



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

April 5, 2021

The Honorable Ian Rosenblum

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs, Delegated the authority to perform the functions and duties of the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20202

Dear Deputy Assistant Secretary Rosenblum:

I am writing to request a waiver, pursuant to section 8401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), of the following requirements as a result of ongoing challenges related to the novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):

State: **District of Columbia**

Please check all that apply:

- ✓ Accountability and school identification requirements in ESEA sections 1111(c)(4) and 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D): the requirements that a State measure progress toward long-term goals and measurements of interim progress; meaningfully differentiate, on an annual basis, all public schools, including by adjusting the Academic Achievement indicator based on a participation rate below 95 percent; and identify schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement based on data from the 2020-2021 school year.
- ✓ Report card provisions related to accountability in ESEA section 1111(h) based on data from the 2020-2021 school year. These include:
 - Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(i)(I)-(IV) and (VI) (*Accountability system description, other than the list of comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement schools*).
 - Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(iii)(I) (*Other Academic indicator results for schools that are not high schools*).
 - Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(v) (*School Quality or Student Success indicator results*).
 - Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(vi) (*Progress toward meeting long-terms goals and measurements of interim progress*).
 - Section 1111(h)(2)(C) with respect, at the local educational agency (LEA) and school levels, to all waived requirements in section 1111(h)(1)(C).

Consistent with the requirements of ESEA section 8401(b)(1)(C), describe how the waiving of such requirements will advance student academic achievement.

DC Specific Narrative:

As the District continues to respond to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) continues to prioritize the health and safety of students and educators. The pandemic has had a significant impact on our students, families and schools in the District. Yet, OSSE remains committed to providing stakeholders with accurate and accessible data on the performance of our schools. We believe it is important to have comparable, valid and reliable data that measures how our students are doing academically as well as how our schools are supporting student learning. We need to know both where our students are academically and what the impact of the pandemic and distance learning has been on student performance. We are committed to reviewing all available data, as well as working with our stakeholders to be able to provide information that is both meaningful as well as useful in improving programs and supports for all students and schools.

OSSE recognizes the impacts these changes have on the data used for statewide accountability calculations in the STAR Framework and has determined that the absence of many data components from the 2019-20 school year combined with the impacted data from the 2020-21 school year directly impacts the ability to implement the STAR Framework as specified in our ESSA plan. Providing flexibility from these high stakes accountability and reporting requirements, provides an opportunity for OSSE to report on new and more timely data elements to address the current structure of learning, additional opportunity to learn elements, address equity gaps, as well as provide schools flexibility to address the specific social and emotional needs of students and staff in ways that are responsive to the current learning structures.

Consistent with the requirements of ESEA section 8401(b)(1)(F), in order to maintain or improve transparency in reporting to parents and the public on student achievement and school performance in school year 2020-2021, including the achievement of subgroups of students, I assure that:

- ✓ The State will make publicly available chronic absenteeism data, either as defined in the State's School Quality or Student Success indicator, if applicable, or ED *Facts*, disaggregated to the extent such data are available by the subgroups in ESEA section 1111(c)(2), on State and local report cards (or in another publicly available location).
- ✓ The State will make publicly available data on student and/or teacher access to technology devices and high-speed internet, disaggregated by the subgroups in ESEA section 1111(c)(2), to the extent such data are collected at the state or LEA level.

Provide any additional information about maintaining and improving transparency here, including whether the state or LEA collects information on access to technology and high-speed internet and other existing collections of opportunity to learn data (e.g., data used for the State's School Quality or Student Success indicator(s), school discipline data, access to a well-rounded education (such as advanced courses, music, and the arts), access to support staff (e.g., nurses, social workers, psychologists), and/or access to qualified educators data, which could include teacher and staff turnover data).

DC Specific Narrative:

DC collected information and published a report about access to technology devices and high-speed internet in the fall of 2020 and has outlined how recovery funds are being used to continue to address and support those needs to address the identified digital divide.

OSSE has published multiple attendance metrics on the DC School Report Card, including chronic absenteeism data and in-seat attendance which is reported at the state, LEA, and school and is disaggregated at the student group level. OSSE will report chronic absenteeism and additional attendance information specific to instructional settings. Data will continue to be disaggregated at the student group level.

OSSE's school report cards have historically provided information on the school profile page about a variety of school offerings and on the teacher and staff page it has included information about which health staff are available at each school as well as the required teacher and school leader experience and credential metrics. While this year, information may be presented differently, we will continue to make information about staff experience and credentials, health and mental wellness support services, and other programs available at schools accessible to the public through our reporting tools.

Consistent with the requirements of ESEA section 8401(b)(1)(F), in order to ensure that schools will continue to provide assistance to the same populations served by Title I, Part A (e.g., subgroups in section 1111(c)(2)), I assure that:

✓ Any school that is identified for comprehensive, targeted, or additional targeted support and improvement in the 2019-2020 school year (i.e., any school that was in that status as of the 2019-2020 school year), except for comprehensive support and improvement schools identified based on low graduation rates that meet the State's exit criteria, will maintain that identification status in the 2021-2022 school year, implement its support and improvement plan, and receive appropriate supports and interventions.

Provide any additional information on how schools will continue to provide assistance to the same populations served by Title I, Part A here.

OSSE identified Comprehensive support schools representing the bottom 5% in the fall of 2018 and has continued to support the LEAs and schools in the implementation of their improvement plans. Each school will continue to address the needs of their population and revise their plans according to updated data and identified needs which may have shifted throughout the course of the pandemic. OSSE will meet with the LEA and schools identified to provide support and guidance as they make revisions and monitor the progress they make in meeting exit criteria.

Comprehensive Support Schools identified as a result of graduation rates (CS2) below 67% will have an ability to exit this status based on graduations rates from the 20-21 school year. New CS2 schools will not be identified until the fall of 2022.

Targeted Schools were last identified in Fall of 2019 and reviews of their plans will also continue with a goal toward supporting them in identifying continuing or shifting areas of needed focus.

These plans and monitoring tools are posted publicly on our OSSE site and linked within the resource page on our report card site, as well.

✓ The State will identify comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement schools using data from the 2021-2022 school year in the fall of 2022 to ensure school identification resumes as quickly as possible.

Consistent with the requirements of ESEA section 8401(b)(3)(A), prior to submitting this waiver, OSSE provided interested LEAs and the public with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input on this waiver request and considered the feedback and input in

finalizing this request. OSSE published this waiver along with a waiver requesting flexibility related to statewide assessments on March 19, 2021. Both waivers were presented to during meetings with LEA data and assessment leaders as well as at a public meeting of the DC State Board of Education on March 25, 2021. Comments were accepted through April 2, 2021. Prior to the release of this waiver, OSSE had presented and published an Accountability Addendum with similarly requested flexibilities and received public comment regarding those items in December and January. The comments and input received, as well as the State's description of how it addressed the comments and input, are enclosed with this request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Chief State School Officer (or Authorized
Representative)

Digital Signature

OR

Typed Name and Date

By typing my name here, I am affirming submission
of this waiver on behalf of the State.