ESEA Flexibility
West Virginia
Executive Summary

August 8, 2012
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO WEST VIRGINIA’S ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request process is being implemented by the United States Department of Education in response to Congress’ inaction surrounding the reauthorization of ESEA. The process allows states to request a series of waivers of restrictive provisions included in ESEA. The Secretary of Education may elect to grant these waivers to State Education Agencies (SEAs) if, following a comprehensive peer review process, it is determined that the SEA has proposed a series of high quality plans for the implementation of sweeping educational reforms aligned to three core principles:

Principle 1 - College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students

Principle 2 - State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support

Principle 3 - Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

To date, there have been two request Windows for flexibility in which all but 13 states have submitted applications. Of these states, 32 have been approved as of August 2012. The state of West Virginia, though fully committed to the spirit of these educational reforms, was unable to submit a request for flexibility during Windows 1 and 2 due to legislative constraints related to Principle 3. However, those barriers have since been removed by the West Virginia Legislature. In response, Dr. Jorea Marple communicated West Virginia’s intent to apply for flexibility during Window 3 which closes September 6, 2012.

In the interim, the state filed and has been approved for a waiver to freeze West Virginia’s Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for reading/language arts and mathematics to the levels approved in the state’s accountability workbook for the 2010 – 2011 school year. This has allowed sufficient time for West Virginia to engage with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive ESEA Flexibility Request.

In crafting our response to each principle, we have engaged myriad stakeholders including the West Virginia Board of Education, administrators, teachers, institutions of higher education (IHEs), district staff, RESA staff, legislative representatives, parents, and individuals from other professional organizations and education advocacy groups. We have established a Teacher evaluation Task Force and an Accountability and Accreditation Stakeholder’s Advisory Committee. The work of these committees has been ongoing since 2010 to inform the plans proposed in our Flexibility Request.

Upon submission of the ESEA Flexibility Request, West Virginia’s application will be assigned to a peer review panel. It is anticipated that the review process could take from 3 to 6 months to be completed. During the process, the WVDE will be required to answer questions, defend our stance on these key issues, and negotiate compromises in order to receive flexibility. If approved, the waivers will be effective for the 2012 – 2013 school year.

In addition to the extensive stakeholder involvement that has taken place during the development of our Request, this detailed executive summary is being provided to stakeholders during the month of August 2012 in order to secure substantive feedback regarding the high level vision for West Virginia’s plan related to each Principle. This summary shall be provided to the Governor, the West Virginia National Congressional Delegation, the West Virginia Board of Education, Educators, Administrators, Districts, RESAs, and the public.
PRINCIPLE 1: COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

1.A ADOPT COLLEGE – AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

In May 2010 the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics and English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. West Virginia educators placed these standards into the WV framework and re-branded these standards, the Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives (Next Generation CSOs). The Next Generation CSOs are available for review in WVBE Policy 2520.1A and WVBE Policy 2520.1B.

The ESEA Flexibility Request Application requires that West Virginia provide evidence of adoption of the CCSS. West Virginia will be providing the May 12, 2010 WVBE meeting minutes to peer reviewers as evidence of the state’s adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

1.B TRANSITION TO COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

West Virginia must provide a high quality plan to transition to and implement college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics. The state must respond to 11 key areas. West Virginia’s response to each of these areas is briefly summarized below.

1. Alignment of WV 21st Century CSOs to the CCSS

The WVDE has produced an alignment document which details the degree of fit among the CCSS and the currently utilized West Virginia 21st Century Content Standards and Objectives. The alignment document can be found at http://wvde.state.wv.us/teach21/Crosswalks.html.

This document has been utilized to prioritize the content included in professional development opportunities for WV educators.

2. Linguistic Demands of the WV Next Generation CSOs and Development of Corresponding English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards

WV has partnered with 15 states and the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to examine current English Language Proficiency standards. The purpose of the partnership is to develop common ELP expectations that correspond to the CCSS.

WV is also a member of the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA 21) Consortium. This partnership of 13 states, Stanford University, and CCSSO, has submitted a grant proposal to enhance the quality of assessment tools for measuring English language proficiency.

3. Learning and Accommodation Factors for Students with Disabilities

Ensuring that all learners can meaningfully access the Next Generation CSOs presents a considerable challenge to educators of students with disabilities. Because most students with disabilities spend the majority of their learning time in the general educational environment, a large portion of this challenge will be shouldered by the state’s regular education teachers.
The WVDE Office of Special Programs (OSP) has remained connected with the WVDE Office of Instruction during the state’s adoption of the Next Generation CSOs. Throughout this process, the OSP has identified several critical factors that must be attended to in order to maximize learning opportunities and appropriately accommodate students with disabilities. LEAs and schools will receive best practice guidance from OSP to assist in making critical transitions in these areas during the 2012 – 2013 school year.

The OSP has also provided and will continue to provide for teachers of students with disabilities, a series of high quality professional development opportunities including CCSS-aligned Literacy and Mathematics Academies, Autism Academies, and Support for Personalized Learning (SPL) professional development. More information about this work can be found later in this executive summary where professional development is discussed in detail.

Districts and teachers of students with disabilities will also continue to receive assistance in making the transition to the Next Generation CSOs for students with disabilities from the state’s regional Technical Assistance Specialists (formerly Response to Intervention Specialists).

Teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities will be supported via a variety of avenues including the WVDE’s Teaching and Technology for Students with Significant Disabilities project, known as the T1 project, WV’s involvement in the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment Consortium, and ongoing collaboration with the West Virginia Autism Collaborative Community of Practice. The OSP has provided and will continue to provide their OSP Autism Academies in partnership with Marshall University’s Autism Training Center.

The WVDE has also enlisted a great deal of support for transitioning teachers of students with disabilities to the Next Generation CSOs from a variety of state and national technical assistance organizations including the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC), the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI), The Mid South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC), the North Central Regional Resource Center (NCRRC), the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, The Autism Training Center at Marshall University, The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children, The National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development, and the National Center to Improve Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel for Children with Disabilities. The WVDE will continue to work with these groups to ensure transition to the Next Generation CSOs is successful.

4. Outreach and Dissemination of WV Next Generation CSOs to Appropriate Stakeholders

The WVDE has developed an informational web-site to keep the public informed about the adoption and implementation of Next Generation CSOs. The site, located at [http://wvde.state.wv.us/next-generation](http://wvde.state.wv.us/next-generation) includes an overview of the process through which West Virginia, along with our state’s educators, adopted the CCSS, re-branding them the WV Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives (WV Next Generation CSOs). The site includes video testimonials from teachers who are implementing the new standards and provides an overview of the state’s WVBE approved professional development and implementation schedule as well as a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the WV Next Generation CSOs. The site also includes a “Need to Know” section for teachers, parents, and students. Each section includes resources relevant to these stakeholder groups. The site will continue to be updated throughout our transition to the Next Generation CSOs.
Outreach is also being provided via a variety of professional development opportunities for educators, regular communication from the State Superintendent of Schools to County Superintendents, regular outreach to the Counties’ Chief Instructional Leaders, and West Virginia’s involvement in a variety of national advisory groups/state collaborative organizations such as the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) State Collaboratives on Student Assessment and Standards (SCASS). All of these communication activities will continue to be supported during the transition.

5. Professional Development and Supports for All Teachers

Professional development for the state’s education workforce is one of the centerpieces of West Virginia’s plan to successfully transition to the Next Generation CSOs. In recognition of the importance of this critical support structure, the WVBE’s goals for professional development and the resulting Master Plan for Statewide Professional Development have been consistently designed to ensure that the state’s professional development providers provide adequate support related to the CCSS for both teachers and administrators.

With respect to the 2011 – 2012 school year, the WVBE’s first goal for professional development clearly explicated their expectation that professional development conducted by West Virginia’s state providers would promote “instruction that exhibits an understanding of the CCSS for English/language arts and Mathematics including how the new standards align to the WV 21st Century Content Standards and Objectives.” Furthermore the WVBE’s second goal for statewide professional development for this period stated that “participants will apply their knowledge of the CCSS into professional practice with specific attention to (1) addressing writing and text complexity, (2) designing school-wide efforts to improve literacy and numeracy, and (3) ensuring technology and science are integrated into improvement efforts.”

During school year 2011 – 2012, approximately 423 sessions were provided by the state’s professional development providers to align with the Board’s first goal (i.e., provide professional development to promote instruction that exhibits an understanding of the CCSS for reading/language arts and mathematics including how the standards align to the 21st Century CSOs). An additional 370 sessions were provided to address the Board’s second goal (address writing and text complexity, design school-wide efforts to improve literacy and numeracy, and ensure technology and science are integrated into improvement efforts).

The board’s goals for staff development for school year 2012 – 2013 also include a similar, though expanded focus upon promoting high quality standards-based instruction. Goal 1 for the 2012 – 2013 school year states that providers must provide professional development that “aligns with curriculum standards to increase educator effectiveness in the arts, world languages, health, physical education, career/technical, reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.”

So far, the state’s professional development providers (including the WVDE) have proposed in the Master Plan for Statewide Professional Development for 2012 – 2013 to conduct 229 sessions aligned to this goal for educators and administrators.

The WVDE has fulfilled the board’s expectation to support this transition primarily through the provision of a series of week-long residential summer institutes designed to help prepare WV’s educators to implement the Next Generation CSOs. These Teacher Leadership Institutes (TLIs) began in the summer of 2011 and are attended by teams of teacher leaders, accompanied by a building principal or county staff member, from each of the 55 county school districts. The professional development experience is designed to deepen the teacher leaders’ understanding of the content and expectations set forth in the Next Generation CSOs and prepare and empower
educators to facilitate professional development for their peers in each county school system. The TLI professional development will continue with a focus on the Next Generation CSOs through 2014 – 2015 at which point teachers from all grade levels K – 12 will have received professional development on the new standards. The current WVBE-approved professional development schedule for TLI can be found at: http://wvde.state.wv.us/next-generation/implementation.html.

A critical component of the state’s plan to successfully transition to CCSS involves building capacity among all LEAs, principals, and educators to deliver responsive and accessible instruction to learners who represent a diverse range of ability. WVDE’s Support for Personalized Learning (SPL) initiative (formerly RTI) is the mechanism for ensuring this transition. SPL employs three tiers of increasingly intensive instruction (1) core, (2) intensive, and (3) targeted. SPL also utilizes data-based progress monitoring, formative assessment, and differentiated instruction.

The WVDE has recently issued comprehensive guidance to LEAs and schools regarding SPL, including six core principles that promote effective implementation (1) leadership (2) school climate and culture, (3) collaboration, (4) family and community involvement, (5) assessment, and (6) multi-tiered instruction (core, targeted, intensive). The guidance can be found at: http://wvde.state.wv.us/spl.

Beyond the provision of this guidance, a comprehensive professional development rollout plan for the SPL initiative is included in the WVDE’s Flexibility Request. Phase 1 SPL professional development is currently underway and subsequent Phase 2 and Phase 3 professional development will be provided through 2014 – 2015 to assist teachers of students with disabilities, students who are English Language Learners (ELLs, or students who are otherwise struggling to succeed to ensure their students can access the Next Generation CSOs.

Additional professional development for teachers of students with disabilities includes a series of CCSS-aligned Literacy and Mathematics Academies. These extended PD opportunities for educators focus on building special educators’ capacity to deliver high quality instruction that meets the rigorous expectations set forth in the Next Generation CSOs. The Academies began in 2011 and mathematics academies will continue through 2013 while literacy academies will continue throughout 2014 in support of the WVDE’s transition to the Next Generation CSOs.

WVDE also recognizes the linguistic demands that English language learners will experience in accessing the Next Generation CSOs. As previously mentioned, supports provided through SPL and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) have been targeted for specific professional development activities. Additionally, several districts within the state have already begun to implement the SIOP® (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Model to support English language learners. This researched model provides protocols and supports to improve overall student comprehension, especially in content area instruction. The model serves to strengthen overall increased content literacy and facilitates the implementation of the Next Generation CSOs. During the WVDE 2012 Summer Institute for Teachers for ESL and World Languages, the key ESL presenter provided an introduction of SIOP® fundamentals. SIOP® will be introduced to general educators in the summer of 2013 during Teacher Leadership Institute (TLI) and will provide yet another scaffold to support English language learners.

6. **Professional Development for Principals**

The WVDE recognizes the critical role that administrators have in transitioning their schools to successfully implement the Next Generation CSOs. Instructional leadership is the number one skill required by principals to successfully navigate this transition and, as such, it is a critical component of
the WVBE’s 2011 – 2012 goals for statewide professional development. Goal 4 states that individuals who participate in state-sponsored professional development shall, as a result, “exhibit increased leadership and collaboration to facilitate school improvement.” In 2011 – 2012, state professional development providers conducted 352 sessions aligned to this goal.

Likewise, the previously mentioned 2011 – 2012 WVBE Goals for statewide professional development (Goals 1 and 2) explicitly communicate the expectation that professional development conducted by state providers must seek to build participants’ capacity to recognize and implement instruction and leadership practices that align to the CCSS. This expectation includes professional development for administrators. According to evaluation data collected by the WVDE Office of Research, school and district administrators were attendees at a great many of the 793 professional development sessions held during school year 2011 - 2012 that were aligned to these two goals.

In response to the importance of principals attending such professional development, the WVDE has invited school administrators to attend as required team members of the TLI for the past three years and will continue to do so going forward into 2014 - 2015. Principals have participated in the aforementioned sessions with their teachers to begin to understand the Next Generation CSOs and the changes which will ensue in classrooms as a result of adoption. The institutes held so far have also contained breakout sessions for principals focusing on the monitoring and accountability aspects required for a successful transition to the Next Generation CSOs.

Further, during the 2011-2012 school year the Office of Instruction conducted regional trainings, at the eight Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), to begin building the expertise of the RESA staff, central office administrators and principals regarding the new standards. The Office of Instruction also provided six days of professional development to the principals and leadership teams of our state’s low-performing schools along with many district and school-level trainings.

Representatives of the department’s Division of Educator Quality and System Support’s Office of Professional Preparation and the Office of School Improvement have collaborated with the center’s chief executive and the director of principal programs in coordinating a redesign of the evaluation institute based on the revised West Virginia Professional Teaching Standards as well as the Next Generation CSOs, especially as the new content standards and objectives relate to the professional teaching standards involving curriculum and planning and the learner and the learning environment. This initiative is undertaken principally as part of building capacity for the statewide implementation of the revised educator evaluation system in 2013.

The WVDE’s ESEA Flexibility Request Application also includes a comprehensive overview of a variety of additional standards-based professional development provided by the WVDE and other state providers to school administrators to help prepare them to lead schools in successfully transitioning to the WV Next Generation CSOs.

7. Development and Dissemination of High-Quality Instructional Materials
The WVDE Office of Instruction uses http://wvde.wv.state.us/Teach21 as a springboard for publicizing the Next Generation CSOs and providing high quality instructional resources to teachers. To date, the site has been visited by approximately 900,000 visitors from 187 countries and territories and boasts approximately 41,400 regular users (individuals accessing the site 200 times or more).

During the 2012-2013 school year all existing instructional resources (e.g., model lessons, units, Project Based Learning (PBL) units of study, video clips and professional development resources) will be reviewed and revised for alignment with the Next Generation CSOs for ELA, Literacy and Mathematics using a peer review process designed by national experts, Jay McTighe and Grant
Wiggins and rubrics aligned with the Understanding by Design framework. Those resources that cannot be brought into direct alignment with the Next Generation CSOs will be removed from the site. Additional resources, with an emphasis on those that employ project based learning and inquiry, will be identified or designed by classroom teachers under contract with the WVDE to support the content and expectations set forth in the Next Generation CSOs—particularly those standards weakly represented or non-existent in the state’s currently adopted instructional materials—by school year 2014.

Furthermore, West Virginia is currently in the process of adopting instructional materials for social studies, K-12, aligned with the Next Generation Standards for Literacy for grades 6-12, and mathematics, aligned with the Next Generation Standards for Mathematics. The calendar for Instructional Materials Adoption for the 2012 – 2013 school year can be found at: http://wvde.state.wv.us/materials/calendar.html.

8. **Expansion of Access to Accelerated Learning Opportunities and Successfully Transitioning Students to College and Career**

The WVDE remains committed to providing rigorous and accelerated learning opportunities for all students. Our state has set broad goals aligned to this expectation and has set forth on a path to establish and maintain a system of high quality and coordinated policy and programming in this area. The WVBE also recently approved the reorganization of the WVDE to support a more personalized learning system for students, a system that supports anywhere anytime learning and represents true transformation of the system. This new organizational structure shall result in major policy revisions that acknowledge learning in a variety of settings and are tailored to progress the learning of each individual student. We believe that the implementation of these initiatives will bolster the quality of instruction for students who take part in accelerated learning opportunities, increase participation in innovative and rigorous programs that have a proven track record of success, and create a culture of high expectations leading to postsecondary success.

The WVDE’s ESEA Flexibility Request includes an extensive discussion of the state’s plans with respect to expanding access to and participation in (1) Advanced Placement courses, (2) Dual Credit courses, (3) Post-Secondary Transition courses, (4) career readiness/technical education courses, (5) college and career education and development opportunities, and (6) other diverse accelerated learning opportunities/programs.

9. **Collaboration with WV Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to Better Prepare Teachers and Principals for Transition to the Next Generation CSOs**

The West Virginia Department of Education’s Division of Educator Quality and System Support and Division of Teaching and Learning are actively collaborating to ensure that all 20 West Virginia institutions of higher education’s teacher and principal preparation programs better prepare teachers to instruct all students upon the Next Generation CSOs, including students with exceptionality such as those with disabilities and English language learners, students living in poverty, and students exhibiting persistently low achievement. The divisions’ efforts have likewise focused on the preparation of principals to lead schools where teachers design unique learning opportunities for students which engage them meaningfully in their learning of the newly adopted English language arts and mathematics curricula based on the CCSS.

The WVDE’s ESEA Flexibility Request includes an extensive discussion of the state’s plans with respect to (1) specialized professional development for institutions of higher education in Next Generation CSOs, (2) development and maintenance of Educational Personnel Preparation Advisory
Committees, (3) Educator preparation faculty participation in WVDE’s Teacher Leadership Institutes, (4) Collaboration with the Office of Special Programs to Prepare Educators to Teach Students with Disabilities, (5) Building Capacity for Personalized Learning with the Next Generation CSOs, (6) Standards for Preparation Programs for Principals and Teachers, and (7) Cross-State Engagement Through the State Consortium on Educator Effectiveness.

10. Evaluation of Current Assessments and Transition Plan for Implementation of Next Generation CSOs

The WVDE, in collaboration with the state’s education community, has taken bold action to put in place a comprehensive assessment system which aligns with rigorous 21st century proficiency expectations and includes summative and interim/diagnostic components. The available assessments employ a variety of challenging items, utilize online administration for some components, and include a variety of opportunities for educators to gather both formative and summative data about their students. As a result of our investment in this modern assessment system, West Virginia has received a grade of “A” from Quality Counts in the area of Standards, Assessment, and Accountability in 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. The ESEA Flexibility Request details the development of this assessment system including augmentations to support transition to the Next Generation CSOs as well as our transition plan for moving to the Smarter Balanced Computer Adaptive Assessment by school year 2014 – 2015.

*Early childhood assessment* - Over the next five years the WVDE is projected to complete an ambitious project which will yield both population and individualized growth data for children in grades pre-k through 2. These data will be available as part of a multi-year plan to pilot and establish a statewide system for early childhood formative assessment to benefit personalized learning for all children, as well as to inform classroom instruction, planning, and family communication for children in grades pre-k through grade 2 throughout West Virginia’s public school system. Production of growth data across years for populations as well as individual students will be possible using the aforementioned ELS, a reliable, valid instrument developed by Rutgers University’s National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

This project is already underway in WV, following from the integration of the WV Pre-K Child Assessment System into Policy 2520.15 in 2010, and via the ongoing pilot of the WV Kindergarten Child Assessment System in selected counties during the current school year. A comprehensive time line for piloting and implementing the early childhood assessment project in conjunction with the roll out of the WV Early Learning/Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives is included in the state’s ESEA Flexibility Request. This plan extends from school year 2009 - 2010 to School year 2016 – 2017.

*WESTEST 2* - The adoption of the WV 21st Century CSOs transitioned West Virginia from a set of standards that were aligned with only basic skills proficiency expectations to a nationally rigorous set of expectations based upon the content assessed via national and international assessments (e.g., NAEP, TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA). This represented a 180 degree turnaround in terms of academic expectations and necessitated the development and adoption of an entirely new assessment system, the centerpiece of which is the West Virginia Educational Standards Test 2 (WESTEST 2).

WESTEST 2 was developed from 2007 to 2008 based upon the WV 21st Century CSOs. The assessment is administered annually in grades 3 – 11 in the subject areas of mathematics, reading/language arts, science, and social studies. The reading/language arts subtest of WESTEST 2 includes two components: (1) a selected response session which utilizes items aligned to single or multiple connected passages of text and (2) an online writing assessment session wherein students
respond to a writing prompt via a secure computer program. The online writing assessment contains prompts aligned to four genres (narrative, informative, persuasive, and descriptive).

Items developed for WESTEST 2 were developed with the intention of being truly aligned to 21st Century expectations, reflective of the CCSS. Some of the characteristics of these items and their alignment to the CCSS are included in the state’s ESEA Flexibility Request.

The state’s ESEA Flexibility Request includes a detailed description of the 2008 standard setting, 2009 benchmark standard setting, and the 2010 cut score revision which aligned WESTEST 2 proficiency expectations with NAEP. This revision was completed to raise the bar in preparation for the CCSS. Assessment data spanning WESTEST and WESTEST 2 are provided to illustrate the increased rigor to peer reviewers.

The WV Growth Model - The state’s ESEA Flexibility Request also provides an overview of the development and adoption of the WV Growth Model. The WVDE Office of Assessment and Accountability and the Office of Research, having identified the need to familiarize stakeholders with measures of student growth in preparation for the implementation of the next generation of student assessments, and acknowledging our need for such information to guide instruction and program evaluation, contracted with Dr. Damian Betebenner of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (NCIEA) in 2010 to develop the West Virginia Growth Model. The model uses the student growth percentile (SGP) methodology developed by the state of Colorado to determine individual student growth on the state’s summative assessment. It is described in detail in Dr. Betebenner’s 2008 publication entitled Norm- and Criterion-Referenced Student Growth, which is available via NCIEA’s web site at: http://www.nciea.org/publication_PDFs/normative_criterion_growth_DB08.pdf.

The ESEA flexibility request details the growth model’s intended uses including for (1) school improvement, (2) educator effectiveness, (3) informing instructional decisions, (4) program evaluation and research, and (5) informing stakeholders. The Flexibility Request includes West Virginia's plan to provide individual student level growth data to teachers of record by the 2012 – 2013 school year. Principle 2 of the request includes an overview of how data from the WV Growth Model will be used for accountability purposes.

Alternate Assessment - The Alternate Task Performance Assessment (APTA) is West Virginia’s Alternate Assessment Based upon Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS). It is currently administered in grades 3-11 in mathematics and reading/language arts and in science in grades 4-6 and 10. West Virginia is a member of the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment consortium, and as such will be transitioning to the new assessment by school year 2014 – 2015.

Interim/Diagnostic Assessments - The state’s ESEA Flexibility Request also includes a detailed time line indicating when various updates to West Virginia’s interim/diagnostic assessments will be available to help teachers transition their students to the Next Generation CSOs.

With respect to Acuity, the plan includes providing a variety of Next Generation CSO-aligned items and assessments for reading/language arts and mathematics on the following schedule:

- Grades 4, 5, and 9 by the 2012 – 2013 school year,
- Grades 3, 6, 7, and 10 by the 2013 – 2014 school year, and
- Grades 8 and 11 by the 2014 – 2015 school year.

With respect to WV writes, WVDE proposes to develop, by school year 2012 – 2013, a series of writing prompts/units aligned to the CCSS utilizing both informative and argumentative prompts for
grades 2, 4, 5, and 9. Similar resources will be developed for grades 3, 6, 7, and 10 by school year 2013 – 2014 and for grades 8 and 11 by school year 2014 – 2015.

The state’s ESEA flexibility request also provides a brief description of other assessments including those available as measures of college/career readiness.

11. **Factors to be Addressed in Preparing Teachers of Students with Disabilities Participating in State’s Alternate Assessment Based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards (AA-MAAS)**

West Virginia does not currently employ an AA-MAAS. However, we acknowledge the need to effectively transition teachers of students with disabilities who would ideally be instructed upon modified academic achievement standards, were they available in West Virginia. To this end, we have identified the student population that would be most appropriate from an AA-MAAS and explicated some of the key issues that must be addressed in instructing and assessing this population. In 2009, WVDE received a report from Measurement Inc. This group was contracted by the Office of Special Programs to conduct a multimethod research study detailing the target population for a potential AA-MAAS. The study informed West Virginia about this population of students including their languishing performance in the bottom levels of WESTEST 2 and the top of APTA.

The transition to the SBAC assessment and the DLM alternate assessment will expand our ability to measure the target population’s ability. That is, we expect that, due to its computer adaptive nature, the SBAC assessment will greatly expand the “floor” of the general assessment allowing us to have a more robust measure of achievement for students whom the current general assessment is ill fitted. Likewise, the DLM assessment is expected to vastly extend the “ceiling” of the current alternate assessment allowing us to better measure the ability of students with significant cognitive disabilities, but who are currently achieving consistently at the highest level of performance on APTA.

1.C **DEVELOP AND ADMINISTER ANNUAL, STATEWIDE, AlIGNED, HIgh-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS THAT MEASURE STUDENT GROWTH**

West Virginia is participating in one of the two State consortia that received a Federal grant under the Race to the Top Assessment (RTTA) competition, specifically the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).

The state will be providing to external peer reviewers, a copy of our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as a Governing State in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The MOU was signed on June 8, 2010 by Governor Joe Manchin III, Dr. Steven Paine (State Superintendent of Schools), Priscilla Haden (WVBE President), and David Tincher (State Chief Procurement Officer).

Because of our historic role as a leader in the field of educational assessment, West Virginia serves as a governing state in the SBAC. The WVDE has taken an impressive leadership role in the development of the new assessment. WVDE staff currently and will continue to serve on the following workgroups/committees for SBAC:

- Test Administration
- Formative Processes and Tools
- Technology Approach
- Technology Review Board
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Performance Tasks
WV also serves the consortium in a governing capacity in the following areas:

- Teacher Involvement
- Procurement Study
- Technology Readiness Team

West Virginia has an ambitious plan to transition to utilization of the SBAC assessment by school year 2014 – 2015. The state will participate in the field tests administered by SBAC in 2012 - 2013, and has plans to simultaneously field test online administration of our general assessment (the West Virginia Educational Standards Test 2: WESTEST 2) during school year 2012 – 2013. These activities will prepare West Virginia to gauge the level of administrative effort necessary to administer the SBAC assessment statewide in 2014 - 2015.
**PRINCIPLE 2: STATE DEVELOPED DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT**

When the West Virginia Department of Education announced its intent to submit an ESEA Flexibility Request by September 6, 2012, the state filed for a waiver from NCLB to allow for sufficient time to develop a comprehensive and supportive accountability system. The WVDE sought to address two significant actions in support of the State Board’s goals through our ESEA Flexibility Request. First, to craft a thoughtful, fair and constructive accountability system that addresses student learning and student growth, as well as the learning strategies employed in our schools. The intent of this revised accountability system is to build capacity in West Virginia schools and districts by providing evidence of improvement and engaging parents and communities as key stakeholders in the improvement process. This differentiated identification and support system will promote data-driven changes in order to improve the learning of all students. Second, freezing West Virginia's annual measurable objectives (AMOs) under NCLB for the 2011-2012 school year allows the state to focus on designing a fair, equitable, and supportive accountability system in the interim with time to include comprehensive stakeholder representation.

In line with waiver expectations, West Virginia has already made strides to support the principles set forth in the guidance for requesting flexibility from ESEA. This support ensures that the state will focus on creating a high quality public education system that develops students who are ready for college and careers upon graduating from the 12th grade. Aligned with the three requirements embedded within the waiver to NCLB, West Virginia has continued pushing forward through the following three actions:

- First, the state continues to implement the Common Core State Standards (West Virginia Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives) and assessment system that prepares students for college and careers, iteratively identifies new targets for improving achievement among all students, and has maintained a focus on helping students and schools who need the most support.
- Second, the WVDE, in conjunction their comprehensive Teacher Evaluation Task Force, has worked with the legislature to enact critical laws implementing an overhauled educator evaluation system that is being expanding from 25 pilot schools to 136 demonstration sites across the state in the 2012 - 2013 school year. This system is based on multiple measures including classroom observations and student learning. The revised educator evaluation system both evaluates educator performance and provides meaningful feedback informing data-driven professional development.
- Third, the WVDE has provided access to student growth data in both mathematics and reading/language arts to every teacher of record in the state for their respective students. This unprecedented access to data supports the state’s continued transparency in providing access to longitudinal assessment data to educators. This will help the field move beyond narrow criteria that define student and school success as single snapshots of performance. Student academic growth is at the center of the new accountability structure, bringing the focus back to the student. That is, understanding the degree to which an individual student has improved over time is the foundation that will continue to drive systemic program change.

2.A **DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STATE-BASED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT**

West Virginia’s current proposed accountability system seeks to differentiate schools based on a balanced set of metrics that are expected to be in place no later than the 2013 - 2014 school year. The collaborative nature in which the system was designed resulted in the emergence of the following guiding principle: To develop a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that was both rigorous and fair while maintaining validity and transparency. The focus on performance indicators that were valued by the educational community will ensure that the system will identify improvements or declines in academic
achievement and school performance, will draw attention to closing achievement gaps, and point to areas of improving, declining, or stagnating instructional quality.

In light of the requirement that an accountability system will address all necessary aspects of ESEA section 1111(b)(2) (C)(v)(II); (2), the accountability system’s components differentiate between elementary/middle schools and high schools. West Virginia’s new accountability system is an index comprising a balanced set of indicators based on student achievement in mathematics and reading/language arts. Currently, the state can only limit its focus on these two content areas because of constraints in state code (West Virginia Code, Chapter 18, Article 2E, Section 5), but the state intends on exploring an expanded focus to incorporate additional academic indicators in the future. These may include science, social studies, and college readiness assessments (e.g., EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT, COMPASS).

The West Virginia Accountability Index is composed of the following performance indicators:

- Proficiency rates in mathematics and reading/language arts (32.5%)
- Achievement gaps of subgroups in mathematics and reading/language arts (20%)
- Student academic growth (32.5%), comprising
  - Observed growth of subgroups in mathematics and reading/language arts
  - Adequate growth (i.e., Growth to Standard) in mathematics and reading/language arts (i.e., the amount of growth required to be proficient)
- Attendance rates for elementary and middle schools (15%)
- Graduation rates for high schools (15%)

In order to support the effective implementation of this Accountability Index, reporting will play a major role in guiding initial data-driven decision making efforts at the state and local level. By drawing attention to (1) whether students are currently meeting academic expectations, (2) the degree to which achievement gaps are present, (3) how much growth students exhibit in a given year, (4) how many students are growing enough to be ready for college and careers, and (5) attendance and graduation rates, differentiated supports and incentives can be tailored from a much earlier point. The state will be able to identify recommended courses of action depending on individual school performance and results on the index.

Once the WVDE committed to applying for flexibility in round the 3, the state actively worked to garner stakeholder buy-in during the accountability system development to avoid insular thinking and to ensure the appropriate values were captured in its development. An accountability stakeholder group, which included members of the WVBE, WVDE staff, teachers, administrators, education agency representatives, districts, and RESA staff worked with key department staff throughout the summer months to make recommendations and suggestions guiding the development of the West Virginia Accountability Index. Using stakeholder recommendations, key department staff compiled data reflecting each of the performance indicators to include in the Index.

The development process was iterative in nature and required multiple simulations, applications of various use-cases—both common and rare—and subsequent validations using lists of all schools in the state with live data. The initial Index was taken back to the Accountability and Accreditation Stakeholder Committee for feedback and further recommendations reflecting conversations around consequential validity and practical application. From these recommendations, further adjustments were made to the Index that were again tested. During this phase, relevant national content experts and members of the WV Technical Advisory Committee were contacted to ensure performance indicators were applied in a valid manner.

Once the Index was finalized, data were compared from the prior year to determine changes in the system, as well as various cut-points across Index values. Furthermore, schools’ Index values were examined longitudinally to ensure there was not excessive drift or drastic changes in school rankings that appeared to be
unwarranted. These validations will allow WVDE staff to bring the data to a group of practitioners, policymakers, and researchers within the state to participate in an empirically-based standard setting in August 2012. During this event, participants will examine Index values over time and compare schools in programmatic levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) at multiple cut points across the Index, allowing participants to better understand representative schools at various Index values.

2.B SET AMBITIOUS BUT ACHIEVABLE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

West Virginia believes that Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) must be ambitious, but legitimately attainable, to drive system-wide change as students progress through their educational careers. The state made a bold decision, once in 2009 and again in 2010, to realign proficiency-level expectations with national and international performance benchmarks. Given the short amount of time that was left to reach the “100% proficiency by 2014” target, schools were left with an approximate required increase of 16% and 17% percent proficient per year in mathematics and reading/language arts, respectively. This reality became an impediment to focused statewide efforts supporting improved teaching and learning as many local systems were discouraged before they even began each school year. The opportunity to revise the accountability system and set new AMOs reflecting comprehensive improvement are necessary to ensure West Virginia’s K12 public education system continues to move forward.

While it has been clear that West Virginia values many performance indicators, the current accountability model results in very few indicators driving conversations among educators. The revised Index expands our focus beyond achievement as proficiency at an aggregate level. Rather, there is a renewed focus on the performance and improvement among individual students through the use of the West Virginia Growth Model, which identifies both observed growth and the necessary amount of growth for students to meet academic expectations. With the inclusion of an achievement gap performance metric, schools now have access to a four-pronged accountability metric that will help them make more balanced decisions.

To set AMOs, West Virginia will use empirical evidence to compare the expected change in schools’ Index values over time to a minimum expectation and threshold for school efficacy. To understand the context and features of a maximum index school, 100% values will be used across each performance indicator. Using the maximum index value, starting points from 2011 and the expected change from 2010 to 2011, participants will recommend cut-points within the Index for schools while considering the following components:

- **Academic achievement as proficiency.** 90% proficient,
- **Achievement gaps.** 0% gap in proficiency,
- **Observed growth.** 50th percentile median growth—a logical expectation for schools,
- **Adequate growth.** 100% of students meeting or exceeding their target growth percentile,
- **Attendance Rate/Graduation Rate.** 95% attendance or 90% graduation rate.

Participants will examine the data for schools associated with a given ranking or Index value to inform the extent to which improvement was observed in comparison to the extent to which improvement should be expected. Participants will be asked the extent to which improvement should be expected as to not anchor their attitudes too high or low.

While the Accountability Index is more balanced than a traditional examination of proficiency rates, the average statewide proficiency based on 2011 - 2012 assessments in mathematics and reading/language arts in the “all students” group and all available subgroups will be included in West Virginia’s final ESEA Flexibility Request.
West Virginia believes that by setting AMOs as consistent increases in Index values, a vast majority of students will be on track to be college- and career-ready. We not only expect schools to have a high percentage of their students exhibiting proficiency, but we also expect there to be an equal representation of proficiency across subgroups and consistent growth to standard inhibiting stagnant high performance. The intent of the West Virginia Accountability Index is to concretize the expectation of exhibiting high performance and high growth.

2.C-E REWARD, PRIORITY AND FOCUS SCHOOLS

2.C. - Reward Schools
WV’s Accountability Index includes a growth model component and is further described in Principal 2, A-B above. For additional information on the methodology behind the West Virginia Growth Model, please refer to Principle 1—Development of the West Virginia Growth Model (pg. 44). The Index will be used as the methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as reward schools. (List of reward schools will be attached in final application).

The WVDE proposes to recognize school performance and progress through a comprehensive school recognition system that incorporates current state recognition programs (Title I Distinguished Schools, WV Schools of Excellence, Exemplary Schools). The Next Generation Schools of Success system will recognize and reward both Title I and non-Title I schools for high performance as well as for high levels of progress (growth). The WV Board of Education will implement this school recognition program annually with public announcements and press releases accompanied by certificates and banners to designate the achievement of recognized schools. Schools receiving top honors will be recognized during an awards banquet in which the WV Board of Education, Governor and Legislative members will be invited. As funding allows, recognized schools will be eligible for competitive enhanced professional development grants that will support their school’s Strategic Plan for Continuous School Improvement.

2.D - Priority Schools
WV’s Accountability Index includes a growth model component and is further described in Principal 2, A-B above. The Index will be used as the methodology for identifying the lowest five percent of the State’s Title I schools as priority schools. (The list of priority schools will be attached in the final application).

The WVDE will utilize its current School Improvement model as the framework for supporting LEAs in selecting and implementing interventions with identified priority schools. This framework has been successfully implemented with the state’s School Improvement Grant (SIG) 1003(g) initiative utilizing the Transformation model since 2010. The timeline for implementation under this waiver request will begin with the new priority school identification process in the 2012-2013 school year. Beginning in 2013-14, the following components of the transformation model will be implemented in identified priority schools: development of teacher and leader effectiveness; comprehensive instructional reform programs; increased learning time and creation of community oriented schools; and operational flexibility with sustained support. The current School Improvement model includes WVDE School Improvement Coordinators assigned to each school. In addition, the model provides a focus on utilizing the state’s eight Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) and LEAs to build capacity by providing technical assistance and support as the school turnaround principles are implemented with their priority schools.

The WVDE will set the criteria for exiting priority status at demonstration of adequate progress over a three year period. Research indicates that a school must actively engage in intentional school improvement processes for at least three years to build the process into the culture and normal operations of the school. Specific, annual, measurable growth targets will be established for each priority school during the initial year and reviewed annually. Schools that meet their growth targets at the completion of the third year will exit priority status.
2.E. - Focus Schools
WV’s Accountability Index will be used as the methodology for identifying low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools as “focus schools.” Specifically, schools that have the largest within-school gaps between the highest-achieving subgroup(s) and the lowest achieving subgroup(s) will be identified. (The list of focus schools will be provided in the final application).

The WVDE will utilize the same School Improvement model as the framework to support LEAs in their efforts to support focus school as is used with priority school. However, adherence to the transformation model implementation may be limited to key components because of fewer financial resources to support this level of implementation. WVDE school-based staff support for focus schools will not be as intense for focus school; rather technical assistance will be provided to develop a strategic plan for improvement based on the specific area of need. The RESAs will be utilized to offer more school based support through a fee-for-service structure that the LEAs can fund through ESEA funding targeted to assist focus schools. The timeline for implementation is no later than the beginning of the 2014 – 2015 school year. The additional year is needed to build RESA capacity to support school improvement.

2.F-G OTHER TITLE I SCHOOLS, STATE, LOCAL & SCHOOL CAPACITY BUILDING

The WVDE will provide support for all other schools including other Title I schools through a variety of initiatives, resources, and tools that are integrated within the School Improvement model and are available to all schools regardless of Title I designation. These initiatives include Common Core Standards, Support for Personalized Learning (RTI), English Language Learner Programs, Teacher Quality/Teacher & Administrator Evaluation, Teacher Mentoring, Instructional Coaches, Collaborative Teams/Professional Learning Communities and Safe and Supportive Schools. State, regional and local capacity building will continue and expand in order to assist schools in their efforts to implement these research-based practices within the context of their Strategic Plan for Continuous School Improvement.
**PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP**

**3.A DEVELOP AND ADOPT GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS IMPLEMENT TEACHER**

In February 2012, West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin signed House Bill 4236, establishing a new system of performance evaluations for West Virginia educators and school leaders. This new system is based upon the 2011-2012 pilot project and will be implemented in phases with full statewide implementation in 2013-2014. The revised evaluation guidelines were developed in collaboration with various stakeholders through the following process:

- A broad stakeholder Teacher Evaluation Task Force worked to create teaching standards to assure alignment with the state’s teaching and learning initiative. The group recommended the new West Virginia Professional Teaching Standards, the foundation of the revised evaluation system in 2009. The WV Board of Education approved the new standards, which became effective in April 2009 (WVBE Policy 5100, Appendix A-2 [http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p5100.pdf](http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p5100.pdf)).
- A West Virginia Leadership Collaborative and School Leader Evaluation Task Force developed new leader standards to serve as a policy framework to develop, support, and focus WV leaders on improving teaching and principal leadership. The work of this broad group of stakeholders was approved by the WV Board of Education and became effective July 1, 2010 (WVBE Policy 5800 [http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p5800.pdf](http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p5800.pdf)).
- In 2010, a the Teacher, Principal and Counselor Evaluation Task Forces and utilized the new standards to develop the revised West Virginia Educator Evaluation System, This system infuses opportunities for continuous growth and improvement over time to ensure high-quality instruction focused on increasing student achievement.

The following components of the evaluation system address the requirements of Principle 3 and support the continual improvement of instruction:

- The revised evaluation systems for teachers and for school leaders use four performance levels, which describe the quality of teaching and administrative practices. The four performance levels are distinguished, accomplished, emerging and unsatisfactory.
- The revised evaluation system requires that all educators be evaluated each year and provided an annual summative rating.
- The revised evaluation system uses multiple measures to determine the level of performance. The process begins with educator self-reflection using the West Virginia Professional Teaching Standards and Rubrics, and includes other measures, i.e. observation, self-selected evidence of performance, student learning goals, and school-wide growth measures included in the summative evaluation.
- The system includes the ability to generate evaluation data that may be used to focus and identify specific professional development needs for schools and districts using the online evaluation system platform.
- The system provides a mechanism to address areas of concern as part of a comprehensive system of support through the use of focused support and corrective action plans. The results of the evaluation inform personnel decisions.

**3.B ENSURE LEAs IMPLEMENT TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND**
**Support Systems**

West Virginia is ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements the revised evaluation and support systems through the following process:

- During the 2011-2012 school year, the revised educator evaluation system for teachers and school leaders was piloted in 25 schools including 20 schools that received School Improvement Grants (SIG 1003(g)). Technical assistance was provided throughout the year to the schools and data was generated through a robust research effort to inform the next phase of implementation.
- The revised system will be expanded during 2012 - 2013 and include 111 demonstration schools (2 schools from each county) and the 25 pilot schools (total 136 schools).
- During summer 2012, statewide training for the 136 school leadership teams was conducted at eight Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs). The Center for Professional Development (CPD) also conducted five days of professional development for school leaders at multiple sites across the state.