statewide accountability system. A new Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR) will be calculated for each school in the state. The MMR combines four achievement measures to arrive at an overall rating:

- Proficiency
- Individual student growth
- Growth gap reduction
- Graduation rates

A school's performance on these measures is determined by student performance on Minnesota's statewide assessments in math and reading and the four-year on-time cohort graduation rate. This new rating is centered on what stakeholders deem to be the four most important factors in a school's success. If approved Minnesota's school accountability profile for the 2011-2012 school year will add the MMR to the accountability data it currently provides on an annual basis. A district's accountability profile will continue to show only the AMOs.

The MMR is based on state assessment data and graduation rate computations. It provides textured information to support school improvement activities and focus attention on closing the achievement gap by combining performance and progress measures.

- *Proficiency*

This domain uses the approved index model which allows for a continued emphasis on the goal of promoting maximum levels of proficiency among students. Schools earn points based on the percentage of measured subgroups that make AYP, with subgroups weighted according to their size. Using the index rating provides continuity between the current and future accountability systems. A more detailed discussion of this calculation can be found in [Attachment 15](#).

- *Growth*

Parents, teachers, administrators, and policy makers have valid questions about the relative progress of students over time (Smith and Yen 2006). In accordance with NCLB, the Minnesota Assessment System develops and administers criterion-referenced tests aligned to grade-level academic standards. The tests are primarily designed to enable a determination of each student's proficiency level within their grade. Additionally, Minnesota's tests can provide information about students' relative achievement growth over time. Growth modeling represents a cost-effective way to maximize the return on Minnesota's investment in criterion-referenced testing by providing growth information.

Individual student growth is measured using a normative model. Student growth is measured over two consecutive test administrations by predicting a student's second-year score based on the student's first-year score. Each student earns a growth Z-score based on the relation of their second-year score to their predicted second-year scores. Schools earn a growth score based on their average individual student growth Z-scores. The longitudinal data warehouse is used to locate students across the state to maximize the inclusion of data and individuals on this measure. A more detailed discussion of this calculation can be found in [Attachment 16](#).

- *Growth gap reduction*

Growth gap reduction is focused on students in black, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian, special education, English learners and students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch subgroups.

Schools receive a score based on the average of individual student growth Z-scores in these seven subgroups compared to the statewide average individual student growth in higher-performing subgroups.

Growth exhibited by the free or reduced price lunch subgroup is compared to that of non-free or reduced price lunch students. The English learner subgroup is compared to non-English learners. The special education subgroup is compared to non-special education students. Racial/ethnic subgroups are compared to White students.

By subtracting the statewide mean growth of each higher-performing group from the school's mean growth exhibited by the corresponding lower-performing group the result is a standardized effect size measure of the degree to which a given school closed the achievement gap. Negative values indicate the gap is closing and positive values indicate a widening gap. A student-weighted average of growth gap effect sizes is calculated to determine each schools overall growth gap effect size.

Each school is then given a percentile ranking based on its contribution to growth gap reduction (i.e., their weighted average of growth gap effect sizes). A more detailed discussion of this calculation can be found in [Attachment 16](#).

- *Graduation*

The graduation rate is measured using Minnesota's approved, federally-mandated, four-year adjusted cohort formula. A more detailed discussion of this calculation can be found in [Attachment 17](#).

#### Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR)

Each of the four domains described above is computed individually and is based on two years' worth of data to ensure statistical validity and minimize the effects of small group sizes.

Using the results on each of the four MMR domains, every school earns a percentage based on the points achieved out of the school's possible points. Each domain is weighted equally. Schools can earn up to 25 points in each domain so that schools measured in all four points have 100 possible points. For schools that do not have data in one of the four domains, the total possible points are reduced, placing greater weight on the remaining domains.

A Multiple Measurements Chart will be posted in the school accountability profiles on the MDE website for every school in the state. The chart will show the school's performance on all four domains and its total percentage of points earned out of their possible points. Using the interactive data center on the MDE website, interested members of the public can compare school performance on all four of the domains and on the overall percentage of points earned. An example of the Multiple Measurements Chart can be found below:

DISTRICT: Sampleville SCHOOL: Sampleville Secondary TITLE I: Yes ACCOUNTABILITY STATUS: Reward School		
MEASUREMENT	POINTS EARNED/POINTS POSSIBLE	PERCENTAGE
Proficiency	25/25	100%
Student Growth	23.7/25	94.8%
Achievement Gap Reduction	22.9/25	91.6%
Graduation Rate	24.8/25	99.2%
<b>Total</b>	96.4/100	96.4%
<b>Statewide Average</b>		58.7%

Minnesota's Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) was consulted during the development of the MMR and was generally supportive. The local member of the TAC participated in the ESEA Flexibility Request Work Group and was also supportive of this methodology.

**b. Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system create incentives and provide support to close achievement gaps for all subgroups of students?**

Schools that Need the Most Support in Closing Achievement Gaps

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Minnesota students exhibit high levels of achievement compared to other states, but our achievement gaps are among the worst in the nation. Minnesota has one of the largest achievement gaps in the country. Our stakeholder community has sent a clear message that any revisions to the accountability system must focus school improvement around efforts on better serving minority students, students in poverty, English learners and students with special needs. The choice Minnesota made in adjusting the proficiency targets within Option 1 for AMO adjustments will shine a bright light on our achievement gaps.

Even though the current system provides disaggregated information in each domain (participation, proficiency, attendance and graduation) for all eight required subgroups, the underlying measurements do not include growth or credit for closing the achievement gap. A more complete picture is needed.

*Growth Gaps-* Minnesota's achievement gap reduction measurement used in the MMR is essentially a growth gap measurement that focuses attention on the need to accelerate the growth of lower-performing subgroups in order to close achievement gaps. This measurement will highlight schools that are succeeding in this regard. Within each school, student growth score means are calculated for each of seven, lower-performing subgroups: students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, English learners, special education students, and students identifying as American Indian, Asian, Black, or Hispanic. The growth of each of these groups is compared to the statewide average growth of their higher-performing counterparts. The gap is defined by the difference in growth. Because higher-

performing groups are ahead and growing at faster rates, increasing the growth rates of subgroups to meet or exceed that of high performing groups is necessary to close achievement gaps. Please see [Attachment 16](#) for a summary of Minnesota's achievement and growth gaps.

**c. Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system include interventions specifically focused on improving the performance of English Learners and students with disabilities?**

The MMR and Focus Rating both include measures of performance by English Learners (ELs) and students with disabilities. Title I schools can be identified as Focus Schools based on inadequate performance by students in these two subgroups. Additionally, with the implementation of WIDA standards and assessments, MDE will explore new measurements for ELs that reflect time in program in assessing the proficiency and growth of those students. Once data becomes available to adjust the measurements for ELs in this method, MDE will explore the incorporation of it into AMOs, the MMR and the Focus Rating.

When a school is identified as a Focus School as a result of the performance of English Learners or students with disabilities, the school will be expected to perform a full diagnostic review of its instruction and practices with those students to determine the best interventions to meet the unique needs of students in these subgroups. The statewide system of support will facilitate the sharing of best practices for these students to give schools the technical assistance they need to effectively provide high-quality instruction to these students. MDE will also expect Priority Schools to include specific plans for addressing the needs of ELs and students with disabilities in their turnaround plans. Only turnaround plans that specifically address these students will be approved. A more detailed discussion of this calculation can be found in [Attachment 16](#).

**d. Did the SEA provide a plan that ensures the system will be implemented in LEAs and schools no later than the 2012-2013 school year?**

Minnesota will begin implementing this system of recognition, accountability and support immediately upon federal approval of its ESEA Flexibility Request by publishing a list of Priority, Focus and Reward schools in the winter of 2012. MDE will work with Priority and Focus Schools to develop plans so that they are approved and in place for the 2012-13 school year, during which interventions must begin.



## 2. B Set Ambitious But Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives

### Option A:

**Did the SEA set its AMO's so they increase in annual increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the "all students" group and in each subgroup who are not proficient?**

- i. **Did the SEA provide the new AMO's and the method used to set these AMO's?**

Minnesota has chosen to reset Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) using Option A. We selected this option because it is both ambitious and achievable. Setting different targets for different subgroups reflects the current conditions in classrooms and shines a light on Minnesota's biggest educational crisis: the achievement gap.

By drawing more attention to the current situation and setting an ambitious six-year goal, the hope is that the state as a whole will rally around this goal and continue to make closing the achievement gap a major priority in education. AMOs are used to award points in the proficiency category of the MMR, which gives greater importance to the AMOs and the underlying goal of closing the achievement gap.

*Methodology-* We used the process in our approved workbook for the approved index system for computing proficiency but revised the index targets. Revised statewide targets were set by using the statewide averages for each grade and subgroup from the 2011 results (See [Attachment 8](#)). These values were incremented in equal steps so that there would be a 50% reduction in non-proficient kids by 2018.

50% reduction

$((1 - [\text{starting index}]) * 0.5) + [\text{starting index}]$

If .58 was the starting index, they would need to be at .79 by 2018

$1.00 - .58 = .42$

$.42 * .5 = .21$

$.58 + .21 = .79$

The Functional Requirements for the 2011 No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress Calculations” can be found in [Attachment 15](#).

**ii. Did the SEA use current proficiency rates from the 2010-2011 school year as the base year?**

To generate the new AMOs, Minnesota used the statewide averages on the assessments taken during the 2010-2011 school year for every subgroup at every grade level as the starting points for every subgroup and projected a 50 percent decrease in non-proficiency over the course of six years using equal annual increments.

**iii. If the SEA set AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup do the AMOs require LEAs, schools and subgroups to make greater rates of annual progress?**

The effect of this method is that subgroups that currently have a lower rate of proficiency start with lower targets but are expected to make greater rates of annual progress during the six-year period. Within six years, the gap between the lower-performing subgroups and the higher-performing subgroups is cut in half.

## 2. C Reward Schools

### 2.C.i Describe the methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as reward schools?

#### Philosophy of Reward School Identification

To understand how Reward Schools are identified, it is important to first understand the purpose that is served by identifying Reward Schools: Incentivizing high performance and progress among Title I schools, and highlighting best practices to be shared with all schools, particularly Priority and Focus Schools. To those ends, the methodology used to identify Reward Schools must identify schools that are performing well in all measurements that are valued by the state and identify school types proportionally.

*Methodology-* Reward Schools will be identified using the Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR) described in detail in section 2.A.i of this document. Using the top 15 percent of Title I schools will be identified as Reward Schools. These schools will represent the highest-performing elementary schools, middle schools and high schools in the state based on their ability to achieve high rates of proficiency, high levels of growth, growth gap reduction and high graduation rates.

Within the four school classifications of elementary school, middle school, high school, and others, the Title I schools with percentages that fall within the top 15 percent are identified as Reward Schools. The final group of Reward Schools will not be differentiated between highest-progress and highest-performing schools because the MMR captures both performance status using proficiency, and student progress using student growth. Reward Schools will exhibit both high levels of performance and high levels of progress.

This methodology achieves the two goals of identifying Reward Schools by incentivizing schools to perform well on the four measurements that are most valued by the state and creating a group of high-performing schools that is representative of the schools around the state. Using this methodology, the state can incentivize high proficiency and growth while highlighting the best practices from schools around the state.

*Recognition-* Each year, the Governor and Commissioner of Education will publicly recognize the achievement of the top 15 percent of Title I schools based on their MMR. Public recognition will continue to be the primary reward for these schools. Minnesota is also pursuing funds from the state or private sources to financially support Reward Schools that are willing to partner with low-performing schools to share best practices.

**2.C.ii Did the SEA’s request identify both highest-performing and high-progress schools as part of its first set of identified reward schools?  
(Table 2)**

We have included a table to identify preliminary Reward Schools ([Attachment 9](#)). This list does not disclose the identity of individual schools as the computation is based on preliminary impact data runs. Upon approval of the methodology by USDOE, Minnesota will begin the standard production process to create new annual statewide accountability statistics. The IT development team will use SQL programming to pull data from production warehouse sources creating full functional documentation. Quality assurance routines will be run to verify and validate the computational results. This is the standard methodological process for releasing any statewide high stakes education statistics to ensure validity and reliability of data.

**2.C.iii Did the SEA Describe how the SEA will publically recognize and, if possible, reward the highest and high-progress schools?**

- *Has the SEA provided a reasonable explanation of why its proposed recognition and where applicable rewards are likely to be considered meaningful by schools? For example has the SES consulted with LEA’s and schools in designing its recognition, and where applicable, rewards?*

Minnesota believes the opportunity to identify Reward Schools is one of the most critical elements of its proposed system of recognition, accountability and support. The current AYP system is based mostly on sticks and lacks the carrots

necessary to motivate schools to improve and set ambitious goals that go beyond the AMOs. Reward Schools are the carrot that an effective accountability system must have to motivate high achievement and identify the best practices of schools around the state.

The primary reward for schools will be public recognition. In consulting with stakeholders from schools and LEAs, MDE has gleaned that the most meaningful incentive for schools is the opportunity to have their good work recognized. The SEA will work with LEAs to determine the best methods for publicly recognizing Reward Schools.

*Proposed Recognition-* At a minimum, Minnesota plans to hold an annual press conference to announce the list of Reward Schools, publish a list of Reward Schools on MDE's website, have the Governor or Commissioner of Education visit Reward Schools to congratulate the students and staff and present plaques or certificates to Reward Schools. LEAs have said that such steps would make the Reward School designation meaningful and motivate schools to set ambitious goals to reach Reward School status.

*Stakeholder Input* -A lack of state resources at the present time limits MDE's ability to provide additional rewards to Reward Schools, but over time MDE hopes to develop ways to provide financial and other incentives to Reward Schools. One way the MDE hopes to provide financial rewards is by securing a funding source, either through private donations or repurposing of state funds, to provide financial incentives to Reward Schools that are willing to partner with Priority or Focus Schools to share best practices.

Stakeholders from around the state have expressed support for this idea and principals and superintendents have expressed a willingness to participate in such partnerships if financial restitution was available for those Reward Schools willing to have personnel take time to work with Priority and Focus Schools. Experience has shown that collaboration between educators is one of the most effective ways to improve performance and create a better academic environment for students, so finding a way to provide financial incentives to help Reward Schools that are willing to share their best practices with other schools holds great promise for improving the academic achievement of schools statewide.

Another preference expressed by stakeholders and LEAs that will not require additional resources is to have Reward Schools audited so MDE can share with leaders and instructors at Reward Schools which of their practices are most effective. This audit would be provided at no cost to the Reward School or its LEA and could be used by the school to assess what it is doing well and how it could continue to improve. The results of the audit would also increase the capacity of MDE to assist other schools by highlighting practices that work best in promoting high academic achievement. MDE would use the results of such audits to create an online clearinghouse of information on best practices that schools around the state could access.

## 2.D Priority Schools

### **2.D.i Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State's Title I schools as Priority Schools ?**

#### Philosophy of Priority School Identification

To understand how Priority Schools are identified, it is important to first understand the identification of Priority Schools serves the purpose of identifying the lowest-performing schools so they can implement turnaround principles to fundamentally change the way they operate. It is critical that the methodology for identifying schools is comprehensive and has the necessary legitimacy to justify the severe sanctions they will be required to implement.

Every three years Minnesota will identify 5 percent of Title I schools with the lowest performance. Two groups will be included: those with the lowest MMRs and Tier I School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools that are implementing one of the four turnaround models.

They will take their designation seriously and make the necessary improvements to change the trajectory of the school. Furthermore, the measurements that are used to identify Priority Schools must provide those schools with data they can use to assess their own needs and set improvement goals. Finally, it is also important to ensure that the methodology for identifying the lowest-performing schools is consistent with the methodology for identifying the highest-performing schools so there is continuity within the accountability system.

#### Methodology

Minnesota plans to achieve these goals by identifying Priority Schools with the MMR. All schools in the state will be measured with this rating and every three years the bottom five percent of Title I schools will be identified as Priority Schools. The inaugural class of Priority Schools will be generated using graduation data from the 2009-10 school year and results from the statewide 2010-11 math and reading assessments.

This methodology achieves the goals of the state by accurately identifying those schools that are not only exhibiting low levels of proficiency, but are also failing to

achieve adequate levels of student growth, are contributing to the state's achievement gap by failing to improve the performance of lower performing subgroups, and are graduating a low percentage of students within four years.

Educators around Minnesota have been asking MDE to use growth for school accountability purposes. A methodology for identifying Priority Schools that includes student growth gives the system greater legitimacy and will create more buy-in for schools that are identified as Priority Schools. This is critical to the success of the system of recognition, accountability, and support because for any turnaround principles to be effective they must be implemented with fidelity. The methodology for identifying Priority Schools ensures that no school identified in this category can make the claim that they do not deserve to be in the Priority School category.

#### **2.D.ii Does the SEA's request include a list of its Priority Schools? (Table 2)**

We have included a table identifying Priority Schools ([Attachment 9](#)). This list does not disclose the identity of individual schools as the computation is based on preliminary impact data runs. Upon approval of the methodology by USDOE, Minnesota will begin the standard production process to create new annual statewide accountability statistics. The IT development team will use SQL programming to pull data from production warehouse sources creating full functional documentation. Quality assurance routines will be run to verify and validate the computational results. This is the standard methodological process for releasing any statewide high stakes education statistics to ensure validity and reliability of data.

*a. Did the SEA identify a number of Priority Schools equal to at least five percent of its Title I schools?*

During the 2010-11 school year, there were 842 Title I schools, so Table 2 ([Attachment 9](#)) of the ESEA Flexibility Request identifies 47 Title I Priority Schools plus an additional eight non-Title I schools due to their School Improvement Grant status.



**2.D.iii Are the interventions that the SEA described aligned with the turnaround principles and are they likely to result in dramatic, systemic change in Priority Schools?**

Priority Schools will implement turnaround plans based on the turnaround principles outlined in the ESEA Flexibility guidance. MDE will create diagnostic value-added profiles for Priority School to help identify the root causes of their performance, assess their academic needs, and monitor student improvement. Priority Schools will also have the opportunity to partner with Reward Schools to share best practices and collaborate on school improvement activities. To achieve turnaround, Priority Schools will be required to set aside 20 percent of their Title I funds for state-approved school improvement activities.

**a. Do the SEA's interventions include all of the following?**

*(i) providing strong leadership by: (1) reviewing the performance of the current principal; (2) either replacing the principal if such a change is necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrating to the SEA that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staff, curriculum, and budget;*

*Performance Reviews to Establish Track Record* - MDE will work with each Priority School's LEA to determine if the current principal is an effective leader and has proven to be effective in improving student achievement in a turnaround effort. MDE will require all Priority Schools to adopt an MDE-approved principal evaluation tool that will be utilized to review the performance of the current principal and serve as the basis to replace the principal if the performance measures are not met.

MDE will provide support to Priority School principals by incorporating a turnaround leadership component into the technical assistance provided to the LEA to ensure ongoing measurement of the principal's growth as a turnaround leader. This support will be initiated by MDE staff and a contracted vendor with a track record of providing support to turnaround principals.

*Operational Flexibility-* Priority School principals will be required to provide regular formative data reports on student achievement to the LEA and MDE to monitor student achievement over time. MDE will work with LEA leadership to increase the operational flexibility for the principal as needed to meet the building's identified needs.

*(ii) ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by: (1) reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort; (2) preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and (3) providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs;*

All Priority Schools will be required to implement a standards-based teacher evaluation system for all teachers in alignment with the recently adopted teacher evaluation legislation. The system should require three formal observations for all teachers with pre- and post-conferences to provide ongoing coaching and performance review.

The principal in each building will also be required to implement other strategies to monitor and measure teacher effectiveness such as goal-based walk through, teacher sharing of student work portfolios, and other measures of teacher growth. Based on the results of the evaluations, building leaders will make relevant staffing decisions to ensure that teachers are as effective as possible given the needs of turnaround schools.

Each Priority School will develop a School Improvement Plan based on a comprehensive needs assessment and, within the plan, include a detailed professional development program. This program should be grounded in the practice of professional learning communities (PLCs) providing 90 minutes of job-embedded professional development each week to promote teacher learning of need-based instructional strategies and collaboration around student work and achievement.

*Professional Learning Communities* - PLCs are to be led by identified teacher leaders trained in PLC facilitation and implementation. Principals are an integral component of the PLCs and teacher learning which will be monitored through the teacher evaluations and ongoing observations.

*(iii) redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;*

Improvement plans will incorporate structures within the PLCs to allow for teacher collaboration time. This will require the school to revisit the weekly schedule and teacher contract to ensure this time is provided.

Increased and extended learning time for students will be encouraged contingent on the completion of a time audit to measure the amount of instructional time that is currently in place for the core subjects and explore possibilities to increase the length of instructional time for all students.

Extended learning opportunities for high-need students should be explored to find researched-based models that can be implemented. Extended learning opportunities should be based on an extension of the core curriculum and instruction and include a system of ongoing measurement of student achievement to determine the effectiveness of the model.

*(iv) strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with State academic content standards;*

MDE will work with the LEAs to ensure that the core curriculum of the school is closely aligned with the Minnesota State Academic Content Standards through a review process of each building's operational curriculum. Curriculum audits, mapping and alignment strategies will be part of the technical assistance delivered through the statewide system of support (SSOS). As part of the technical support provided to the district, the professional development that is identified as part of the school's standards-alignment will be provided by MDE staff or resource staff directed by MDE content staff.

Priority Schools' LEAs will also be required to audit any Pre-Kindergarten programming provided by the LEA to ensure that the instruction is high-quality and aligned with K-12 academic standards. If the LEA does not provide Pre-Kindergarten programming, it may choose to use a portion of its school improvement set-aside in order to do so.

*(v) using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data;*

The technical assistance provided through the SSOS will include the use of the state student data repository to mine, disaggregate and analyze the summative student data for the respective buildings. This data will be used to diagnose the areas of student achievement that need to be addressed as part of the needs assessment process and to set goals for student learning. Priority Schools will also be provided with value-added diagnostic tools to identify student needs, plan appropriate instruction and measure progress.

Improvement plans must identify staff who will work directly on data analysis to provide the principal and instructors with data to guide decisions on curriculum, resources and staffing. Technical assistance and training will be provided to ensure that designated staff who are working with data have the knowledge and technical capability to provide high-quality data analysis.

In addition, the PLCs will focus their work around formative data collection at the classroom level (See a. ii above). Student work will be analyzed and compared in on a regular basis to monitor individual student progress toward becoming proficient in the Minnesota State Academic Content Standards. This process of formative assessment will be standardized through the technical assistance model of the SSOS and monitored on a regular basis by MDE and the LEA.

*(vi) establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs; and*

As part of the school's needs assessment, factors impacting school safety and discipline will be analyzed to determine if the school has the structural components in place to maintain a learning environment that will encourage learning, embrace diversity and provide a nurturing environment for all students. As a result of the needs assessment, MDE will provide guidance to the LEA about what structures and/or personnel would need to be implemented in order for students to have an appropriate learning environment.

In addition to assessing the school environment, Priority Schools will also be provided with an audit of learning time missed as a result of disciplinary actions. MDE analysis has shown that low-performing schools often have higher rates of days missed as a result of student suspension. LEAs in Minnesota that have explored alternatives to suspension have seen observed gains both in academic performance and school environment indicators. Priority Schools will need to explore the viability of such options.

*(vii) Providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement?*

These schools must go beyond the term, "family involvement." They will need to explore and implement true engagement activities for parents and the community. Parents should be involved in the curriculum review processes, provide insight and feedback into what makes a safe school environment for their children, and assist in the classroom and at school events to become part of the school community. Schools that have difficulty engaging parents will need to develop strategies to reach out to families and meet them "on their turf" and address topics from their perspective. The Statewide System of Support (SSOS) will provide resources and strategies to enhance the school's parent and community engagement practices.

Schools need to reach out to the greater community to engage members in school events such as inviting service clubs and businesses into the school to assist with parent nights, student sports or music and theater performances. These "points of engagement" for community members are critical. Schools with significant minority populations will need to work directly with representatives of those populations to ensure parent and community engagement. Finally, each

school will be provided guidance in creating service opportunities for students with in the greater community to provide relevant service and build strong bonds to community members and entities.

**a. Has the SEA identified practices to be implemented that meet the turnaround principles and are likely to —**

*(i) increase the quality of instruction in Priority Schools ;*

MDE is currently in the process of redesigning its NCLB AYP Statewide System of Support to better respond to the needs schools in a more efficient and timely manner. MDE has reviewed best practices in SSOS support as well as the successful strategies and practices gleaned from research and the administration and support of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program in Minnesota. These will be incorporated in the supports provided to Priority Schools.

*(ii) improve the effectiveness of the leadership and the teaching in these schools; and*

This system will be rooted in strong leadership and effective teachers as well as appropriate use of data and improved instruction and student support. The system will link classroom instruction to a cohesive support network, resulting in detectable instructional changes in every classroom and measureable teacher and student achievement growth. The plan will include:

**1. Strong Leadership supported by:**

- Effective strategies to recruit, replace and/or retain skilled staff
  - Turnaround leader selection processes
  - Turnaround leader competencies
- Rigorous evaluation system
- Effective evaluation/observation
- Operational flexibility
  - Provide criteria to recruit, screen, select and evaluate external providers

- Effective governance structure
  - Leadership team development
- 2. Effective Teachers supported by:
  - Effective strategies to recruit, replace and/or retain skilled staff
    - Turnaround teacher selection processes
    - Turnaround teacher competencies
  - Rigorous evaluation system
    - Effective evaluation/observation
- 3. Appropriate Data Use supported by:
  - Continuous use of student data to improve instruction
    - Systemic needs assessment support
    - Root/cause analysis
    - Setting effective SMART goals
    - Focused intervention planning
    - Classroom formative assessment support (provide feedback to students and teachers and increase student involvement in learning)
    - Benchmark assessment support (measure student growth of the standards-based instructional program)
- 4. Improved Instruction supported by:
  - Increased learning time
    - Maximize the effectiveness of current instructional time  
Link increased time to core content
    - Extended-day learning opportunities
  - Research-based, vertically-aligned MN standards-aligned instructional program
    - Standards alignment supported with rigorous instruction
    - Formative instruction support
  - Professional learning communities
    - Protocols

- Time and resources

5. Student Supports Strengthened by:

- Providing social-emotional and community-oriented services/supports
- Engaging parents and community to support student achievement

*(iii) Improve student achievement and, where applicable, graduation rates for all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and the lowest-achieving students?*

Priority Schools will be expected to address the needs of specific subgroups, including ELs and students with disabilities, in their improvement plans. The SSOS will work with schools to disaggregate data with the goal of identifying subgroups that need intensive academic supports.

Once particular subgroups are identified, the SSOS will assist the school and LEA in identifying strategies that have a record of success in improving the academic achievement of students in those subgroups. Schools can draw on the best practices identified at Reward Schools with similar demographics. Schools will also be expected to work with the community to identify culturally-relevant academic programming to address the needs of lower-performing subgroups. Schools with low-performing ELs and students with disabilities will review the curriculum and programming used for these students to identify flaws and steps that can be taken to address them.

**b. Has the SEA indicated that it will ensure that each of its Priority Schools implements the selected intervention for at least three years?**

MDE will develop an ongoing system of accountability for the Priority Schools that will measure fidelity of implementation of the interventions based on the Minnesota Common Principles of Effective Practice (CPEP). In addition, MDE will



engage in ongoing monitoring of the schools PLCs, the teacher observation system and the formative data gathering by the building to measure student achievement. These elements have all been incorporated into the SSOS described above.

**2.D.iv Is the SEA's proposed timeline for ensuring that LEAs that have one or more Priority Schools implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each priority school no later than the 2014-2015 school year reasonable and likely to result in implementation of the interventions in these schools?**

- *Does the SEA's proposed timeline distribute Priority Schools' implementation of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in a balanced way, such that there is not a concentration of these schools in the later years of the timeline?*

MDE's support model described above will be implemented consistently across all Priority Schools to ensure that there are not discrepancies in the type and duration of interventions that schools are incorporating at any given time. Each school will go through the data analysis, goal-setting, PLCs and teacher observation system implementation, curriculum alignment, instructional time audit and determination of professional development goals and focus for each year in a systematic manner with oversight by SSOS facilitators.

By applying for the NCLB waiver in November of 2011, MDE will have ample time to lay out the expectation and processes for Priority Schools so that when the waiver is approved, the identified schools can be contacted in the spring of 2012 and planning can commence to ensure an effective and efficient implementation of the intervention in the fall of 2012. All Priority Schools will implement all of the turnaround principles by no later than the start of the 2014-15 school year.

**2.D.v Did the SEA provide criteria to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits priority status?**

**a- Do the SEA's criteria ensure that schools that exit priority status have made significant progress in improving student achievement?**

Any exit criteria for Priority Schools have to be meaningful enough to ensure that a school that exits Priority status has permanently altered its trajectory. With that standard in mind, Minnesota will only allow Priority Schools that finish outside of the bottom quartile of Title I schools statewide for two consecutive years, using performance on the MMR as the criteria.

Sufficient Time

Minnesota's experiences in working with schools in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program have shown that meaningful turnaround takes at least two years. Therefore, a school identified as one of the most-persistently low-performing in the state must work with MDE for at least two years to permanently change direction and achieve genuine success in turning around.

It is clear from the preliminary impact data that MDE has examined that the difference between the bottom five percent of performers on the MMR and those above of the bottom quartile is such that two consecutive years above the bottom quartile will be evidence of genuine improvement for a Priority School. Because the MMR is a comprehensive and robust measurement tool, in order to move up in the statewide rankings enough to move from the bottom five percent to above the bottom quartile will be an indicator that the school has made systemic improvements.

Consistency

Using this methodology provides consistency across the accountability system. The selection process for Priority Schools is normative, so it is only appropriate that the exit process should be normative as well. Schools are identified as Priority Schools based on their performance relative to other Title I schools. Similarly, Priority Schools should be exited from their status if their performance relative to other Title I schools improves substantially over the course of two years. Also, with the 25 percentile being used as an indicator for continuous improvement, using this line as the cutoff for exiting Priority Status provide clear benchmarks for all schools.

Resources

The logic behind selecting a small group of Priority Schools is that with limited state and federal resources, the most focused attention should be paid to those schools that are truly at the bottom of the state in terms of academic performance. By allowing Priority Schools that move out of the bottom quartile of Title I schools to direct their own improvement efforts, MDE can maintain a focus on those schools that are truly most in need of support.

### Meaningful

The difference between the bottom five percent of MMR performers those outside of the bottom quartile is such that two consecutive years outside the bottom quartile will be evidence of genuine improvement for a Priority School.

### Two Exceptions

Two exceptions will be made for the exit criteria. The first is directed at Priority Schools identified because of their status as SIG schools. Minnesota currently has 19 schools implementing one of the four SIG turnaround models. These schools are automatically identified as Priority Schools. However, because these schools have been implementing the turnaround models for multiple years, they will have the opportunity to exit Priority status if their performance on the MMR during their final year of SIG status puts them above the bottom 25 percent of Title I schools. This will allow MDE to focus resources on those schools that are most in need of support rather than to spread resources more thinly to include SIG schools that have already made real strides in changing direction.

The second exception applies to all Priority Schools. Any Priority School that attains Reward School status can immediately exit Priority status. Because the criteria for the Priority and Reward Schools is the same, moving from the bottom five percent of Title I schools to the top 15 percent would be an indication of remarkable progress. Any school that could achieve this type of progress will have clearly made the necessary changes to alter the trajectory of the school in a way that ensures sustained improvement.

## 2.E Focus Schools

### **2.E.i Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State's Title I schools as Focus Schools?**

#### Philosophy of Focus School Identification

The identification of Focus Schools is meant to shine a bright light on the achievement gap while identifying Title I schools that are most in need of support in improving the academic performance of low-performing subgroups. Some of these schools will have wide within-school achievement gaps, a subgroup or subgroups that are falling behind students around the state or both.

By identifying Focus Schools based on schools' contributions to the statewide achievement gap, the state can incentivize schools to thoughtfully and aggressively address the academic performance of subgroups that have typically performed poorly on the statewide math and reading assessments. For those schools that are unable to promote higher achievement by these subgroups, the identification as a Focus School is an opportunity for the state to intervene and put practices into place that can assist the school in addressing their specific problems.

#### Methodology – Modified Proficiency and Growth Gap

Focus Schools are those with specific achievement gap issues. They will be identified once every three years using a modified version of the MMR called the Focus Rating centered exclusively on lower-performing subgroups. The rating will measure growth and proficiency for the following sub-groups:

- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian,
- American Indian,
- English learners
- Free/Reduced Price Lunch
- Special Education

### Focus Rating- Proficiency Status

To identify Focus Schools, proficiency is calculated using the approved AYP Proficiency index model. However, unlike the proficiency index model, the focus rating will only allow schools to earn points based on the percentage of just the seven groups noted above that make AYP. This percentage is weighted based on the number of students in of each group. A more detailed discussion of this calculation can be found in [Attachment 15](#) or in section 2.A.1.a.

### Focus Rating – Growth Gap Reduction

The growth gap measure used in the Focus rating measures achievement gap reduction measurement used in the Focus Rating is the same as the achievement gap reduction domain in the MMR. A description of the methodology for calculating this domain can be found in 2.A.i.a.

Points for proficiency and growth gap reduction are summed and divided by the total possible points to generate a combined percentage of points for each school. The bottom 10 percent of Title I schools on these combined measurements that have not already been identified as Priority Schools are designated as Focus Schools. Once the list is complete, Title I schools identified as Focus Schools for graduation rate purposes are added in and an equal number of schools from the original Focus School list are removed so the resulting number of Focus Schools is equal to 10 percent of Title I schools. Based on the number of Title I schools in 2011 the attached list includes 84 Focus Schools.

### Title I schools with Graduation Rates Under 60 Percent.

In addition to schools contributing to the achievement gap, Title I high schools with graduation rates of less than 60 percent will also be identified as Focus Schools. Schools that are not graduating at least 60 percent of their students need to identify the root causes of the problem and address them in ways that work for their student population. Identifying those schools with graduation rates of less than 60 percent as Focus Schools incentivizes schools with low graduation rates to address the problem and allows the state to identify schools most in need of support.

For the purposes of identifying Focus Schools due to graduation rates of 60 percent or less, Minnesota will use a six-year adjusted cohort rate methodology,

pending final federal approval of this methodology. Minnesota is currently in the process of earning final approval for this methodology from the US Department of Education. The attached list reflects the six-year adjusted cohort rate but would be altered to reflect the four-year rate if the state's six-year methodology has not been approved before the ESEA Flexibility Request is granted.

The six-year adjusted cohort rate would be used in order to generate a list of schools that are truly failing to graduate a high enough percentage of students. Minnesota is fortunate to have a number of charter schools that operate in a manner similar to Alternative Learning Programs. The charter schools work exclusively with students who at risk for dropping out. While their four-year graduation rates may not exceed 60 percent because they are working with students who are often multiple grades behind their cohort, this is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the school's success in graduating students. Using the six-year rate allows the state to avoid misidentifying schools that have unique situations.

The state also looks at three years' worth of data in determining graduation rates for the purpose of identifying Focus Schools. Only those schools with a three-year average of less than 60 percent on the six-year adjusted cohort graduation rate are identified as Focus Schools. This protects against misidentifying small schools with wide statistical variations in graduation rate from year-to-year.

This methodology for identifying Focus Schools achieves the goals of closing the achievement gap, identifying schools that are contributing to the state's achievement gap so they can work with the statewide system of supports (SSOS) to address their situation, and identifying so-called dropout factories so they can implement plans to improve their graduation rates. Using this methodology, the state can accurately diagnose problems within schools and incentivize improvement

## **2.E.ii Did the SEA include a list of its Focus Schools? (Table 2)**

We have included a table identifying preliminary Focus Schools ([Attachment 9](#)). This list does not disclose the identity of individual schools as the computation is based on preliminary impact data runs. Upon approval of the methodology by

USDOE, Minnesota will begin the standard production process to create new annual statewide accountability statistics. The IT development team will use SQL programming to pull data from production warehouse sources creating full functional documentation. Quality assurance routines will be run to verify and validate the computational results. This is the standard methodological process for releasing any statewide high stakes education statistics to ensure validity and reliability of data.

**a. Did the SEA identify a number of Focus Schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State's Title I schools?**

During the 2010-11 school year, there were 842 Title I schools, so Table 2 of the ESEA Flexibility Request identifies 85 Focus schools.

**b. In identifying Focus Schools, was the SEA's methodology based on the achievement and lack of progress over a number of years of one or more subgroups of students identified under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system or, at the high school level, graduation rates for one or more subgroups?**

As described above, the Focus Ranking and Focus graduation rate both use student data from multiple years, including proficiency on the statewide assessments. Please see [Attachment 9](#) for a graphical summary of measures that were used to identify Focus Schools. Additionally, please see [Attachment 16](#) for a summary of achievement and growth gaps.

**2.E.iii Did the SEA describe the process and timeline it will use to ensure that each LEA identifies the needs of its Focus Schools and their students and provide examples of and justifications for the interventions the SEA will require its Focus Schools to implement to improve the performance of students who are furthest behind?**

The SSOS as described in the previous section (2.D.iii) will also have the responsibility of providing the technical assistance and support to the identified

Focus Schools. The SSOS facilitators will work with Focus Schools and their LEAs to identify the needs of the school based on the issue that caused the school to be identified. This will involve interventions tailored to the needs of subgroups failing to meet proficiency and growth expectations, and interventions aimed at improving graduation rates. To close achievement gaps, Focus Schools will be required to set aside 20 percent of their Title I funds for state-approved school improvement activities.

Utilizing the data-driven decision-making model that is embedded within the SSOS, the first activity that the school will engage in is the disaggregation and analysis of the achievement data that were used as identifiers. Once causes of the achievement gap or low graduation rate are determined subsequent goals will be set. The SSOS will use the following supports to promote effective data use:

- Continuous use of student data to improve instruction
- Systemic needs assessment support
- Root/cause analysis
- Setting effective SMART goals based on the subgroup's specific needs
- Focused intervention planning by the LEA and SEA, employing resource staff versed in culture, language and environmentally specific interventions
- Classroom formative assessment support (provide feedback to students and teachers and increase student involvement in learning)
- Benchmark assessment support (measure student growth of the standards-based instructional program)

Utilizing best practices that have been identified through research and MDE's experience working with SIG Schools, the SSOS will assist Focus Schools in developing interventions that address the unique needs of the subgroup or subgroups for which they were identified. For example, experience in working with schools that have significant American Indian populations has shown that implementing culturally-specific curriculum built around the traditions of the community can yield positive results for those students.



The SSOS will assist Focus Schools that are identified due to the performance of ELs or students with disabilities in addressing the needs of those students. For ELs, the SSOS will train EL instructors on the new WIDA standards and how to use data from WIDA assessments to tailor instruction to student needs. For Focus Schools identified for the performance of students with disabilities, the SSOS will work with the school to identify the types of special education services that these students need to improve their academic performance.

Regardless of which subgroup is identified, it will be critical that the Focus School engage the parents and community members of the subgroup as it crafts a plan to improve student achievement. Interventions should reflect the expressed preferences of the parents and community so that the school has the support of these key stakeholders. If there are community-based groups that have a proven record of success in working with specific populations of students to improve academic achievement, the LEA should consider contracting with them to provide student services that complement the academic programming at the school.

For all Focus Schools, the SSOS will take advantage of the best practices identified in Priority and Celebration Schools. MDE will analyze the enrollment data from Reward and Celebration Schools (See section 2.F) to identify those schools that are having success with lower-performing subgroups. Audits of these schools will identify best practices that can then be applied at Focus Schools with similar student populations.

- *Has the SEA demonstrated that the interventions it has identified are effective at increasing student achievement in schools with similar characteristics, needs, and challenges as the schools the SEA has identified as Focus Schools?*

Based on the support provided to the current SIG Schools as well as the experiences in schools that have been re-structured under NCLB that have similar achievement challenges at the subgroup level, MDE has developed a cadre of interventions that can be employed to address the specific needs of the Focus Schools. In addition to the standard resources employed by MDE, additional resources will be leveraged to assist schools in addressing subgroup achievement gaps and/or graduation rates.

### Partnerships

MDE will be creating partnerships with ethnic and racial advocacy organizations, private corporations and other entities to partner in the efforts to address cultural, family and racial elements that may be contributing to the achievement gap. MDE is currently in the process of working with advocacy organizations around the state to ensure that the SSOS incorporate culturally-relevant and -specific practices. The partnerships being formed in this process will prove invaluable as MDE works with Focus Schools to address low subgroup performance.

### Math and Reading Specialists

The SSOS will employ the services of math and reading specialists that will be available to work with teaching staff to implement culturally-responsive teaching strategies that will have a significantly positive impact on the instructional processes in the classroom. In addition, MDE will offer the opportunity for Focus Schools to partner with Reward Schools that have reached high levels of student achievement with similar characteristics, needs, and challenges in order to learn from their successful programs.

- *Has the SEA identified interventions that are appropriate for different levels of schools (elementary, middle, high) and that address different types of school needs (e.g., all-students, targeted at the lowest-achieving students)?*

Interventions will be determined through precise data analysis to determine root causes and subsequent interventions that address the students at their current level of learning and accelerate them to grade-level proficiency. The SSOS does will continue to provide differentiated technical support not only to schools with diverse student populations and needs but also at the appropriate grade configurations. The interventions will be not only appropriate for skill level but will also take into consideration the cultural, social and emotional level of the students served.

An example of an intervention for secondary schools will be to implement a set of diagnostics to determine the level of college- and career-readiness of students through the use of data and reports from the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT assessments to provide feedback and guidance for students and their parents in preparation for graduation and the work force. By creating opportunities for

students to explore their interests and skills at an earlier age and by offering scaffolded curriculum and learning experiences to help them reach their goals, a culture of self-worth, success, and hope for their future can be fostered in middle and high school students.

The SSOS will also provide technical assistance specific to high schools with graduation rates of 60 percent or less. In recent years MDE has developed tools to improve graduation rates. One lesson that will be applied to Focus Schools is the need for early identification. Through Minnesota's Early Indicator and Response System (MEIRS), schools can identify students at-risk for dropping out and develop student-specific strategies for keeping all students on track to graduate. All Focus Schools identified for low graduation rates will be expected to utilize MEIRS.

**2.E.iv Did the SEA provide criteria to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits focus status?**

**a. Do the SEA's criteria ensure that schools that exit focus status have made significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps?**

Any exit criteria for Focus Schools has to be meaningful enough to ensure that a school that exits Focus status has permanently altered its trajectory and is on track to close, rather than expand, the achievement gap. With that standard in mind, Minnesota will only allow Focus Schools that finish above the bottom quartile of Title I schools statewide for two consecutive years, using performance on the growth gap reduction measurement as the criterion.

Focus Schools are identified based on their performance on the growth gap reduction measurement. This measurement compares the growth of disadvantaged subgroups within a school to the average growth of advantaged subgroups statewide. Those schools whose growth among disadvantaged subgroups is lower than the average growth of advantaged subgroups statewide are contributing Minnesota's achievement gaps, and the lowest-performing on this measurement are making the largest contribution. The consequence of this performance is identification as a Focus School. To exit this status, the

expectation is that a school will make enough progress to finish above of the bottom quartile of Title I schools on the achievement gap measurement.

#### Ambitious Goals for Low Achieving Students

Schools that are in the bottom ten percent of Title I schools on the achievement gap measurement are exhibiting extremely low student growth among their disadvantaged subgroups. To move out of the bottom ten percent and above the bottom 25 percent will require a major effort to improve the student growth of students in disadvantaged subgroups that will result in fewer students in those subgroups falling behind their more advantaged peers. Schools that are able to achieve this goal will have made the kind of progress the Focus School designation is designed to prompt.

#### Achievable Goals

In many schools that will be identified as Focus Schools, the group of students whose academic performance is causing the designation is small enough that smart, focused interventions can have an immediate impact on the school's performance on the Focus Rating. Furthermore, because the growth gap reduction measurement is based on growth instead of proficiency, Focus Schools with students who have fallen well behind the standard for proficiency can still get credit for achieving a high level of individual student growth among students in disadvantaged subgroups. By setting an achievable goal, Minnesota can achieve the kind of buy-in it will need from identified Focus Schools to achieve meaningful progress in closing the achievement gap.

#### Resources

This standard is consistent with the logic behind identifying a manageable-sized group of Priority Schools for the SEA to support. By limiting the size of the Focus School group to ten percent of Title I schools, MDE can efficiently direct its resources to those schools making the biggest contribution to the achievement gap. Similarly, by allowing those Focus Schools that have made major strides in closing the achievement gap to direct their own improvement activities, MDE will be able to focus resources on those Focus Schools that are most in need of support.

#### Graduation Rates

Some Focus Schools are identified because of their graduation rates rather than their performance on the growth gap reduction measurement. For those schools to exit Focus status, they must have a graduation rate of greater than 60 percent for two consecutive years and show at least a five percentage point improvement in graduation rate in each of those years. By setting these criteria, Minnesota ensures that schools are not only achieving a graduation rate above the level used for identification as a Focus School but also that they have an improved trajectory that will ultimately allow them to achieve a graduation well above 60 percent.

## 2.F Provide Incentives and Support for Other Title I Schools

**2.F Does the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system provide incentives and supports for other Title I schools that, based on the SEA’s new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps? Are those incentives and supports likely to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students?**

### Differentiated Recognition Accountability and Support for Title I Schools

Minnesota will use the MMR to further differentiate recognition and accountability for Title I schools. In addition to Reward, Priority and Focus schools Minnesota will identify some additional Title I schools for *Celebration* and *Continuous Improvement*.

### Celebration Schools

In order to create further incentives for high-performing Title I schools, Minnesota will solicit applications from the 25 percent of schools immediately outside the top 15 percent based on the annual MMR to apply for Celebration School status. Each year, these schools may submit applications outlining the reasons they should be considered Celebration Schools.

The primary criteria for awarding Celebration School status will be performance on statewide assessment and graduation rates but schools may also reference more qualitative data such as rigorous course-taking data, college placement statistics and participation on the ACT, PLAN or EXPLORE tests. The SEA will review applications and interview applicants to identify an additional 10 percent of Title I schools to be identified as Celebration Schools. The application and interview process will allow applicants to examine their best practices and identify areas where they can make improvements to move into Celebration or Reward status in the future if their applications are unsuccessful.

### Continuous Improvement Schools

Each year, all Title I schools with MMRs in the bottom 25 percent will be identified as Continuous Improvement School. Title I schools falling into this category that are not already Priority or Focus Schools will be expected to work with their LEA

to perform a needs assessment or self-evaluation and complete a school improvement plan. These schools can access technical support from the state if needed. MDE will audit a random 10 percent of improvement plans created by schools in the Continuous Improvement category to ensure fidelity.

Note: In accordance with state law ([Minn. Stat. 120B.35, Subd. 2](#)), all Title I schools that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years must write a school improvement plan. These schools will also continue to have access to support and technical assistance from the SEA. The SEA will audit a random 10% of improvement plans created by schools in the Continuous Improvement category and Title I schools failing to make AYP for two consecutive years to ensure fidelity with requirements.

### School Report Cards

MDE will incentivize continuous improvement at all schools, including Title I schools, by improving both the quality and quantity of data provided on annual school report cards. The school report card of every school in the state will display the Multiple Measurements Chart to indicate performance in each of the four domains and an overall percentage of points earned. This will supplement the current AYP data, which will continue to be posted as part of the school report card.

MDE is also in the process of collecting and reporting new data as part of its longitudinal data system. MDE will soon begin reporting data on rigorous course-taking and postsecondary enrollment. This qualitative data will supplement quantitative data provided through the MMR and AMOs.

All of this data will be easily accessible through MDE's new website data center. This data center will launch in December 2011, and will allow users to compare the data sets of multiple schools. The data center is divided for easy use by three user types: parents, educators and power data users. The data center will be a crucial tool for holding schools accountable through robust reporting of student achievement data.

**2.G Build SEA, LEA, and School Capacity to Improve Student Learning**

**2.G Is the SEA's process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, likely to succeed in improving such capacity?**

- a. Is the SEA's process for ensuring timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in priority and Focus Schools likely to result in successful implementation of these interventions and in progress on leading indicators and student outcomes in these schools?**

Please refer to the explanation of the SEA's Statewide System of Support (SSOS) in the above section (section 2.D.iii.b). The primary goal of Minnesota's SSOS is to focus schools and districts on closing the persistent achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers.

Timely and Comprehensive Monitoring

Minnesota's SSOS will provide effective technical assistance, thus creating a platform for disseminating and reinforcing the use of effective, research-based instructional strategies and evidence-based practices. In addition, MDE must ensure that these schools and districts provide job-embedded professional development that increases teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects they teach, provide in-depth training in math and reading, (including an emphasis on PreK-3 literacy), support the use of effective, scientifically-based instructional strategies with a diverse range of students, and train teachers to analyze classroom and school-level data to inform their instruction.

- *Did the SEA describe a process for the rigorous review and approval of any external providers used by the SEA and its LEAs to support the implementation of interventions in priority and Focus Schools that is likely to result in the*



*identification of high-quality partners with experience and expertise applicable to the needs of the school, including specific subgroup needs?*

Minnesota recognizes the need to improve achievement for all students and accelerate gains for those who lag behind. In reorganizing the technical assistance for Priority and Focus Schools to address this priority, MDE has established a tiered Statewide System of Support by providing services through partners such as higher education institutions, education districts, service cooperatives or other established providers of school improvement services in Regional Centers of Excellence supported by cross-agency implementation teams from MDE. These partners and any vendors utilized to deliver services will be vetted by the SEA program staff through application review and personal interviews. External providers will need to meet high standards of past experience and success with turnaround schools as well as demonstrate their capacity to provide such services. All grant and contract decisions for services and facilitation of programming will be made by SEA program staff. The aims for this partnership for delivery of services will include:

- Build the capacity of instructional leadership teams in schools to successfully guide the process of continuous improvement
- Implement scientifically-based strategies that will help build sustainable capacity for dramatically improving teaching and learning in Title I schools and districts
- Provide collaborative support for Title I schools and districts to develop a framework for analyzing data, identifying underlying root causes and scaling up best instructional practices to ensure the academic achievement of all students

This tiered system of support will provide regional support to Priority and Focus Schools on an ongoing basis, delivering technical assistance through a network of content specialists, implementation facilitators and professional development providers supported by cross-agency implementation teams. The facilitators in each of the regional centers will have regular contact with the principals and LEAs leaders of the identified schools to monitor the progress towards established

school goals. The SEA will utilize an online system for monitoring the progress that schools are making in the areas of educator and student performance

- b. Is the SEA's process for ensuring sufficient support for implementation in Priority Schools of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources) likely to result in successful implementation of such interventions and improved student achievement?**

#### Funding Options

This system promotes school-wide reform and the access of all children to effective, scientifically-based instructional strategies and challenging academic content. This system also aims to elevate the quality of instruction by providing staff in identified Priority and Focus Schools with substantial opportunities for professional development. The SSOS professional development plans will include differentiated support for principals of the schools from strategies for Turnaround leaders to instructional leadership to leadership in targeted Areas (EL, Special Education, Literacy, Math etc.). These activities will be supported through Title I funds set- asides and other federal funding resources for implementation of the intervention strategies as proposed earlier in this waiver application. These processes have a proven track record and were previously supported by required reserves under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with state and local resources.

- c. Is the SEA's process for holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their Priority Schools, likely to improve LEA capacity to support school improvement?**

The LEAs will be held responsible for the implementation of the improvement plans in the schools through regular interactions with LEA leaders, required reporting of student progress and program fidelity measurements as evidenced through progress made towards both leading and eventually, lagging indicators.

The SSOS will provide direct supports to LEAs and hold them accountable for effectively implementing improvement plans in identified schools

**Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership****3.A Develop and Adopt Guidelines for Local Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support Systems****3.A.i Has the SEA developed and adopted guidelines consistent with Principle 3 through one of the three options below?***Option A:*

*If the SEA has not already developed any guidelines consistent with Principle 3:*

- i. Is the SEA's plan for developing and adopting guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems likely to result in successful adoption of those guidelines by the end of the 2011–2012 school year?*

During the 2011 Minnesota Legislative Session laws were enacted that provided specific parameters and guidelines for the adoption of teacher and principal evaluation systems ([Minn. Laws 2011 SS Chap. 11](#)). MDE, in consultation with stakeholders, is required to create and publish a new teacher evaluation process that applies to all teachers and require LEAs to implement it.

In fall of 2011, the Commissioner of Education convened a Principal Evaluation Work Group and a Teacher Evaluation Work Group. Each Work Group is charged with developing an evaluation model that ensures continuous growth for both teachers and principals.

Each Work Group includes a broad cross-section of stakeholders, representing diverse viewpoints, expertise and perspectives from the leadership of statewide organizations of teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards, higher education as well as parent, business, and community organizations

Minnesota law requires LEAs to fully implement principal evaluations in 2013-2014. Current legislation allows for a longer timeline for teacher evaluation. LEAs will be required to fully implement teacher evaluation in 2014-15. A plan is in place to ensure high-quality and comprehensive evaluations are in place.

- ii. Does the SEA's plan include sufficient involvement of teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines?*

#### Stakeholder Involvement in Development of Teacher Evaluation Guidelines

The Teacher Evaluation Work Group which convened in the fall of 2011 includes a broad base representation of Minnesota stakeholders: parents, teachers and administrators appointed by their respective representative organizations, including the Board of Teaching, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, the Minnesota School Boards Association, the Minnesota Elementary and Secondary Principals Associations, Education Minnesota, and representatives of the Minnesota Assessment Group, the Minnesota Business Partnership, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, and Minnesota postsecondary institutions with research expertise in teacher evaluation. The purpose of the Work Group is to work in consultation with MDE to create and publish a teacher evaluation process that complies with the guidelines set forth in 2011 teacher evaluation legislation.

Using the 2011 Minnesota teacher evaluation legislation, ESEA waiver expectations and the charge given to the Work Group, emphasis will be given to evaluations systems that are:

- occurring frequently;
- focused on teaching and learning;
- differentiated by years of teaching and area of teaching; and
- a foundation for teacher development and improvement and play an important role in employment decisions (The New Teacher Project, 2009).

This Work Group will develop recommendations for an evaluation model to improve student learning and success. The law requires LEAs to either:

- implement a locally-developed teacher evaluation model and support system that meets the criteria of the state-developed teacher evaluation model; or
- Implement the state-approved model.

#### Stakeholder Involvement in Development of Principal Evaluation Guidelines

During the 2011 Minnesota adopted legislation that provided specific parameters and guidelines regarding principal evaluation. MDE, in consultation with stakeholders, is required to create and publish and a principal evaluation process that applies to all principals and require LEAs to implement it.

The Principal Evaluation Work Group was convened in October 2011, per legislative requirement. A list of required membership of stakeholders and [schedule](#) of meetings and agenda items can be found in Attachment 18. The membership of the Work Group includes the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Minnesota Association of Elementary School Principals. Additionally, membership includes a group of recognized and qualified experts and interested stakeholders, including principals, superintendents, teachers, school board members, and parents, among other stakeholders.

The charge of the Principal Evaluation Task Force is to develop an evaluation model that will improve teaching and learning by supporting the principal in shaping the school's professional environment and developing teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness.

#### iii. *Has the SEA checked Assurance 14?*

Yes-Minnesota will submit to the Department for peer review and approval a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011-2012 school year.

### 3.B Ensure LEAs Implement Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support Systems

**3.B Is the SEA's process for ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and principals, evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA's adopted guidelines likely to lead to high-quality local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems?**

#### High Quality Teacher Evaluation Models

Currently there are four important teacher effectiveness initiatives occurring statewide that will inform the development of MDE's teacher evaluation and support model.

- Minnesota's Q Comp program is aimed at improving teaching and learning through job-embedded professional development. This program connects the dots between teacher observation, professional growth, professional development and student achievement.
- Minnesota's School Improvement Grant Schools are required to implement rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluations systems for teachers that take into account student growth and are aligned to professional development.
- The Teacher Support Partnership (TSP) developed New Teacher Induction Guidelines to assist LEAs in implementing comprehensive new teacher programs that include standards-based observations, mentoring, coaching, professional development and teacher growth.
- Minnesota's teacher preparation institutions have piloted and are now implementing the Teacher Performance Assessment which measures pre-service teachers' ability to support and advance student achievement.

Established legislative requirements for teacher professional development will enhance the development and implementation of a new teacher evaluation model. LEAs are currently required to create and implement plans for professional development that:

- Support stable and productive professional communities achieved through ongoing and school-wide progress and growth in teacher practice

- Emphasize coaching, professional learning communities, classroom action research, and other job-embedded models
- Maintain a strong subject matter focus premised on students' learning goals
- Ensure specialized preparation and learning issues related to teaching students with special needs and limited English proficiency and English Learners
- Reinforce national and state standards of effective teaching practices

### Elements of the Teacher Evaluation Model

The teacher evaluation model will differentiate between new and experienced teachers, contain common elements for all teachers and have the option for alternative measures for teacher performance. It will provide differentiated expectations between teachers new to teaching and those with experience. Probationary teachers are defined as those in their first three years of teaching and do not have a continuing contract. Tenured or continuing contract teachers are defined as teachers having successfully completed their three-year probationary period.

*Probationary Teachers-* Minnesota's teacher evaluation model for probationary teachers will:

- Require at least three formal observations periodically throughout each school year with the first evaluation occurring within the first 90 days of teaching service.
- Promote continuous improvement and collaboration with professional colleagues by having trained peer observers serve as mentors or coaches, and by encouraging participation in professional learning communities to develop, improve, and support effective teaching practices.

MDE will continue to provide guidance and technical assistance to LEAs in designing and implementing mentoring and induction programs for probationary teachers.

*Continuing Teachers-* The teacher evaluation model will be differentiated for teachers in tenured or continuing contract status. The model must:



- Establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes a peer-review process.
- Require at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator. For the years when a tenured teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained evaluator, the teacher must be evaluated by peer review.

The Work Group will provide guidance in specifying the frequency of formative observations and various forms of feedback (e.g., coaching, self-assessments, formal/informal walkthroughs, and parent and student surveys) that occur throughout the three-year professional review cycle.

*Commonalities* - Commonalities in the model will exist for both probationary and tenured teachers:

- The teacher evaluation model will be based on Minnesota's professional teaching standards as established in rule ([Minn. Administrative Rule 8710.2000](#)).
- Qualified and trained evaluators will perform summative evaluations.
- 35% of the teacher's evaluation will include results of a teacher value-added assessment.
- Longitudinal data on student engagement and connection and other student outcome measures, explicitly aligned with the elements of curriculum for which teachers are responsible, will be included as well.

The model will include an option for teachers to develop and present a portfolio demonstrating evidence of reflection and professional growth, including the teachers' own performance assessment based on student work samples and examples of teachers' work. It may also include video among other activities for the summative evaluation.

Providing this option for alternative measures of teacher performance via portfolio allows consideration for an equally robust teacher evaluation system that captures the many facets of effective teaching beyond evidence collected during a teacher observation process (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality Research to Practice Brief, 2011).

### High Quality Principal Evaluation Models

Currently there are three important principal effectiveness initiatives occurring statewide that can inform the continuing development of a SEA principal evaluation and support model.

- The Minnesota Principal Academy was established in collaboration with the National Institute of School Leadership. The academy's purpose is to ensure school leaders have the knowledge, skills and tools to offer direction to teachers and design an efficient organization, which helps improve student achievement in low-performing schools or lead good schools to great performance.
- Minnesota's School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools are implementing rigorous, transparent, and equitable principal evaluation systems that take into account student growth and are aligned to professional development.
- Four Minnesota professional organizations collaboratively developed a principal evaluation process that emphasized accountability and was framed around continuous improvement and aligned to Minnesota's K-12 Principal Competencies.

These Minnesota statutes and key initiatives along with a growing body of research as well as examples of national evaluation models will be considered by the Work Group as they make recommendations for designing a principal evaluation model.

### Leadership Skills that Support School, Teacher and Student Performance

Currently, each school district creates its own principal evaluation policies/process. The purpose of the Work Group is to work in consultation with MDE to create and publish a principal evaluation model that complies with the guidelines created by state law. The law requires MDE to do the following:

- Develop a performance-based system model for annually evaluating school principals.
- Consider how principals develop and maintain high standards for student performance, rigorous curriculum, quality instruction, a culture of learning and professional behavior, connections to external communities, systemic

performance accountability, and leadership behaviors that create effective schools and improve school performance.

- Consider whether to establish a multi-tiered evaluation system that supports newly-licensed principals in becoming highly-skilled school leaders and provide opportunities for advanced learning for experienced school leaders.

The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) is one of the most widely-used and respected measures in school leadership performance assessment and was considered when Minnesota's principal evaluation legislation was written. "This assessment empowers administrators to effectively evaluate staff, diagnose strengths and weaknesses, and recommend pertinent professional development." (Benbow, 2008) As highly-regarded as VAL-ED is, the principal evaluation Work Group also recognizes it has limitations such as the lack of inclusion of actual student-learning gains or graduation rates in their evaluation of principals, and will address these limitations in their recommendations.

The evaluation model will include an annual evaluation to support and improve a principal's instructional leadership, organizational management, and professional development. The model will strengthen the principal's capacity in the areas of instruction, supervision, evaluation, and teacher development through formative and summative evaluations. The model will be consistent with a principal's job description, a district's long-term plans and goals and the principal's own professional multi-year growth plans and goals.

The model ultimately must support the principal's leadership behaviors and practices, rigorous curriculum, school performance, and high-quality instruction. On-the-job observations and previous evaluations will be included as will surveys to help identify a principal's effectiveness, leadership skills and processes, and strengths and weaknesses in exercising leadership in pursuit of school success.

The Evaluation Task Force may also consider whether to establish a multi-tiered evaluation system that supports newly licensed principals in becoming highly skilled school leaders and provides opportunities for advanced learning for more experienced school leaders.

- *Does the SEA have a process for reviewing and approving an LEA's teacher and principal evaluation and support systems to ensure that they are consistent with the SEA's guidelines and will result in the successful implementation of such systems?*

#### Approving Locally-developed Evaluation Models

An SEA review/approval process will be established for LEA's teacher and principal evaluation and support systems to ensure that they are consistent with MDE guidelines and result in the successful implementation of such systems. The process will be determined through Work Group recommendations to MDE and rolled out prior to the pilot and full implementation phases. Each Work Group will define evaluation criteria and develop a rubric for LEA and MDE use to determine if their locally-developed plans meet state guidelines.

#### Continually Reviewing and Refining State Evaluation Models.

MDE will update the models regularly to reflect new knowledge from the field—both nationally and statewide. The process and frequency of review of MDE's models will be based on recommendations from the Work Groups.

- *Does the SEA have a process for ensuring that an LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems with the involvement of teachers and principals?*

Evaluation models must have capacity for individual input and personal decisions to fully garner support of teachers and principals. Minnesota has taken on the task of developing evaluation guidelines and models that incorporate professional growth and is aligned with personal decision making.

#### Teacher Evaluation Aligned with Professional Growth

The Teacher Evaluation Work Group will be expected to provide guidance in how LEAs:

- Coordinate the results of teacher evaluations with LEA and school professional development plans
- Use individual professional development plans for professional growth and improvement that are driven by student achievement data

### College- and Career-Ready Standards

The Work Group will be required to incorporate within the evaluation model strong links to Minnesota's college- and career-ready standards and classroom applications to standards-aligned curriculum, research-based and rigorous instruction, formative and summative assessments, use of technology, etc. In addition, the model will incorporate multiple measurements related to increasing student academic achievement and school performance ensuring that every teacher is highly effective in helping students achieve at high levels.

Priority Schools will be required to implement a rigorous and comprehensive teacher evaluation system to ensure that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by:

- Reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort
- Preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools
- Providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs

Priority Schools will receive additional targeted support in implementing teacher evaluation systems through Minnesota's Statewide System of Support.

### Teacher Evaluation Aligned with Personal Decisions

The Work Group will include in their recommended model, teacher quality and current tenure practices that are linked with teacher evaluation, retention and dismissal decisions (Center for American Progress, 2010). Tenured teachers not meeting professional teaching standards will be provided support to improve through a teacher improvement process that includes established goals and timelines. Teachers not making adequate progress in the teacher improvement process will follow disciplinary steps that may include a last chance warning, termination, discharge, nonrenewal, transfer to a different position, a leave of absence, or other discipline a school administrator determines is appropriate. A probationary teacher's contract may be terminated at any time by mutual consent of the board and the teacher.

### A Principal Evaluation Model with Multiple Measures

The principal evaluation Work Group will provide recommendations regarding the use of longitudinal data and school-wide student academic growth data as an evaluation component. District achievement goals and targets will be incorporated into the evaluation process. It will be the task of the Principal Evaluation Work Group to determine how student growth measures will be incorporated into MDE's Principal Evaluation model. Work Groups will lean upon other state principal evaluation models and research that include a value-added assessment component.

### Principal Evaluation Aligned with Professional Growth

Principal evaluation must be linked to professional development that emphasizes improved teaching and learning, curriculum and instruction, student learning, and a collaborative professional culture. The model will include implementation of a plan to improve the principal's performance and specify the procedure and consequence if the principal's performance is not improved. The Work Group will provide more guidance regarding principal professional development as it relates to the principal evaluation process.

### College- and Career-Ready Standards

As the instructional leader, the principal must ensure the teaching occurring in the school is:

- linked to Minnesota's college and career ready standards;
- using standards-aligned curriculum;
- research-based and rigorous;
- utilizing regular formative and summative assessments; and
- encouraging 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning.

Principals will be using a teacher evaluation model that will address areas noted above and use multiple measurements of student academic achievement and school performance to ensure that every teacher is highly effective. The Work Group will be required to incorporate these key features within the evaluation model.

Priority Schools will be expected to implement rigorous and comprehensive principal evaluation models. The results of principal evaluations at Priority Schools

will guide the LEAs decision to dismiss or retain the principal. The results of principal evaluations at Priority Schools will also be used to develop effective supports for leadership within Priority Schools that align with the turnaround principles.

#### Principal Evaluation Model Used for Personnel Decisions

As part of the design of the evaluation model, performance levels and/or evaluation rubrics will be developed and used in developing a principal's professional development plan and to inform personnel decisions. The Work Group will be asked to provide guidance to clarify specific procedures and consequences for principals not meeting standards of professional practice or other criteria to inform personnel decisions.

- *Did the SEA describe the process it will use to ensure that all measures used in an LEA's evaluation and support systems are valid, meaning measures that are clearly related to increasing student academic achievement and school performance, and are implemented in a consistent and high-quality manner across schools within an LEA?*

#### A Teacher Evaluation Model that Includes Multiple Measurement

The Teacher Evaluation Work Group will define a process for ensuring that all measures that are included in determining performance levels are valid and meaningful measures that are clearly related to increasing student academic achievement and school performance, and are implemented in a consistent and high-quality manner across schools within an LEA. Statute requires three measures in the teacher evaluation model:

- Observations based on professional teaching standards
- Value-added performance measures
- Longitudinal data on student engagement and connection

Historically, most states and LEAs have used classroom observations as the primary tool to assess teacher performance (Brandt, Thomas, & Burke, 2008; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Although classroom observations – in combination with student growth measurements – provide multiple data points on teacher performance, additional alternative measures such as graduation rates



should also be considered to ensure a rigorous teacher evaluation system will capture the multiple facets of effective teaching. New research and studies provide insights into how student achievement data can be incorporated into a credible evaluation system. Research has shown that the involvement of teachers in deciding how to account for student learning and other relevant outcomes in evaluation using a combination of measures so teachers feel they are being evaluated comprehensively and fairly is essential (NEA Teacher Evaluation Systems: The Window for Opportunity and Reform, 2009).

MDE will incorporate student growth into its performance-level definitions with sufficient weighting to ensure that performance levels will differentiate among teachers who have made significantly different contributions to student growth or closing achievement gaps. Statute requires that 35 percent of the teacher's evaluation will include results of a teacher's value-added assessment. The model will use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection and other student outcome measurements aligned with elements of curriculum for which the teacher is responsible.

When developing the value-added assessment component of the model, work groups will lean upon other state teacher evaluation models and research that includes value-added assessment components for use with all teachers, particularly those subjects or grade levels where state assessments are not in place.

### Student Growth

As outlined in Principle 2, student growth will play a larger role in Minnesota's new accountability system. The teacher evaluation model will lean on the growth score used in the Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR). This score is based on the average individual student growth achieved by students in each school. Student growth is measured on a normative basis by predicting second-year student scores based on the first-year scores and measuring a student's growth based on their actual performance relative to that prediction. Predicted student growth is established by finding the mean scores of students at each score point using two cohorts of students. In the MMR, student growth is used to measure schools' ability to achieve high student growth. The same principle can be applied to teacher evaluation systems that measure a teacher's ability to achieve high student growth.



- *Is the SEA's plan likely to be successful in ensuring that LEAs meet the timeline requirements by either (1) piloting evaluation and support systems no later than the 2013-2014 school year and implementing evaluation and support systems consistent with the requirements described above no later than the 2014-2015 school year; or (2) implementing these systems no later than the 2013-2014 school year?*

MDE has established a schedule for development and implementation which is outlined below.

Type of Evaluation	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Principal	Legislation enacted	Work Group convenes; model completed	Pilot year	Full implementation at LEA level	
Teacher	Legislation enacted	Work Group convenes; model under development	Model completed	Pilot year	Full implementation at LEA level

#### Pilot Sites, Feedback and Model Refinement

The piloting process will be broad enough to gain sufficient feedback from a variety of educators, schools, and classroom settings to inform full implementation of the LEA's evaluation and support systems. Pilot sites will include:

- LEAs identified with Priority Schools and those receiving federal school redesign grants are required to use evaluation systems that “differentiate performance by at least three levels” and “use student growth as a significant factor in evaluation.”
- Other sites to ensure a representative sample across the state.

MDE's Division of School Support will work with key stakeholders from LEA pilots to refine the evaluation models before full implementation occurs statewide.

- *Do timelines reflect a clear understanding of what steps will be necessary and reflect a logical sequencing and spacing of the key steps necessary to implement evaluation and support systems consistent with the required timelines?*

The Principal Evaluation Work Group has a rigorous meeting schedule intended to result in a formal report to be reviewed and adopted in January 2012. The Work Group is addressing critical issues such as review of information at the Federal level and information from other national and state sources. They are presenting to key stakeholder groups including the Minnesota Principals Academy. By early December they will have a draft that includes core indicators, descriptors, and required evidence. See the current schedule below:

Monday, October 24	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Charge to the group</li> <li>• Review of legislation</li> <li>• Presentations by BOSA and MESPA &amp; MASSP of work completed</li> <li>• Next Steps</li> <li>• Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
Monday, November 7	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of information at federal level-NCLB Waiver Principles</li> <li>• Review of models from state and national sources (NC, IL, IA &amp; Other)</li> <li>• Compare and contrast models</li> <li>• Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
Monday, November 14	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation: MN Principals Academy</li> <li>• Presentation: New Leaders for New Schools</li> <li>• Terminology &amp; structure of model</li> <li>• Begin development of model, recommendations &amp; report</li> <li>• Issues: <b>Proficiency categories &amp; Core Competencies</b></li> <li>• Set calendar and agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
Monday, December 5	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by Val-Ed</li> <li>• Legal Implications</li> <li>• Continue development of model, recommendations &amp; report</li> <li>• Issues: <b>Indicators/Descriptors; Evidences</b></li> <li>• Set calendar and agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
Monday, December 12	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare &amp; discuss questions for January meeting on assessment &amp; longitudinal data</li> <li>• Continue development of model, recommendations &amp; report</li> <li>• Issues: <b>Timelines, process, forms &amp; developmental expectations</b></li> <li>• Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
Thursday January 19	1:00 – 4:00	MDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint meeting with teacher evaluation working group on issues related to testing, assessments and longitudinal data</li> <li>• Review outline of draft report; discussion and revisions</li> </ul>
Monday, January 23	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and Adopt Final Report</li> </ul>

- The Teacher Evaluation Work Group has a similar work schedule with monthly meetings scheduled through August of 2012:

Date	Time	Location	Agenda
November	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Charge to the group</li> <li>• Review of legislation</li> <li>• Review of information at federal level (NCLB—Federal Legislation)</li> <li>• Other teacher evaluation processes in law—Q Comp, SIG</li> <li>• Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
December	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Board of Teaching professional teaching standards established in rule</li> <li>• Identification of terms that need agreement</li> <li>• Prepare questions for January meeting on assessment/growth, longitudinal data, etc.</li> <li>• Legal implications</li> <li>• Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
January 19	1:00 – 4:00 PM	Room CC 15 & 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint meeting with Principal Evaluation Working group for presentation from MDE on what assessment, value-added, longitudinal data is available.</li> <li>• Discussion of information from presentation</li> <li>• Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
February	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of terms and agreement of terminology</li> <li>• Requirements and role of “trained evaluators”</li> <li>• Review of models from local, state and national sources</li> <li>• Compare and contrast models</li> <li>• Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings</li> </ul>
March	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin development of model</li> <li>• Issues:</li> </ul>
April	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of model</li> <li>• Issues:</li> </ul>
May	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of model</li> <li>• Issues:</li> </ul>
June			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of model</li> <li>• Issues:</li> </ul>
July			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of model</li> <li>• Issues:</li> </ul>
August			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of model</li> <li>• Issues:</li> </ul>
TBD			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review outline of draft process; discussion and revisions</li> </ul>
TBD			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and Adopt Final Work Product to present to Commissioner</li> </ul>

- *Is the SEA plan for providing adequate guidance and other technical assistance to LEAs in developing and implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems likely to lead to successful implementation?*

#### Implementation plans, resources and technical assistance

The Principal and Teacher Evaluation Work Groups will develop an implementation plan for LEAs that reflects a clear understanding of what steps will be necessary and a logical sequencing and spacing of the key steps necessary to implement evaluation and support systems consistent with the required timelines.

The design of the implementation plan will be informed by the National Center for State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP). In developing a plan needed attention will be given to:

- Understanding educational practices and developing the capacity to support those practices system-wide (Fixsen, Blase, Horner & Sugai, 2009).
- Awareness that implementation occurs in stages underscores an understanding that change is a process (not an event). By attending to each of the stages of implementation, we will increase the likelihood of sustained implementation of the evaluation model.
- Training in core implementation components for improving and ensuring competence and confidence of individuals (e.g., teachers, coaches, administrators) and for aligning and improving organizational and systems support (e.g., school, district, state policies, regulations, funding).
- Use of Competency drivers to systematically attend to professional development to build competence and confidence and include: staff selection, training, consultation and coaching, and evaluation of staff related to implementation of the educational practice to ensure fidelity.
- Use of Organization drivers to promote hospitable environments for evidence-based educational programs and innovations and include: data-based decision-making, which includes collecting and using reliable and valid process data (fidelity) and outcome data (student academic and

behavioral outcomes) to make decisions; facilitative administration to create policies and procedures at the school and district level that promote high-fidelity implementation; systems intervention processes to create a hospitable state education system (e.g. policies, procedures, and funding streams) designed to support, improve and sustain the literacy programs and practices.

MDE will be taking full advantage of our partnership with SISEP for the next two years as we continue to build knowledge and work to develop a thoughtful plan for implementation of the teacher and principal evaluation models.

Implementation resources will be required to promote successful use of meaningful evaluation systems. Features of the state models may include:

- Contract language describing process, timelines and collection of evidence
- Rubric for standards, indicator and/or competencies that describe performance vividly and clearly for at least three levels of performance
- Templates for self-assessments and growth plans
- Guidelines for developing and using measures of student learning and growth
- Examples of ways to collect and use student, staff and parent feedback

MDE will use recommendations from the Work Group in providing statewide training for teacher and principal evaluation processes such as:

- Understanding the components of the state evaluation models. These components may include guideline components, processes, rubrics, growth plans and templates
- Training evaluators in the evaluation process for consistent and effective application with all educators (WestED, 2011)

Support to LEAs can be provided through regional networks and accessed through webinars or e-learning opportunities. Future MDE support and technical assistance will be driven by feedback from pilot sites and from all LEAs during the first year of implementation.

### Technical assistance for implementation of Teacher Evaluation Models

Once the teacher evaluation model for Minnesota is established, the teacher evaluation Work Group will design an implementation framework for ensuring all districts are implementing an effective teacher evaluation process with their teachers. The framework will include:

- Attention and to staff training
- Coaching
- Evaluation
- System intervention
- Leadership at all levels
- Coherent alignment of policies and practices

Support to LEAs implementing a comprehensive teacher evaluation process will be delivered through the statewide system of support's regional model of assistance.

### Technical Assistance for Implementation of Principal Evaluation Models

Once the principal evaluation model for Minnesota is determined, the principal evaluation Work Group will design an implementation framework to ensure that all LEAs are implementing a successful evaluation process for their principals. Included in the framework will be stage-based implementation, attention to staff training, coaching, evaluation, system intervention, leadership at all levels and coherent alignment of policies and practices.

Support to LEAs implementing a comprehensive principal evaluation process will be delivered through the statewide system of support's regional assistance model.

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## Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

### 3.A Develop and Adopt Guidelines for Local Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support Systems

#### 3.A.i Has the SEA developed and adopted guidelines consistent with Principle 3 through one of the three options below?

Option B: If the SEA has already developed and adopted one or more, but not all, guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:

- i. a copy of any guidelines the SEA has adopted (Attachment 10) and an explanation of how these guidelines are likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for students;

During the 2011 Minnesota Legislative Session laws were enacted that provided specific parameters and guidelines for the adoption of teacher and principal evaluation systems ([Minn. Laws 2011 SS Chap. 11](#)). MDE, in consultation with stakeholders, is required to create and publish a new teacher and principal evaluation process that applies to all teachers and require LEAs to implement it.

Attachment 10 in the Table of Contents has links to five statutes that serve as guidelines that Minnesota has adopted for its principal and teacher evaluation systems.

- ii. evidence of the adoption of the guidelines (Attachment 11);

Attachment 10 (the five statutes that set guidelines for Minnesota's principal and teacher evaluation systems) is also evidence of the adoption of guidelines because these statutes have already been adopted into state law.

- iii. the SEA's plan to develop and adopt the remaining guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year;

In fall of 2011, the Commissioner of Education convened a Principal Evaluation Work Group and a Teacher Evaluation Work Group. Each Work Group is charged with developing an evaluation model that ensures continuous growth for both teachers and principals.

Each Work Group includes a broad cross-section of stakeholders, representing diverse viewpoints, expertise and perspectives from the leadership of statewide organizations of teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards, higher education as well as parent, business, and community organizations.

Minnesota law requires LEAs to fully implement principal evaluations in 2013-2014. Current legislation allows for a longer timeline for teacher evaluation. LEAs will be required to fully implement teacher evaluation in 2014-15. A plan is in place to ensure high-quality and comprehensive evaluations are in place.

- iv. a description of the process used to involve teachers and principals in the development of the adopted guidelines and the process to continue their involvement in developing any remaining guidelines; and

#### Stakeholder Involvement in Development of Teacher Evaluation Guidelines

The Teacher Evaluation Work Group which convened in the fall of 2011 includes a broad base representation of Minnesota stakeholders: parents, teachers and administrators appointed by their respective representative organizations, including the Board of Teaching, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, the Minnesota School Boards Association, the Minnesota Elementary and Secondary Principals Associations, Education Minnesota, and representatives of the Minnesota Assessment Group, the Minnesota Business Partnership, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, and Minnesota postsecondary institutions with research expertise in teacher evaluation. The purpose of the Work Group is to work in consultation with MDE to create and publish a teacher evaluation process that complies with the guidelines set forth in 2011 teacher evaluation legislation.

Using the 2011 Minnesota teacher evaluation legislation, ESEA waiver expectations and the charge given to the Work Group, emphasis will be given to developing an evaluation model and support system that:

- occurs frequently;
- focused on teaching and learning;
- differentiated by years of teaching and area of teaching; and
- is a foundation for teacher development and improvement and play an important role in employment decisions (The New Teacher Project, 2009).

This Work Group will develop recommendations for an evaluation model to improve student learning and success. The law requires LEAs to either:

- implement a locally-developed teacher evaluation model and support system that meets the criteria of the state-developed teacher evaluation model; or
- Implement the state-approved model.

#### Stakeholder Involvement in Development of Principal Evaluation Guidelines

During the 2011 Minnesota adopted legislation that provided specific parameters and guidelines regarding principal evaluation. MDE, in consultation with stakeholders, is required to create and publish and a principal evaluation process that applies to all principals and require LEAs to implement it.

The Principal Evaluation Work Group was convened in October 2011, per legislative requirement. A list of required [membership](#) of stakeholders and [schedule](#) of meetings and agenda items can be found in Attachment 18. The membership of the Work Group includes the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Minnesota Association of Elementary School Principals. Additionally, membership includes a group of recognized and qualified experts and interested stakeholders, including principals, superintendents, teachers, school board members, and parents, among other stakeholders.

The charge of the Principal Evaluation Task Force is to develop an evaluation model that will improve teaching and learning by supporting the principal in shaping the school's professional environment and developing teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness.

- v. *an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the remaining guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year (see Assurance 14).*

Yes-Minnesota will submit to the Department for peer review and approval a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011-2012 school year.