

By submitting this request, the SEA assures that:

<p>✓ Assurance:</p>	<p>Nebraska's Context: *Nebraska's request does not follow the timelines outlined by the U.S. Department of Education's Window 3 Request for ESEA Flexibility (2012). Nebraska has outlined its proposed timelines for each assurance in its full request.</p>
<p>✓ 1. It requests waivers of the above-referenced requirements based on its agreement to meet Principles 1-4 of the flexibility, as described throughout the remainder of this request.</p>	<p>Nebraska seeks flexibility from the requirements of ESEA in order to implement AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow), a statewide accountability and continuous improvement model grounded in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based and systematic professional learning for teachers, principals, and governing boards. • Systems of support • Evaluation that leads to the improvement and accountability of processes, programs, and systems (Yarborough et al., 2010, xxv). • Innovation that invites shared accountability and collaboration among schools and communities in order to support the achievement of all students in Nebraska.
<p>✓ 2. It will adopt English language proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to the State's college- and-career-ready standards, consistent with the requirements 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)</p>	<p>English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards were adopted by Nebraska in December 2013, for initial implementation in the 2014-2015 school year and full implementation in the 2015-2016 school year.</p> <p>Nebraska's standards come from work completed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in collaboration with WestEd and the Understanding Language Initiative at Stanford University who worked to develop a new set of English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards. The ELP Standards, developed for K, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grades, highlight and amplify the critical language, knowledge about language, and skills using language that are in college-and-career-ready standards and that are necessary for English language learners (ELLs) to be successful in schools.</p> <p>http://www.education.ne.gov/natlorigin/ELP%20Standards/ELP%20Standards%20Sept%202014.pdf)</p>

<p>✓ 3. It will develop and administer no later than the 2014-2015 school year <u>alternate assessments</u> 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)</p>	<p>In 2010, Nebraska began the implementation of the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) assessments for grades 3-8 and 11. The State is in the process of revising its content standards and assessments for college-and career-readiness.</p> <p>NeSA testing includes Alternate Assessments for students with severe cognitive disabilities. The students who are administered the alternate assessments are typically fewer than 1% of the student population, so the vast majority of students with disabilities are administered the NeSA general education tests with accommodations, not the alternate assessments. Alternate assessments have been created and revised through a parallel process using the same quality testing processes as the NeSA general assessment. http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/Alternate_Assessment.htm)</p>
<p>✓ 4. It will develop and administer <u>ELP assessments</u> 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)</p>	<p>Nebraska is one of eleven states involved with the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA 21) Consortium that is currently building an assessment tool aligned with the new English Language Proficiency Standards. http://www.elpa21.org/). The assessment will measure growth based on the new English Language Proficiency standards and provide feedback to inform instruction so English Language Learners have the opportunity to graduate high school college-and career-ready.</p> <p>The ELPA21 assessment system, which includes a screener and summative assessments, will support ELLs by determining initial placement, providing information that can help guide instruction, growth and reclassification/exit; and providing accountability for the system and the states. The ELPA21 will field test in the 2014-2015 school year and will be fully operational in the 2015-2016 school year.</p>

<p>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)</p>	<p>The Nebraska Department of Education annually reports college-going and college-credit accumulation rates for all students. LEAs are able to access the reports through a secure Data Reporting System website which is available to districts with an activation code. The data are broken down into multiple subgroups as well as disaggregated in various categories and cohorts.</p> <p>While NDE collects on college-going and college-credit-accumulation rates, these data do not appear on the public version of the Data Reporting System. The public website masks data for groups with 10 or fewer students to protect confidential information about individual students as required by federal law.</p>
<p>✓ 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 will be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments administered statewide; include all students, including by providing appropriate accommodations for English Learners and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on grade-level 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)</p>	<p>Nebraska has included all Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) assessments (Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Science) in its differentiated recognition, accountability system--AQuESTT. AQuESTT annually classifies schools in four performance categories: Excellent, Great, Good, and Needs Improvement. Reward, Priority, and Focus schools as defined by the ESEA Flexibility Request will be designated through the AQuESTT classification process.</p> <p>Nebraska provides access to NeSA through an aligned alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities and accommodations for English Language Learners (ELLs).</p> <p><u>Alternate Assessment:</u> http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/Alternate_Assessment.htm</p> <p><u>ELL and Special Education Accommodations:</u> http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/NeSA_Accommodations.htm</p>

<p>✓ 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 as well as make public its lists of priority and focus schools if it chooses to update those lists. (Principle 2)</p>	<p>Nebraska will publicly list its Reward, Priority, and Focus schools when it releases annual AQuESTT performance classifications.</p>
<p>✓ 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, all 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 than the deadline required under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. (Principle 3)</p>	<p>Nebraska currently reports student growth data in the secure Data Reporting System. The secured website displays unmasked school district and school building data – data available only to authorized individuals, primarily Nebraska school district and education consortium officials. This data may be accessed through the Nebraska Department of Education Portal once appropriate activation has been granted. Data profiles include data related to student growth on state assessments at the classroom level.</p>
<p>✓ 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)</p>	<p>In seeking flexibility, Nebraska will develop and sustain program evaluation capacity that is inherent to continuous improvement. Strategic evaluation with the goal of eliminating cumbersome redundancy, alleviating burden, and increasing efficiency will become embedded in an annual AQuESTT process.</p> <p>The Nebraska Education Data Systems Legislative Study (2014) initially identified areas for improvement. http://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/NEDataSystemsLegislativeStudyLoRes.pdf</p>
<p>✓ 10. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its request.</p>	<p>The Committee of Practitioners will meet March 24, 2015. The ESEA Flexibility Request is on the agenda for consultation.</p>

<p>✓ 11. Prior to submitting this request, it provided all LEAs with <u>notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request</u> and has attached a copy of that notice (Attachment 1) as well as copies of any comments it received from LEAs (Attachment 2)</p>	<p>The Nebraska Department of Education hosted Policy Forums in September and October 2014, related to AQuESTT, which addresses all principles in the ESEA Request for Flexibility.</p> <p>AQuESTT Policy Forums: http://www.education.ne.gov/aquestt/Documents/2014PolicyPartnerForumDates.pdf</p> <p>Drafts of the ESEA Flexibility Request have been posted on the NDE website since February 5, 2015. http://www.education.ne.gov/eseaflex/</p>
<p>✓ 12. Prior to submitting this request, it <u>provided notice and information regarding the request to the public in a manner which the State customarily provides such notice</u> and information to the public (Attachment 3).</p>	<p>The Nebraska Department of Education hosted Policy Forums in September and October 2014, related to AQuESTT, which addresses all principles in the ESEA Request for Flexibility.</p> <p>AQuESTT Policy Forums: http://www.education.ne.gov/aquestt/Documents/2014PolicyPartnerForumDates.pdf</p> <p>Drafts of the ESEA Flexibility Request have been posted on the NDE website since February 5, 2015. http://www.education.ne.gov/eseaflex/</p>

<p>✓ 13. It will provide to the Department, in a timely manner, all required reports, data, and evidence regarding the progress in implementing the plans contained throughout this request.</p>	<p>It is our intent to provide information in a timely manner to the U.S. Department of Education on the following:</p> <p>Principle 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval and implementation of College and Career Ready Standards • Approval and implementation of College and Career Ready-Aligned Assessments <p>Principle 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval and implementation of AQuESTT and its classification and designation of schools. • Identification of Reward, Priority, and Focus schools based on ESEA Flexibility Request definitions. • Recognition and differentiated support systems for Reward, Priority, Focus, and Other Title I Schools. <p>Principle 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of teacher/principal evaluation based on the <i>Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework</i>. • Implementation of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and data analysis correlated to student achievement outcomes.
<p>✓ 14. It will report annually on its State report card, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report on their local report cards, for the “all students” group and for each subgroup described in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II): information on student achievement at each proficiency level; data comparing actual achievement levels to the State’s annual measurable objectives; the percentage of students not tested; performance on the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools; and graduation rates for high schools. It will also annually report, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report, all other information and data required by ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C) and 1111(h)(2)(B), respectively.</p>	<p>Nebraska will continue to annually report data for the “all students” group and subgroups described in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II).</p>

If the SEA selects Option A 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 ensure that:

15. 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 **2012-2013** school year. **(Principle 3)**

The Teacher and Principal Performance Framework outlines guidelines rather than standards of effective practice.

Nebraska's Teacher and Principal Performance Framework is voluntary but a instrumental component of districts showing growth in AQuESTT.

The Teacher and Principal Performance Framework uses Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as an indicator of student achievement instead of tying student achievement data on NeSA to teacher performance.

The Nebraska State Board of Education adopted the Nebraska *Teacher and Principal Performance Framework* to identify effective practice among Nebraska's best teachers and principals.

In February 2012, the Board approved the development of a framework for teacher and principal evaluation based on *The Teacher and Principal Performance Framework*. In the spring of 2013, seventeen pilot schools, representing all sizes of schools and all regions of the state, began a two year implementation process.

Nebraska's evaluation model uses Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in order to to assess teachers' impact on student achievement. Principals and teachers are evaluated across multiple measures, not just the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) assessments. Staff developers from Educational Service Units work with principals and teachers to design appropriate SLOs. This collaboration includes a joint review of baseline data and content needs. In this process, educators' work together to determine content priorities, create student learning goals, set challenging yet achievable targets, and identify appropriate means of assessment.

In submitting its request for ESEA Flexibility, Nebraska **will not**:

Rationale:

Tie teacher evaluations to a single measure of student performance on statewide assessments.

Nebraska recognizes the importance of student growth on annual statewide assessments. However, AQuESTT is a model of accountability that examines multiple measures related to student performance and educator effectiveness. The teacher evaluation framework in Nebraska uses student learning objectives as a gauge for student achievement and growth.

Mandate a single model for teacher/principal evaluation.

Nebraska's Teacher and Principal evaluation framework recognizes the importance of building an evaluation model to support and enhance effective instruction. Districts have designed evaluation models that fit their unique context. The state framework provides a structure that allows for sharing across districts and ensuring accountability.

Prescribe a one-size-fits-all system for Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

Establishing targets and Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for individual schools and districts is crucial for continuous improvement. Creating the same AMOs for every school and district does not take into account the needs and strengths within each context. As a state we want to provide the opportunity for schools and districts to hold themselves to high expectations while continuing to demonstrate growth and improvement through customizable Annual Measurable Objective goal-setting.

Adopt a single turnaround model for schools in need of assistance to improve.

In order to support schools and districts in need of improvement, Nebraska seeks to provide the greatest opportunity for success through differentiated support. Understanding that each school's needs are unique and may require different strategies around support and intervention, it is necessary to construct customized progress plans.