Minnesota Department of
Education

ESEA Flexibility

Request

February 7, 2012

Revised for accessibility, September 2013

Table of Contents

Insert page numbers prior to submitting the request, and place the table of contents in front of the SEA's flexibility request. (*Note: Pagination changed with September 2013 revision for accessibility.)

ESEA Flexibility Request List of Attachments

The list of attachments included in the ESEA Flexibility Request is below. [View these documents on the Minnesota Department of Education website.](#)

Attachment	Title
1	Notice to LEAs
n/a	Comments on request received from LEAs (if applicable)
3	Notice and information provided to the public regarding the request
4	Evidence that the State has formally adopted college- and career-ready content standards consistent with the State's standards adoption process for Reading and Math.
5	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)
n/a	State's Race to the Top Assessment Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (if applicable)
7	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)
8	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)
9	Table 2: Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools
10	A copy of any guidelines that the SEA has already developed and adopted for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
n/a	Evidence that the SEA has adopted one or more guidelines of local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems
12	Comments from Special Education community on standards-setting
13	Standard Setting Technical Report for Minnesota Assessments
14	The Scope of Work for the 2011-12 assessment contract with AIR
15	Functional Requirements for the 2011 NCLB AYP Calculations
16	Functional Requirements for the 2011 Minnesota Growth Calculations
17	Functional Specifications for the Computation of Minnesota Graduation Rates
18	Principal Evaluation Workgroup Schedule
19	AYP Targets
20	Work Group Members
21	Rubric for School Improvement in Priority Schools
22	Principal Leadership and Professional Development Checklist
23	Demonstration that Minnesota's List of Schools Meets the US Department of Education's Definition of Priority, Focus and Reward Schools
24	Demonstration of Exit Criteria

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
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Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Telephone: 651-582-8204
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: (original signed)
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.

YES 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.

YES   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.

YES 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.

YES 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.

YES 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.

YES 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.

YES 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.

YES 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.

YES 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.

YES 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:

0 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:

YES 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.

YES 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)

YES 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)

YES 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)

YES 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)

YES 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)

YES 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)

YES 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)

YES 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)

YES 10. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its request.

YES 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).

YES 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).

YES 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:
YES 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.

This ESEA Flexibility Request is just one part of this larger plan for Minnesota's education system. The Request represents the next step forward in a year that has been full of them. In

early 2011, newly-elected Governor Dayton announced a Seven-Point Plan for education built around:

1. Funding for the Future
2. Better Early Childhood Education
3. Raise the Bar-Close the Gap
4. Reading Well by 3rd Grade
5. Support Teaching for Better Schools
6. Better Testing, Better Results
7. A Department that Provides Educational Leadership and Support

Since the Seven-Point Plan was announced, we have made great strides in almost every area. We increased per pupil funding for K12 education. A new Literacy Incentive Aid Fund of $50 million was created to promote early literacy. We were awarded a Race to the Top Early Learning Grant to build on our innovative system of early childhood education, and were awarded a major Promise Neighborhood Grant in North Minneapolis. The legislature passed a law that adopted WIDA Standards for English Learners. We launched a statewide literacy campaign and set accountability targets to ensure all students are reading by 3rd Grade. We passed legislation to allow for alternative pathways to teaching, and adopted principal and teacher evaluation systems. We contracted with a new testing vendor that allows us to use online formative assessments that can inform classroom instruction. MDE restructured to create a more collaborative and supportive SEA for districts and schools.

These positive steps have put us on a path toward a dramatically reformed education system that is more responsive to the needs of students in the 21st Century. This ESEA Flexibility Request is the next step toward that goal. Our proposal gives schools and districts more funding flexibility to better target resources to their needs. It frees up more Title I funding for early childhood programming. For the first time ever in Minnesota, it sets growth targets aligned with proficiency, and with closing the achievement gap. It provides parents with more data to use in assessing the successes and needs of their child's school. It empowers a statewide system of support that can provide better professional development and content knowledge to teachers. It better utilizes our assessment system by meaningfully measuring growth. It allows MDE to be more responsive to the schools that are in the greatest need of support.

We believe that for all these reasons and more, this proposal will lead to better student outcomes. This proposal is the right one for Minnesota because it is the next step in our efforts to build excellent schools with excellent leaders and teachers getting excellent results for students.

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. Representatives of the following groups were invited to participate:

- 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

A list of the Work Group members who regularly attended meetings and their affiliations can be found in Attachment 20.

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.

Throughout the process, Minnesota's ESEA Flexibility Request proposal was adjusted to reflect feedback given by the Work Group. One of the most significant contributions was the suggestion from teachers, principals and superintendents to abandon a proposed "gap group," which would have measured the performance of all lower-performing subgroups together instead of individually. This proposal was rejected by the Work Group, and MDE adjusted the measurements accordingly. Additionally, MDE was dissuaded by the Work Group from assigning schools to Priority, Focus and Reward School categories proportionally based using school type. Such a proposal would have ensured that a proportional number of charter schools were included in each of the three categories. The Work Group insisted that assignment to these three categories should be based on performance alone, not on the type of school being measured. Finally, the Work Group provided vocal support for the idea of identifying the best practices of Reward Schools and creating an online clearinghouse of best practices that could be accessed by other schools. The Work Group's support for this proposal led to MDE making it a more prominent part of its proposal for providing support to Priority and Focus Schools.

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. Following the initial feedback from the US Department of Education on the original ESEA Flexibility Request, MDE again consulted the Work Group to get feedback on adjustments being made to the request.

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.

Yes 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.

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

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
Yes 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
Yes   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 and includes students with disabilities and English language learners.

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.

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.

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 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 State 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 general education teachers as well as special education and EL teachers to understand and implement standards enabling them to teach all students and to assess student learning related to the academic standards. Educators learn instructional practices to support the learning of all students. Professional development is also provided in teaching literacy in the content areas as it relates to the ELA Common Core State Standards for all groups of students.

Data Decision-Making
MDE supports schools and districts in aligning staff development plans and activities with educational outcomes. The professional development emphasizes best practices such as professional learning communities, coaching and mentoring and using data for instructional decisions to improve teaching practice over time. Schools receive training to:

- Examine statewide assessment data (e.g., MCA, MCA-modified, and MTAS data) to identify under-achieving subgroups.
- Examine MCA participation data to better understand the population of students who are not taking the MCA and their related participation issues.
- Examine alternate assessment data for students with disabilities to better understand issues related to those who are meeting expectations on those assessments and those who do not currently meet expectations.
- Use other kinds of formative and performance assessment data to further identify the needs of the subgroups.
- Use other kinds of assessment data (e.g., English language proficiency data provided on the ACCESS test, including common assessments used in special education) to identify the instructional needs of individuals
- Utilize data and other kinds of information that identify the non-instructional factors that impact academic performance. (e.g., which school policies or practices are limiting the amount of instructional time available for students? Do policies that suspend students from school prevent them from accessing the college- and career-ready curriculum? What is the academic achievement of students who have been removed from instruction?)
- Use research or evidence-based strategies to address individual student needs.

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:

Minnesota's Plan for Supporting Implementation of Academic Standards

Year 1: Stage 1
- Schedule regional information sessions to disseminate information on the standards and considerations for implementation
- Provide web-based information sessions to disseminate information on the standards with viewing guides
- Host face-to-face and virtual conversations with district leaders on considerations for implementation
- Post a Frequently Asked Questions document
- Compose the Statement of Needs and Reasonableness for the Rulemaking Process
- Partner with professional organizations to provide information on standards and resources applicable to the content areas 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

Year 2: Stage 2
- Schedule regional information sessions to support implementation of the standards
- Provide web-based information sessions on standards implementation 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 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
- Provide targeted professional development as needed, specific to school data, student populations, and special concerns

Year 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
- Provide targeted professional development as needed, specific to school data, student populations, and special concerns

Professional Development Provided by Organizations and Institutions
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. The modules include instructional materials to meet the needs of all learners, including support for students with disabilities and students who are English learners.

Other organizations that support professional development for teachers aligned with college- and career-ready academic standards: This list is adapted from the list on pages 23 and 24.

- Education Minnesota (Minnesota's teachers' union).
- Minnesota Academy of Reading
- Minnesota Administrators of Special Education
- 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 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 Reading Association
- Minnesota Rural Education Association
- Minnesota School Boards Association
- Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- Minnesota Writing Project
- Special Education Directors Forum
- State-Approved Alternative Programs

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.

Professional Development Provided by SEA
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, MDE's Assessment Conference, Minnesota American Indian Educators Conference, Minnesota ESL, Bilingual and Migrant Education Conference, and content area professional organizations. This training supports all educators who teach a wide variety of students in a wide variety of settings.

MDE is partnering with MN ASCD to offer a summer professional development, called "Standards Camp." The goal of the Camp is to assist schools in their efforts to implement Minnesota academic standards in all content areas. Schools will send a cross discipline leadership team. Together the leadership teams will learn current best practices in teaching and learning in their content area. The teams will hone their leadership skills and leave the camp with an action plan for school wide implementation and assessment of standards. Together the

MDE and Minnesota ASCD will provide continued support to the team's efforts at their home site. This will be provided through on-site and regional support.

MDE is planning to institute regional content-specific coaching networks. Professional development opportunities will be provided for coaches. The coaches will, in turn, implement them in their classrooms or support other teachers with implementation. The goal is that the network will extend beyond school boundaries to attend to the needs of schools in the region.

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, Minnesota Office of Indian Education, Turnaround Schools, alternative programs, alternative delivery systems of instructional support, service learning, research and assessment, special education policy, integrating technology, Minnesota Common Course Catalog, 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, Alterative 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 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

Year 2 (2012-13): Stage 2
- 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

In order to address the professional development of all educators in providing appropriate linguistic modification and scaffolding to content lessons in math, language arts, science and social studies, MDE plans to identify the linguistic demands of the Minnesota content standards. MDE plans to utilize the taxonomy developed by Dr. Edynn Sato at WestEd in order to analysis language progressions of the content standards. MDE will use the linguistic analysis to help inform instructional planning and practice in order to be intentional and appropriate in supporting students' cognitive and linguistic progress toward proficiency and achievement. Additionally, MDE plans to develop instructional support materials for content teachers that will allow for more supportive instruction for students who are acquiring English.

Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities
MDE is working with Dr. Margaret Heritage to provide guidance and support for general education teachers and special educators on creating more effective reading standards-based IEPs. Through information and training provided by content specialists and special education policy staff, educators will better understand grade level academic standards and how to scaffold learning opportunities so that all students have access to appropriate outcomes. Opportunities are being explored to extend this work to other content areas.

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.

Teacher Licensure Standards for Special Education Teachers
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));

General Education and Special Education 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.

Dissemination
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 as part of a mandated system under which all pre-service teacher preparation institutions are held accountable. Current standards are based on the 1992 INTASC standards. In particular, those standards require a teacher candidate to "understand Minnesota's graduation standards and how to implement them" (MN Rule 8710.2000, Subp. 5, A), as well as "be able to assess student performance toward achievement of the Minnesota graduation standards…" (MN Rule 8710.2000, Subp. 9, A), thus ensuring pre-service teachers are being prepared to teach new standards. Accountability in meeting these requirements is assured through the process of initial and ongoing program approval for teacher preparation institutions as part of the Board's process outlined in the manual for "Institutional and Teacher Education Program Evaluation," 2011 (e.g., p. 41). Furthermore, content standards for pre-service teachers outlined in MN Rule 8710.2000 mandates that teacher candidates "understand the role and alignment of district, school, and department mission and goals in program

planning;" i.e., that all pre-service teachers must understand the state system of student standards and their implementation in the classroom.

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 current system that determines preparation of new principals through oversight of the Minnesota Board of School Administrators requires principal preparation programs to do so according to a set of mandatory and systematic standards outlined in MN Administrative Rule. The Board also ensures those standards are being met as part of its administrative process of initial and ongoing approval of programs. The rules state that principals "shall demonstrate competence in… developing, adjusting, and implementing policy to meet local, state, and federal requirements and constitutional provisions, standards, and regulatory applications" (MN Rule 3512.0510, Subp. 1, D). Sections H and I of the Rule outline in detail principal standards for curriculum planning and instructional management to ensure principals act as effective instructional leaders in delivery of student standards for all students: e.g., "(4) demonstrating the ability to design appropriate assessment strategies for measuring learner outcomes; (5) demonstrating the ability to implement alternative instructional designs, curriculum, behavior management, and assessment accommodations and modifications."

As part of an effort to support continuous improvement of principal preparation standards, 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
    - o Decision makers / Who
    - o Vision
    - o School culture

- Policies/ Structures
    - o Common focus/Structure
    - o Beliefs about time and resources
    - o Evaluation (program)
    - o Grading (student)
    - o Teacher support and evaluation

- Professional development
    - o Purpose
    - o Characteristics of delivery
    - o Evidence of effectiveness

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
    - o Curriculum development/mapping
    - o Instruction
    - o 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 21st 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 and 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.

Minnesota currently utilizes a modified assessment for some students with disabilities. Following direction from the US Department of Education, MDE will work with stakeholders to create a plan for future use of the MCA-Modified assessment. In order to comply with the guidance from the US Department of Education, MDE will work to limit the use of the assessment to the appropriate student population while moving toward a phase out in 2014-15. This scheduled phase out will be in compliance with the timelines outlined in the US Department of Education's written Guidance for this request.

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

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 AYP index model which allows for a continued emphasis on the goal of promoting maximum levels of proficiency among students. For the MMR, two adjustments have been made to the approved index model with the goal of creating a stronger status achievement model that addresses the concern that the MMR does not have a strong enough emphasis on status achievement. First, schools and subgroups will not be able to make AYP through the state's approved AYP growth model. With a greater emphasis on growth in other domains, it is important to maintain a high value on the status achievement measurement in AYP. Second, to further strengthen the expectation of student proficiency, schools and subgroups will not be able to make AYP through Safe Harbor for the purposes of the MMR. While Safe Harbor has value in showing year-to-year improvement in the AYP measurement, the emphasis on growth in other domains makes this adjustment less relevant to the calculation. With these two adjustments to the AYP index model, schools will earn points in the proficiency domain only through reaching the AYP targets set by the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). This places a greater emphasis on the importance of promoting proficiency as one of the primary goals in our accountability system. Schools earn points based on the percentage of measured subgroups that make AYP, with subgroups weighted according to their size. MDE will

continue to use multi-year averaging to account for small schools with dramatic statistical variations. A more detailed discussion of this calculation can be found in Attachment 15.

A weighted percentage of the number of groups making AYP is calculated to determine each school's overall achievement measure and their Focus achievement measure. The square root of the number of students in each group is used to weight the percentages. Weighting by the square root of the number of students gives greater relative weight to smaller/minority groups than larger/majority groups, which reinforces Minnesota's goal of closing achievement gaps. For example, if a school has 49 students eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 400 ineligible/affluent students, then their weights are 7 and 20, respectively. The lower-performing group comprises 11 percent (49/449) of the students in this example, but they account for 26 percent (7/27) of the weighted measure. In addition to reinforcing Minnesota's goal of closing achievement gaps, weighting by the square root of the number of students in each group helps ensure that the overall achievement measure and the Focus achievement measure are more precise than simply averaging percentages across groups.

For the MMR that will be calculated in early 2012 for the purposes of identifying the initial Priority, Focus and Reward Schools, Minnesota will use the first year targets of the proposed AMO model discussed in Section 2B. In effect, schools will be measured on whether their subgroups performed relative to the statewide averages of each subgroup in 2011. Schools that make AYP in a subgroup performed above the state average of that subgroup in 2011. Similarly, schools make AYP in the "all students" group if their percentage of proficient students was above the state average from 2011. This will allow MDE to identify Priority and Focus Schools that performed below the state average, and Reward Schools that performed above the state average.

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.

Purpose and validity
The purpose of the Minnesota Growth calculation is to compute a standardized growth score for each student who took the same test in two consecutive administrations (e.g., students who took the reading MCA in grades 3 and 4). The Minnesota Growth methodology qualifies as a "grade-to-grade" growth model. (Smith and Yen 2006) Grade-to-grade growth models possess some of the same features that make vertical scaling, student growth percentiles, and value-added modeling useful, but grade-to-grade growth models are simpler and more defensible. In particular, by basing growth scores on two years' of matched data and using nonparametric smoothing, the Minnesota Growth model largely rules out the following validity threats:

1. falsely assuming unidimensionality across grades

2. confounding the influence of two or more schools on a student's most recent growth score
3. mis-specifying functional forms
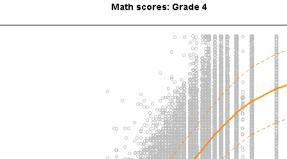4. making conclusions biased by student attrition and/or exclusion of students with special needs.

Minnesota's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has reviewed the Minnesota Growth methodology and found it appropriate. Even though Minnesota has developed a vertical scale for reporting purposes, it does not include students with special needs who took the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (alternate assessment); nor does it accommodate standard setting changes. Members of the TAC agreed that updated Minnesota Growth Model methodology is inclusive and flexible. Additionally, they felt that Minnesota's growth methodology would yield results that are comparable to those from the student growth percentile and value-added methodologies implemented in other states. The local TAC member participated fully in the stakeholder advisory meetings that helped shape Minnesota's ESEA Flexibility request.

Calculating student growth for state and federal accountability

Growth is based on each student's current test score and their score from the prior administration (see the figure below). Statewide means are calculated for each prior score and subtracted from each student's current score to determine the degree to which each student exceeded expected/predicted growth. First, statewide means and standard deviations of students' current-year scale scores are calculated for each prior scale score. Second, nonparametric, kernel density methods are used to smooth and interpolate the conditional means and standard deviations across the prior scale score range. When possible, two cohorts of student test scores are used to calculate conditional means and standard deviations for better accuracy and precision. Third, at each prior scale score, the conditional mean is subtracted from each student's current score, yielding an unstandardized conditional growth score. Lastly, the conditional growth scores are standardized (i.e., converted to z-scores) by dividing by the conditional standard deviation. The formula for calculating student growth z-scores is

$$z_i = \frac{x_{ij} - \bar{x}_{.j}}{\sigma_{.j}}$$

, where x_{ij} is student i's current-year scale score indexed by their prior scale score j on the test aligned to grade- and subject-specific standards, $\bar{x}_{.j}$ is the smoothed mean of current-year scores of all students statewide with prior score j, and $\sigma_{.j}$ is the smoothed standard deviation of current-year scores of all students statewide with prior score j. Note that after standardizing, each student's growth z-score is no longer specific to the prior score on the grade-level test.

Illustration of student growth calculation: Smoothed conditional means and standard deviations

Math scores: Grade 4

Aggregating student growth at the school level

A major advantage of student growth z-scores is that they can be averaged across tests and grades to achieve reliable measures of school-level growth. The Minnesota Assessment System develops criterion-referenced tests aligned to the state's grade-specific academic standards. As such, scores from different grades and tests do not share a common scale. In order to appropriately aggregate scores across tests and grades, scores must be standardized (i.e., converted to z-scores). The figure below illustrates how student growth z-scores are averaged across tests and grades within schools. Each school's mean z-score represents the degree to which students in that school grew faster (or slower) than expected. School means of student growth z-scores exhibit good overall reliability (0.86 for math and 0.74 for reading).
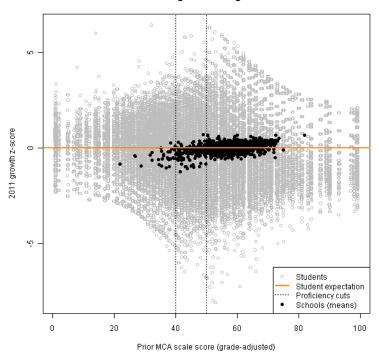
Illustration of averaging student growth across grades within schools to identify high- and low-growth schools.

Reading scores: All grades

Note: Plot limited to MCA takers only for illustration purposes.

Growth to proficiency

Until now, Minnesota has not directly tied the Minnesota Growth Model to its academic standards that lead to college and career readiness. State statute (Minn. Stat. 120B.299) defines low growth as one-half standard deviation (SD) below expectation (i.e., a growth z-score below -0.5), medium growth as between -0.5 and 0.5 SD, and high growth as 0.5 SD and above. Those targets, while well-meaning, were not based on statistical evidence of the levels of growth necessary for students to achieve proficiency. Minnesota took the peer reviewers' recommendation to communicate an expectation of growth to standard seriously and conducted a predictive validity study to establish new growth targets that lead to college- and career-readiness.

The new growth-to-proficiency targets are based on a predictive validity study using historical data. If overall student achievement increases over time as intended, then the targets will be updated so they remain relevant and rigorous. The study's main research question was, "To what degree do students at each score/achievement level need to grow in order to reach proficiency in four years or by graduation?" The data included students' 2011 proficiency levels (the outcome variable), their 2008 growth z-scores, and their 2007 scale scores for math and reading. Proficiency levels were logistically regressed on growth z-scores interacted with prior scale scores. The regression prediction equation was then used to classify students as either "on track" or "not on track" to proficiency. The equation was also used to determine the growth targets that best predict growth to proficiency.
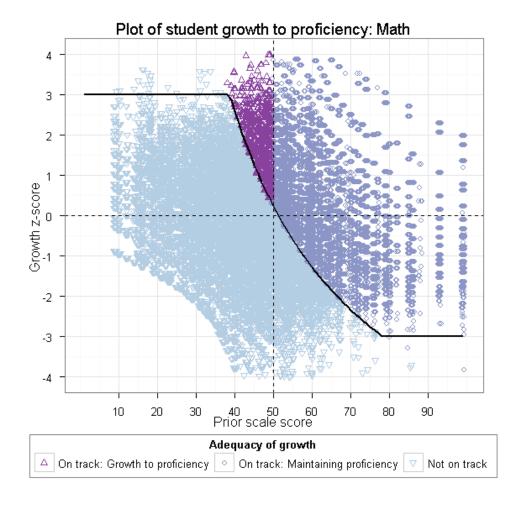
The results indicate that adequate growth depends highly on a student's starting point (i.e., their prior achievement). Students who "do not meet" standards need to exhibit exceptional growth in

order to reach proficiency. Students who "partially meet" standards have a good chance of achieving proficiency if they exhibit very high growth. The growth needed to reach proficiency declines as achievement approaches the "meets" and "exceeds" cut scores. And students who already exceed proficiency are highly likely to maintain proficiency. In terms of accountability, the results indicate that it is important to hold schools accountable for student growth because proficiency is within reach of students who are not yet proficient and students who are proficient but exhibit below-average growth are at risk for falling behind.

For both math and reading, the new growth targets correctly predict eventual proficiency a very high percent of the time (about 80 percent). As shown in the tables below, the new targets result in much higher accuracy than the statutorily defined "high growth" target. They also result in better accuracy than simply using a student's prior proficiency level to predict later proficiency. Given that the new targets- established in response to panelists' concerns- are valid predictors of proficiency, Minnesota will use them to communicate and strengthen expectations that growth should lead to college and career readiness for all students.

Growth to proficiency prediction accuracy and targets: Math
Prediction accuracy rates

Current proficiency level	Prior proficiency level	High growth (statutorily defined)	On track growth (new targets)
Not proficient	0.703	0.784	0.798
Proficient	0.859	0.359	0.822
All students	0.786	0.559	0.810

Plot of student growth to proficiency: Math

Adequacy of growth

△ On track: Growth to proficiency   ◇ On track: Maintaining proficiency   ▽ Not on track
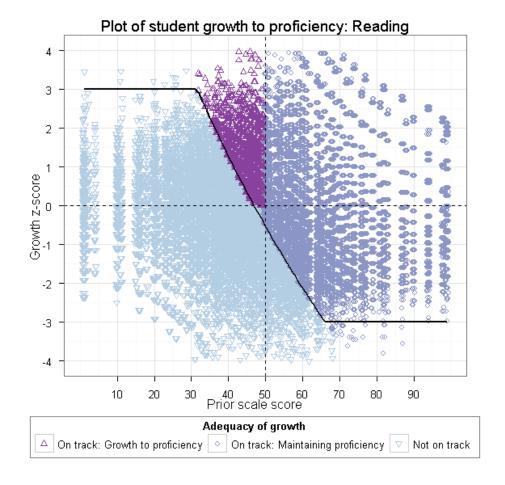
Growth to proficiency prediction accuracy and targets: Reading
Prediction accuracy rates

Current proficiency level	Prior proficiency level	High growth (statutorily defined)	On track growth (new targets)
Not proficient	0.610	0.809	0.594
Proficient	0.894	0.328	0.926
All students	0.816	0.460	0.834

Growth Targets

Prior scale score (grade adjusted)	Growth z-score	Achievement level	Mean growth z-score within achievement level
1-31	3.00	Does not meet	2.55
32	2.90	Does not meet	2.55
33	2.69	Does not meet	2.55
34	2.48	Does not meet	2.55
35	2.27	Does not meet	2.55
36	2.07	Does not meet	2.55
37	1.87	Does not meet	2.55

Prior scale score (grade adjusted)	Growth z-score	Achievement level	Mean growth z-score within achievement level
38	1.67	Does not meet	2.55
39	1.47	Does not meet	2.55
40	1.28	Partially meets	0.42
41	1.09	Partially meets	0.42
42	0.90	Partially meets	0.42
43	0.71	Partially meets	0.42
44	0.53	Partially meets	0.42
45	0.35	Partially meets	0.42
46	0.17	Partially meets	0.42
47	-0.01	Partially meets	0.42
48	-0.18	Partially meets	0.42
49	-0.35	Partially meets	0.42
50	-0.52	Meets	-1.23
51	-0.69	Meets	-1.23
52	-0.86	Meets	-1.23
53	-1.02	Meets	-1.23
54	-1.18	Meets	-1.23
55	-1.34	Meets	-1.23
56	-1.50	Meets	-1.23
57	-1.66	Meets	-1.23
58	-1.81	Meets	-1.23
59	-1.97	Meets	-1.23
60	-2.12	Exceeds	-2.79
61	-2.27	Exceeds	-2.79
62	-2.41	Exceeds	-2.79
63	-2.56	Exceeds	-2.79
64	-2.70	Exceeds	-2.79
65	-2.84	Exceeds	-2.79
66	-2.98	Exceeds	-2.79
67-99	-3.00	Exceeds	-2.79

Plot of student growth to proficiency: Reading

Adequacy of growth

△ On track: Growth to proficiency   ◇ On track: Maintaining proficiency   ▽ Not on track

The functional specifications of the Minnesota Growth computation can be found in Attachment 16. Adjustments will be made to this document to reflect changes associated with the approval of this Request.

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 gaps are a school-level measure of the degree to which higher-performing student groups at the state level are growing faster than lower-performing students in the school. 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 fixed statewide average growth of their higher-performing counterparts. The Free/Reduced Price Lunch subgroup is compared to students who do not qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The Limited English Proficient subgroup is compared to students who are not Limited English Proficient. The Special Education subgroup

is compared to students who are not in Special Education. The four racial and ethnic minority groups are compared to the White subgroup.

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).

Some of the peer reviewers expressed concern that the achievement gap reduction measure could allow a school to get credit for closing achievement gaps even if their within-school gaps stagnate or widen. We have adopted their suggestion and revised the way in which growth gap targets are fixed. ESEA Flexibility requires that we rank and recognize schools according to their performance relative to other schools, but we intend to fix the growth gap targets so they do not automatically fluctuate with changes in the performance of other schools. That is, a school should not get credit for reducing achievement gaps if the achievement of a higher-performing subgroup declines. That risk is minimized by empirically setting the growth targets to the statewide mean growth of higher performing groups rather than to each school's mean. Individual schools cannot influence the statewide mean growth of students as they could the average growth of their own students, and the statewide means will remain more stable over time. (Note that the growth gap targets are hard-wired into the growth gap measurement by subtracting school means from the targets.) After setting the targets in the first year, they will be fixed at those values to prevent normative fluctuations. The statewide means will be re-calculated every year, but the targets will only be updated if the average growth of higher-performing group increases substantially. The empirically-based targets will be fixed in order to track progress towards closing achievement gaps over time in terms of the achievement gap measurement, and the targets will only be updated to make them more rigorous and relevant. As the final list of Reward, Focus, and Priority schools shows, nearly every reward school contributed to a statewide reduction in achievement gaps. This confirms that hard-wiring the empirically fixed growth gap targets into the ranking measure is rigorous and appropriate for identifying schools for recognition, accountability and support.

Calculating growth gaps for state and federal accountability
Coinciding with ESEA Flexibility, Minnesota has begun using growth scores to focus attention on 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. For example, students eligible for free or reduced price lunch had a mean score of 43.87 on the math MCA (grade-adjusted), which corresponds to "partially meets" proficiency. Their more affluent peers "met" proficiency at 54.38 on average. What is more, students in poverty did not grow positively (-0.14), but their more affluent peers grew positively (0.9) for a growth gap of 0.24 standard deviation statewide.

Because students who have economic and other educational advantages exhibit higher achievement and higher growth than their less advantaged peers, closing achievement gaps will

require disadvantaged groups to grow at a faster rate than their advantaged peers. Minnesota's growth gap measure is consistent with that theory of action. It focuses attention on the need to accelerate the growth of disadvantaged subgroups in order to close achievement gaps. Were all schools to reverse this growth gap so students in lower-performing subgroups were growing at a higher rate than their currently higher-performing peers, the achievement gap would be eliminated over time. The table below lists Minnesota's achievement and growth gaps.

Reading

Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	Students	Mean prior score (grade adjusted)	Mean current score (grade adjusted)	Mean growth z-score (fixed targets highlighted)	Growth gap
No	218632	62.01	61.12	0.09	n/a
Yes	121944	51.43	51.41	-0.12	0.21

English Learner	Students	Mean prior score (grade adjusted)	Mean current score (grade adjusted)	Mean growth z-score (fixed targets highlighted)	Growth gap
No	318707	59.31	58.55	0.02	n/a
Yes	21869	42.77	44.84	-0.11	0.13

Special Education	Students	Mean prior score (grade adjusted)	Mean current score (grade adjusted)	Mean growth z-score (fixed targets highlighted)	Growth gap
No	297948	59.85	59.19	0.05	n/a
Yes	42628	45.76	45.72	-0.26	.031

Reading

Race/Ethnicity	Students	Mean prior score (grade adjusted)	Mean current score (grade adjusted)	Mean growth z-score (fixed targets highlighted)	Growth gap
American Indian	7067	50.45	49.96	-0.2	0.24
Asian	21416	54.61	55.14	0.04	0
Hispanic	21599	49.42	50.01	-0.1	0.14
Black	30647	48.69	49.57	-0.1	0.14
White	259847	60.6	59.66	0.04	n/a

* The mean scale score columns in the table are limited to MCA scores to incompatibility with the MTAS scale. MTAS takers are included in the counts and z-scores.

For each school, the statewide mean growth of each higher-performing group (i.e., the fixed growth gap target) is subtracted from the school's mean growth exhibited by the corresponding lower-performing group. This yields a standardized effect size measure of the degree to which a given school closed the achievement gap, with negative values indicating closure and positive values indicating a widening gap. Growth gap sizes of -0.3 standard deviation represent a small

achievement gap reduction, -0.5 medium, and -0.8 large. (Cohen 2003) A weighted average of growth gap effect sizes is calculated to determine each school's overall growth gap z-score. The square root of the number of students in each group is used to weight the average. Weighting by the square root of the number of students gives greater relative weight to smaller/minority groups than larger/majority groups, which reinforces Minnesota's goal of closing achievement gaps. For example, if a school has 49 students eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 400 ineligible/affluent students, then their weights are 7 a+nd 20, respectively. The lower-performing group comprises 11 percent (49/449) of the students in this example, but they account for 26 percent (7/27) of the weighted measure. In addition to reinforcing Minnesota's goal of closing achievement gaps, weighting by the square root of the number of students in each group helps ensure that the growth gap measure is more precise than a simple average across groups.

Illustration of the school-level economic growth gap calculation

School	Statewide mean of advantages students' growth z-scores	School mean of disadvantaged students' growth z-scores	Gap (statewide advantaged z-score minus school's disadvantaged z-score)	Gap Interpretation
1	0.09	0.21	-0.12	Favors disadvantaged group (closing achievement gap)
2	0.09	-0.20	0.29	Favors advantaged group (increasing achievement gap)

The functional specifications of the growth gap calculation can be found in Attachment 16. Adjustments will be made to this document to reflect changes associated with the approval of this Request.

Graduation
The graduation rate domain measures schools by their ability to meet statewide targets for graduation rates. Using the same methodology as the proficiency domain, we will assign points to schools based on the number of subgroups that made AYP in the graduation rate indicator. This provides continuity not only with the proficiency domain, but with the expectations for graduation rates that have been set in the current AYP model. This methodology differs from the current AYP model, which only uses subgroup graduation rates to determine eligibility for Safe Harbor. Schools will earn points based on not just their overall graduation rate, but also on the graduation rates of their subgroups. This sets a clear expectation that all subgroups must meet graduation rate targets. In this way, the proposed model places greater emphasis on the importance of subgroup performance. The inclusion of subgroup accountability for graduation rates addresses concerns raised by peer reviewers.

For the MMR that will be calculated in early 2012 for the purposes of identifying the initial Priority, Focus and Reward Schools, Minnesota's current AYP graduation rate calculation and targets will be used. The graduation rate calculation that is currently used for AYP looks at the number of students that graduated in 2010 and the number of students in grades 9 through 12 that dropped out of school. The target for making AYP is 85 percent. The minimum cell size for subgroup measurement is 40 students. While this methodology differs from the cohort-adjusted graduation rates that all states must use beginning with the 2011-12 school year, it is the methodology that was known to schools during the year for which they will be measured (2010). In fairness to schools, Minnesota will maintain this methodology and its associated targets for the 2010-11 school year MMR, but will then transition to cohort-adjusted graduation rates in 2011-12 as mandated by federal regulation. Minnesota is already reporting cohort-adjusted graduation rates in compliance with regulation, but its cohort-adjusted graduation rate model has not yet been approved by the US Department of Education, and AMOs for graduation rate have not yet been assigned. Upon approval, and the establishment of targets in 2012, the new methodology and targets will be used in the graduation rate domain of the MMR. A more detailed discussion of this cohort-adjusted calculation can be found in Attachment 17.

The graduation rate domain will not count subgroups or schools that make AYP through progress. In the current AYP model, schools can make AYP by improving their graduation rates by two percent or more, even if they are below the 85 percent target. For the purposes of the MMR, only schools and subgroups that meet or exceed the target will be considered to have made AYP. This makes the graduation rate domain a stronger status achievement indicator.

A weighted percentage of the number of groups meeting graduation rate targets is calculated to determine each school's overall graduation rate measure. The square root of the number of students in each group is used to weight the percentage. Weighting by the square root of the number of students gives greater relative weight to smaller/minority groups than larger/majority groups, which reinforces Minnesota's goal of closing achievement gaps. For example, if a school has 49 students eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 400 ineligible/affluent students, then their weights are 7 and 20, respectively. The lower-performing group comprises 11 percent (49/449) of the students in this example, but they account for 26 percent (7/27) of the weighted measure. In addition to reinforcing Minnesota's goal of closing achievement gaps, weighting by the square root of the number of students in each group helps ensure that the overall graduation rate measure is more precise than simply averaging percentages across groups.

The nature of high school graduation in Minnesota also makes graduation rate a strong status achievement indicator. In order to graduate, students are assessed in three subjects with college- and career-ready standards, and must take courses aligned with college- and career-ready expectations. Therefore, graduation in Minnesota is aligned with college- and career-ready expectations, and graduation rates are a reflection of students meeting college- and career-ready standards.

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.

Schools receive a total number of points based on all four of the domains described above. Schools that do not generate data in any of the four domains (e.g. schools without a graduation rate) have a reduced number of possible points. The following steps are used to combine the four measures into a total rating. First, schools are separated into four categories by grade ranges: elementary, middle/junior high, high school, and other. Schools that do not qualify as one of the three main groups are labeled "other". This includes schools such as care and treatment programs or schools without traditional grade range structures. Second, each school receives a percentile for each of the four measurements based on their performance relative to other schools within their grade ranges. Third, percentiles are multiplied by 25 (i.e., the number of possible points for each measurement) to generate points earned in each domain. Lastly, each school's total earned points are divided by their total possible points to arrive at a percentage of possible points earned. This percentage is a school's MMR.

Peer reviewers concluded that Minnesota's proposed system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support meets the technical requirements. The panel noted that a strength of Minnesota proposed system is its focus on college- and career-readiness, including student achievement, growth, and graduation. However, the panel recommended strengthening expectations for raising achievement and closing gaps communicated through the MMR. In this submission, Minnesota has taken concrete steps to address the panel's concern and strengthen expectations by:

- placing more weight on status achievement by removing both safe harbor and value-table growth from the MMR Proficiency domain;
- revising the MMR graduation rate measurement so that schools receive points for each student subgroup meeting rigorous graduation rate targets;
- establishing new, more rigorous growth targets that clearly communicate the levels of growth necessary for students to achieve proficiency in four years or by graduation.

Some peer reviewers expressed concern that MMR points are calculated relative to the performance of other schools. We have revised our measurement so that each one is now tied to defined performance targets that are fixed in time so they do not automatically fluctuate with changes in the performance of other schools. For example, a school cannot earn points for reducing achievement gaps if the achievement of an advantaged subgroup of students declines. Because ESEA Flexibility requires us identify the top 15% and bottom 5% of schools we must rank schools relative to other schools. The MMR reinforces the expectation that schools make Adequate Yearly Progress because the Annual Measurable Objectives and the MMR both require schools to keep pace with each other as overall student achievement increases. We also have two strategic reasons for awarding points based on a simple ranking of four meaningful domains with one measure per domain:

- a simple ranking avoids distracting and burdening schools with a new "point system" in favor of focusing schools' attention on just four measures tied to the college- and career-readiness of all students;
- a simple ranking reduces the incentive for schools to seek out ways to "game the system" by choosing one particular measure or target over others because it is easier for them to meet and gain points.

The MMR method for identifying schools for recognition, accountability and support uses a proper balance of status achievements and growth. In three of the four domains, status achievement targets are utilized to determine the number of points a school earns. The proficiency domain sets hard targets for proficiency based on the state's AMOs. The achievement gap reduction domain sets hard targets for the growth of students in lower-performing subgroups that are aligned to the goal of closing the achievement gap. Finally, the graduation rate domain sets hard targets for graduation rates based on the state's AYP model. Since graduation in Minnesota is aligned to career- and college-ready expectations, graduation rates are a measure of success in meeting these expectations. Only the growth measurement lacks status achievement targets, but the lack of targets reflects a desire to avoid incentivizing an over-focus on the small group of students right above or below the proficiency line. Even in the this domain, which lacks hard targets, there are clearly communicated growth goals that set expectations for schools that are aligned with college- and career-readiness. In the growth domain, results will be published alongside soft growth targets that communicate the expectation of growth to standards for those students who are not proficient.

The impact data for the MMR clearly exhibits that the methodology rewards schools with high achievement, and identifies problems at schools with low achievement. Evidence of this can be found in the Demonstration that Minnesota's List of Schools Meets the US Department of Education's Definition of Priority, Focus and Reward Schools. (Attachment 23)

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%
Total	**96.4/100**	**96.4%**
Statewide Average	n/a	50.1%

2.A.ii Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding information, if any.

Option A

YES. The SEA only includes student achievement on reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, priority, and focus schools.

Option B
NO. 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 to identify reward, priority, and focus schools, it must:
  a. provide the percentage of students in the "all students" group that performed at the proficient level on the State's most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed; and
  b. include an explanation of how the included assessments will be weighted in a manner that will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college- and career-ready standards.

2.B Set Ambitious But Achievable Annual Measureable 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. The new AYP targets can be found in Attachment 19.

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 current proficiency rates based on our approved AYP index model 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 students by 2017.

50% reduction
((1-[starting index])*0.5)+[starting index]
If .58 was the starting index, they would need to be at .79 by 2017
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 current proficiency rates 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. The statewide averages can be found in Attachment 8.

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.

The attached table (Attachment 9) identifies 125 Reward Schools. This number of schools represents 15 percent of the state's Title I schools. In 2010-11, Minnesota had 842 Title I schools. Some of the attached documentation reflects a lower number of Title I schools in 2011-12, which reflects Title I applications that are still being processed by the state. Historically, Minnesota has had between 835 and 845 Title I schools.

Reward Schools, like Priority and Focus Schools, were identified on a proportional basis using grade classification. This is why the table reflects a far greater number of elementary schools than any other grade classification. This decision was made to accurately reflect the universe of schools participating in Title I, and to create natural partnerships among Reward Schools and Priority and Focus Schools in order to share best practices.

Please note that in order to avoid unnecessary disruption in schools, identifying information about schools has been redacted from Attachment 9. Upon approval of Minnesota's ESEA Flexibility Request, MDE will perform quality assurance on the MMR computation to ensure that the lists are completely accurate.

Minnesota will also perform outreach to identified schools in order to ease the transition to Priority and Focus status once the results are made public. MDE anticipates that this process of finalizing the lists and releasing them publicly will take approximately eight weeks.

The Reward Schools listed in Attachment 9 meet the Department's definition of Highest Achieving and Highest Progress. Evidence of this can be found in the Demonstration that Minnesota's List of Schools Meets the US Department of Education's Definition of Priority, Focus and Reward Schools. (Attachment 23)

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?

The attached table (Attachment 9) identifies 48 Priority Schools. This number of schools represents approximately 5 percent of the state's Title I schools. In 2010-11, Minnesota had 842 Title I schools. Some of the attached documentation reflects a lower number of Title I schools in 2011-12, which reflects Title I applications that are still being processed by the state. Historically, Minnesota has had between 835 and 845 Title I schools. The number of Priority Schools we have identified is greater than 5 percent because in generating the list, it was necessary to utilize a rounding technique that captured a greater number of schools than 5 percent.

Please note that in order to avoid unnecessary disruption in schools, identifying information about schools has been redacted from Attachment 9. Upon approval of Minnesota's ESEA Flexibility Request, MDE will perform quality assurance on the MMR computation to ensure that the lists are completely accurate. Minnesota will also perform outreach to identified schools in order to ease the transition to Priority and Focus status once the results are made public. MDE anticipates that this process of finalizing the lists and releasing them publicly will take approximately eight weeks.

Priority Schools, like Reward and Focus Schools, were identified on a proportional basis using grade classification. This is why the table reflects a far greater number of elementary schools than any other grade classification. This decision was made to accurately reflect the universe of schools participating in Title I, and to create natural partnerships among Reward Schools and Priority and Focus Schools in order to share best practices.

The Priority Schools listed in Attachment 9 meet the Department's definition of Most Persistently Low-Performing. Evidence of this can be found in the Demonstration that Minnesota's List of Schools Meets the US Department of Education's Definition of Priority, Focus and Reward Schools. (Attachment 23)

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. These funds must be earmarked in a Priority School's turnaround plan to ensure that resources are being directed to the specific aspects of a school's plan. The approval of a Priority School's Title I application will be dependent on the approval of their turnaround plan, and the earmarked funds within that plan. Only activities such as those outlined in this section that are tied to turnaround principles will be approved as uses of the 20 percent set-aside. The turnaround efforts of Priority Schools will be supported by MDE and the state's newly-reformed Statewide System of Support (SSOS).

These efforts will build on the improvements Minnesota has already made to its system of supports for school improvement. Striving to meet the NCLB requirements, MDE's historical role of support to AYP schools has expanded into a more proactive model of technical assistance and support at the district and school level. Historically focused on promulgating regulations, setting and developing policy, disseminating funds and collecting data, MDE is now being held to a different standard for supporting schools in the current "age of accountability." The capacity of SEAs to manage and provide compliance oversight to all schools in need of improvement has been hampered by an archaic model of oversight that has proven to be ineffective in increasing student achievement, makes incorporating change cumbersome, and has become fiscally impossible to sustain with the ever-decreasing fiscal resources at the SEA level.

The proposed system (Minnesota School Improvement and Support Model) will feature a tiered system of support to identified schools, complete with a differentiated coaching model to address specific strategies that schools should undertake to improve. Under the high-stakes accountability systems that are prevalent in education, the state's role increasingly includes direct support and technical assistance to districts and individual schools to assist them in building capacity for meaningful change that will lead to improved academic outcomes. This level of support has been evident in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program where MDE not only disseminates funds to the eligible schools but also provides oversight, monitoring and direct technical assistance to schools to implement one of the program models. With minimal resources at the agency level, MDE staff will leverage Title I resources to create regional support centers around the state that will provide the basic components of the school improvement process: a comprehensive needs assessment, data analysis to determine root causes of the school's problem, alignment of the operational curriculum with state standards, and identification of specific evidence-based instructional strategies that are learned in professional learning teams and subsequently implemented in the classroom with ongoing formative assessment to determine the extent of student learning and/or subsequent re-teaching. This is all supported with instructional leadership that is sensitive to and learned in the specific needs of the students in their school.

This is a shift in Minnesota's SSOS from the traditional organization built around categorical funding streams, content areas, monitoring and compliance, to one that is organized around

school improvement and educational leadership. The SSOS is at the core of Minnesota's ESEA Flexibility proposal, and will be the driver of change in Priority Schools.

School Improvement Plans
It is the expectation that ALL schools in the state should develop an actionable school improvement plan that is based on the most recent data and implemented with fidelity under the auspices of the LEA.

In our proposed system, all Priority Schools will develop a detailed action plan on how they will address the specific root causes of the school's identification, whether it is based on a lack of student growth, an achievement gap with a specific subgroup, overall student proficiency, low graduation rates, or all of these issues. These plans will be submitted to MDE through the SSOS and reviewed for fidelity with an established set of action standards (see Attachment 22) and will be the basis of the technical support and improvement efforts at the building level. The regional staff in the SSOS will provide assistance in any and all aspects of the school improvement planning process described above.

The regional staff will then work with a cross-agency MDE team comprised of MDE staff members from content standards, EL, Special Ed, school improvement specialists, implementation science, Title I accountability programs, and any other necessary programmatic focuses to determine the most appropriate and impactful course of action for each and every Priority School. The regional staff will then collaborate with the LEAs to implement the plan and provide support, and resources for the work.

MDE will work with Priority Schools and their data teams to identify goals that are differentiated to their specific student needs ("contextualized goals") identified by the student data and needs assessment. These measurements will be monitored by the Priority School's LEA through the use of implementation rubrics based on the best practices in implementation sciences.

Building principals will be the leaders of the turnaround efforts within Priority Schools. In order to improve school capacity to implement turnaround plans, principals of Priority Schools will be given tools and training to monitor the progress of the work including monthly instructional leader checklists that ensure fidelity. The SSOS will work with Priority School principals on best practices for turnaround schools and LEAs will support them with resources and opportunities for growth. Another example of principal support provided by the SSOS is a professional growth rubric for principals of turnaround schools. (See Attachment 21)

The proposed support model will be implemented consistently across all Priority Schools to ensure that there are not discrepancies in the type or duration of interventions that schools are incorporating at any given time. Each Priority School will go through data analysis, goal-setting, development and implementation of professional learning teams, incorporation of an effective educator evaluation system, curriculum alignment, instructional time audit, and fidelity of plan implementation.

District leadership involvement in the building leadership teams is paramount, and the action plans should speak specifically to how the LEA will oversee plan implementation. The LEAs for Priority Schools must complete an LEA-wide needs assessment to provide direction and context for the Priority School's school improvement plan. The LEA must also use the results of the

needs assessment to create a plan to address any weaknesses in the district's ability to implement improvement plans within Priority Schools. These plans could include the identification of a need for a staff member dedicated to data analysis, or the designation of an LEA-level liaison between the LEA, MDE, the SSOS and the Priority School. The nature of an LEA's plan will vary depending on their existing capacity to lead turnaround efforts and the number of Priority and Focus Schools in the LEA. Minnesota statute requires all LEAs to have Educational Improvement Plans, which will serve as the foundation for the process of LEA assessment and improvement planning. LEAs will be required to update their Educational Improvement Plans based on the results of the needs assessment with the goal of improving their capacity to turn their Priority Schools around. Title I funds will be deferred from LEAs that fail to comply with the school improvement requirements at Priority Schools until they have taken positive steps such as submitting a turnaround plan, completing a Title I budget that reflects the priorities in the turnaround plan, or begun implementing activities included in the turnaround plan. Mandatory set-asides for state-approved district improvement activities may be put in place if LEAs with Priority Schools persistently fail to improve student achievement. These set-asides would be linked to an LEA improvement plan that could include the identification of a need for a staff member dedicated to data analysis, or the designation of an LEA-level liaison between the LEA, MDE, the SSOS and the Priority School. The nature of an LEA's plan will vary depending on their existing capacity to lead turnaround efforts and the number of Priority and Focus Schools in the LEA.

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. If Pre-Kindergarten programming is a strategy that fits within a Priority School's turnaround model, it would be considered an approved activity and could be funded with the funds earmarked for implementing turnaround principles.

(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 (SS0S) 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.

b. 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 ;

At the foundation of Priority Schools' instructional programming will be CORE instruction for all students – aligned to standards and taught in a culturally responsive manner. Drawing on the expertise of the SSOS and MDE content specialists, Priority Schools will strengthen the instructional core for all teachers for equitable access. Through needs assessment and data analysis, teachers will identify exactly which standards students are having difficulty in meeting. This will be done through ongoing classroom formative assessment and subsequent analysis in the job-embedded professional learning teams where strategies are explored and subsequently implemented in the classroom and measured again for student success.

Educators need to learn to build their understanding of content knowledge, standards, and pedagogy as well as the capacity to apply evidence-based instructional practices demonstrated to be effective in increasing student achievement and functional performance for ALL students. Regional staff will work to   enhance instructional leaders' capacity to support, promote, lead and sustain professional learning that improves both teaching practices and learning outcomes for ALL students with disabilities.

(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
     o Turnaround leader selection processes
     o Turnaround leader competencies
   - Rigorous evaluation system
   - Effective evaluation/observation
   - Operational flexibility
     o Provide criteria to recruit, screen, select and evaluate external providers
   - Effective governance structure
     o Leadership team development

2. Effective Teachers supported by:
   - Effective strategies to recruit, replace and/or retain skilled staff
     o Turnaround teacher selection processes
     o Turnaround teacher competencies
   - Rigorous evaluation system
     o Effective evaluation/observation

3. Appropriate Data Use supported by:
   - Continuous use of student data to improve instruction
     o Systemic needs assessment support
     o Root/cause analysis
     o Setting effective SMART goals
     o Focused intervention planning
   - Classroom formative assessment support (provide feedback to students and teachers and increase student involvement in learning)
     o Benchmark assessment support (measure student growth of the standards-based instructional program)

4. Improved Instruction supported by:
   - Increased learning time

- o Maximize the effectiveness of current instructional time Link increased time to core content
- o Extended-day learning opportunities
- Research-based, vertically-aligned MN standards-aligned   instructional program
  - o Standards alignment supported with rigorous instruction
  - o Formative instruction support
- Professional learning communities
  - o Protocols
  - o 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.

ELs and Students with Disabilities
SSOS staff will work with MDE staff to tailor the technical assistance needed for teachers of ELs and students with disabilities in order to access and learn the core curriculum through the use of strategic instructional strategies introduced by MDE EL and Special education staff, and identified experts in the field of instructional strategies for classroom teachers.

These strategies could include (but are not limited to):

- Oral Language development – utilizing explicit teacher talk, dramatizing, books on tape, etc.
- Read-Alouds – carefully selecting books in a variety of genres, modeling phrasing, etc.
- Shared reading – demonstrating key concepts, following up with books made by students, etc.
- Small group reading instruction – assessing authentically and frequently, etc.
- Think-Alouds – modeling differentiated reading and writing strategies, modeling problem solving, etc.
- Shared writing – teaching explicit writing strategies, demonstrating revision, editing, and conventions,

- Process writing (Writer's Workshop) – conferencing with students individually, allowing self- selection of topics, etc.
- Independent writing,
- Phonemic awareness – providing opportunities throughout literacy practice, studying high-frequency words.

Technical assistance and support in Special Education and EL supports educators in the basic foundation of instruction by building educators' capacity in evidence-based instructional practices and leadership to meet the needs of ALL diverse learners. These students need not only access, but also attainment of the content information as delineated by state standards.

Technical assistance to support quality instruction of ELs involves providing support to educators to build capacity in evidence-based practices to meet the needs of English language learners in literacy, mathematics and other content areas. Professional learning outcomes that apply to teachers and leaders include the following:

- Apply deep understanding of Minnesota English Language arts standards including the descriptors for each of the five levels of language acquisition, and the relationship of the ELA standards to other instructional standards.
- Understand and apply effective instructional practices for ELs by gaining awareness of the difference between strategies that are effective for all learners and those differentially beneficial to ELs.
- Build support structures among teachers and leaders that enable continuous implementation of effective program models and instructional strategies for ELs.

For students with disabilities, schools need to develop standards-based IEPs for special education students. The SSOS will provide teachers with support that will focus on specific strategies to address the student needs. The strategies listed above for EL students may be applicable to the needs of special education students as well, depending on their specific disability.

c. 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.

Priority Schools will be identified for three-year periods. The period of identification is based on Minnesota's experience with turnaround models in SIG Schools. In those schools, experience and data has shown that turnaround is not a one-year process, and it is rarely a two-year process. It typically takes three years before meaningful improvements can be measured. We anticipate that the same will be true at Priority Schools. However, we have created exit criteria that would allow Priority Schools to exit their status after two years if they move out of the

bottom 25 percent of schools for two consecutive years. This would represent a substantial improvement in performance, and would be indicative of a rare case in which two years was the appropriate time period for the turnaround model to be implemented.

Upon exiting Priority Status through the exit criteria, a school will continue to be monitored for the duration of the three-year period to ensure that it does not revert to lower performance. Priority Schools that have exited their status prior to the end of the three-year period will be expected to draft and submit a school improvement plan. The SSOS will provide technical assistance and support with this improvement plan, which will need to identify interventions that could further alter the school's trajectory toward greater success. The SSOS will continue to provide technical assistance in implementing these plans, and will monitor the school for fidelity. In the event that a school regresses, the SSOS and MDE will work with the school to identify areas where improvement is needed.

Because the expectation for Priority Schools is to improve their performance within three years, those schools that are unable to do so will face stronger sanctions. In the event that a Priority School finishes its three-year period of identification only to be re-identified as a Priority School by finishing in the bottom five percent of schools, the school will be subject to restructuring. Restructuring options will be similar to those currently in place under NCLB.

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. Attachment 24 demonstrates what will be required of Priority Schools to exit their status.

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 will have been implementing the

turnaround models for at least three years after the first year under the waiver, 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 to 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
- Asia,
- 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 86 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. In early January 2012, Minnesota submitted revised graduation rate calculation specifications to meet the requirements of the US Department of Education. MDE anticipates approval of this latest submission in the near future. 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?

The attached table (Attachment 9) identifies 86 Focus Schools. This number of schools represents approximately 10 percent of the state's Title I schools. In 2010-11, Minnesota had 842 Title I schools. Some of the attached documentation reflects a lower number of Title I schools in 2011-12, which reflects Title I applications that are still being processed by the state. Historically, Minnesota has had between 835 and 845 Title I schools.

Focus Schools, like Reward and Priority Schools, were identified on a proportional basis using grade classification. This is why the table reflects a far greater number of elementary schools than any other grade classification. This decision was made to accurately reflect the universe of schools participating in Title I, and to create natural partnerships among Reward Schools and Priority and Focus Schools in order to share best practices.

Graduation Rates- Of the 85 Focus Schools, 3 schools are identified based solely on their graduation rate being below 60 percent. As stated in 2.E.i., Title I schools were identified for graduation rates below 60 percent if the three-year average of their six-year graduation rate was below 60 percent. There were 8 such schools in Minnesota with enough students included in their six-year cohorts (at least 20) to be statistically significant, 3 of which were not identified as

Priority of Focus Schools based on the other criteria. The other five schools with graduation rates below 60 percent were identified as Priority Schools. Three of these schools were identified due to their status as SIG schools, while two were identified based on their MMR.

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 the functional requirements of calculating achievement and growth gaps. Adjustments will be made to this document to reflect changes associated with the approval of this Request.

Please note that in order to avoid unnecessary disruption in schools, identifying information about schools has been redacted from Attachment 9. Upon approval of Minnesota's ESEA Flexibility Request, MDE will perform quality assurance on the MMR computation to ensure that the lists are completely accurate. Minnesota will also perform outreach to identified schools in order to ease the transition to Priority and Focus status once the results are made public. MDE anticipates that this process of finalizing the lists and releasing them publicly will take approximately eight weeks.

The Focus Schools listed in Attachment 9 meet the Department's definition of Focus Schools as those that contribute the most to the state's achievement gap, as well as Title I high schools with graduation rates of less than 60 percent. Evidence of this can be found in the Demonstration that Minnesota's List of Schools Meets the US Department of Education's Definition of Priority, Focus and Reward Schools. (Attachment 23)

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. MDE will work with advocacy organizations around the state to ensure that the SSOS incorporates culturally-relevant and targeted practices. Interventions will take into consideration the cultural, social and emotional levels of the students served. To close achievement gaps and improve graduation rates, Focus Schools will be required to set aside 20 percent of their Title I funds for state-approved school improvement

activities. These funds must be earmarked in a Focus School's school improvement plan to ensure that resources are being directed to the specific aspects of a school's plan. The approval of a Focus School's Title I application will be dependent on the approval of their improvement plan, and the earmarked funds within that plan. Only activities such as those outlined in this section that are tied to interventions for the subgroups for which Focus Schools were identified will be approved as uses of the 20 percent set-aside.

Because Focus Schools are identified based on the performance of subgroups, the interventions that would be incorporated would be differentiated to address the specific subgroup for which they were identified. The specific need will be identified through the comprehensive needs assessment of the school (and district) followed by an in-depth analysis of student data linked to the state standards to correctly diagnose the learning areas of concern that will then be addressed through technical assistance and professional development. This process is part of the tiered coaching model that the SSOS has in place to address the specific needs of buildings (and students) of the Focus Schools.

At the basic level of tiered assistance is a focus on the core instruction of the building. This includes a review of curriculum alignment with state standards to endure that ALL students have access to the state standards. In addition, instructional methods are assessed and identified for intervention to the second tier if necessary. This may include technical assistance to address instructional strategies that are developmentally and culturally relevant to the identified subgroup of students to ensure that students are being taught in the appropriate methodology.

Finally, for support to teachers of unique student groups (newcomer ELs, very low-functioning special education students), support is provided to teachers in a very targeted fashion by a specialist with extensive knowledge, skills, and experience with such student groups.

As student progress is measured through formative means, the level of coaching for the building may move from more or less intensive, again, depending on the ongoing monitoring, diagnosing and assessing of the selected instructional interventions (See examples of specific strategies in previous sections).

Regional SSOS staff will work to   enhance instructional leaders' capacity to support, promote, lead and sustain professional learning that improves both teaching practices and learning outcomes for ALL students.

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.

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. The school improvement efforts of Focus Schools will be supported by MDE and the state's newly-reformed Statewide System of Support (SSOS).

These efforts will build on the improvements Minnesota has already made to its system of supports for school improvement. Striving to meet the NCLB requirements, MDE's historical role of support to AYP schools has expanded into a more proactive model of technical assistance and support at the district and school level. Historically focused on promulgating regulations, setting and developing policy, disseminating funds and collecting data, MDE is now being held to a different standard for supporting schools in the current "age of accountability." The capacity of SEAs to manage and provide compliance oversight to all schools in need of improvement has been hampered by an archaic model of oversight that has proven to be ineffective in increasing student achievement, makes incorporating change cumbersome, and has become fiscally impossible to sustain with the ever-decreasing fiscal resources at the SEA level.

The proposed system (Minnesota School Improvement and Support Model) will feature a tiered system of support to identified schools, complete with a differentiated coaching model to address specific strategies that schools should undertake to improve. Under the high-stakes accountability systems that are prevalent in education, the state's role increasingly includes direct support and technical assistance to districts and individual schools to assist them in building capacity for meaningful change that will lead to improved academic outcomes. This level of support has been evident in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program where MDE not only disseminates funds to the eligible schools but also provides oversight, monitoring and direct technical assistance to schools to implement one of the program models. With minimal resources at the agency level, MDE staff will leverage Title I resources to create regional support centers around the state that will provide the strategically targeted components of the school improvement process for Focus Schools: a comprehensive needs assessment, data analysis to determine root causes of the school's problem, alignment of the operational curriculum with state standards, and identification of specific evidence-based instructional strategies that are learned in professional learning teams and subsequently implemented in the classroom with ongoing formative assessment to determine the extent of student learning and/or subsequent re-teaching. This is all supported with instructional leadership that is sensitive to and learned in the specific needs of the students in their school.

This is a shift in Minnesota's SSOS from the traditional organization built around categorical funding streams, content areas, monitoring and compliance, to one that is organized around school improvement and educational leadership. The SSOS is at the core of Minnesota's ESEA Flexibility proposal, and will be the driver of change in Focus Schools.

School Improvement Plans
It is the expectation that ALL schools in the state should develop an actionable school improvement plan that is based on the most recent data and implemented with fidelity under the auspices of the LEA.

In our proposed system, all Focus Schools will develop a detailed action plan for addressing the specific root causes of the school's identification, whether it is based on subgroups with low levels of proficiency, subgroups with low levels of growth, low graduation rates, or all of these issues. These plans will be submitted to MDE through the SSOS and reviewed for fidelity with an established set of action standards (see Attachment 22). Improvement plans will be the basis of the technical support and improvement efforts at the building level. The regional staff in the SSOS will provide assistance in any and all aspects of the school improvement planning process described above.

The regional staff will then work with a cross-agency MDE team comprised of MDE staff members from content standards, EL, Special Education, school improvement specialists, implementation science, Title I accountability programs, and any other necessary programmatic focuses to determine the most appropriate and impactful course of action for every Focus School that will be targeted specifically at the subgroup(s) that are of greatest need. The regional staff will then collaborate with the LEAs to implement the plan and provide support, and resources for the work.

MDE will work with Focus Schools and their data teams to identify goals that are differentiated to their specific student needs ("contextualized goals") identified by the student data and needs assessment. These measurements will be monitored by the Focus School's LEA through the use of implementation rubrics based on the best practices in implementation sciences.

Building principals will be the leaders of the improvement efforts within Focus Schools. In order to improve school capacity to implement improvement plans, principals of Focus Schools will be given tools and training to monitor the progress of the work including monthly instructional leader checklists that ensure fidelity. The SSOS will work with Focus School principals on best practices for instructional strategies that have proven to be successful with targeted subgroups. LEAs will support them with resources and opportunities for growth. Another example of principal support provided by the SSOS is a professional growth rubric for principals of turnaround schools that can be referenced to target specific educational settings. (See Attachment 21)

The proposed support model will be implemented consistently across all Focus Schools to ensure that there are not discrepancies in the type or duration of interventions that schools are incorporating at any given time. Each Focus School will go through data analysis, goal-setting, development and implementation of professional learning teams, a professional development plan that is targeted to the educators working directly with the specific subgroups, (EL, Special Education, etc.), curriculum alignment of the operational curriculum, and fidelity of plan implementation.

District leadership involvement in the building leadership team planning is critical, and the action plans should speak specifically to how the LEA will oversee plan implementation. The LEAs for Focus Schools must complete an LEA-wide needs assessment to provide direction and context for the Focus School's improvement plan. The LEA must also use the results of the needs assessment to create a plan to address any weaknesses in the district's ability to implement improvement plans within Focus Schools. Minnesota statute requires all LEAs to have Educational Improvement Plans, which will serve as the foundation for the process of LEA assessment and improvement planning. LEAs will be required to update their Educational Improvement Plans based on the results of the needs assessment with the goal of improving their capacity to facilitate targeted support for the Focus Schools. Title I funds will be deferred from LEAs that fail to comply with the school improvement requirements at Focus Schools until they have taken positive steps such as submitting an improvement plan, completing a Title I budget that reflects the priorities in the improvement plan, or begun implementing activities included in the improvement plan. Mandatory set-asides for state-approved district improvement activities may be put in place if LEAs with Focus Schools persistently fail to

improve student achievement. These set-asides would be linked to an LEA improvement plan that could include the identification of a need for a staff member dedicated to data analysis, or the designation of an LEA-level liaison between the LEA, MDE, the SSOS and the Priority School. The nature of an LEA's plan will vary depending on their existing capacity to lead turnaround efforts and the number of Priority and Focus Schools in the LEA.

English Learners and Students with Disabilities
In Focus Schools identified for persistently low-performing ELs or Special Education students, SSOS staff will work with MDE staff to tailor the technical assistance needed for teachers of these students in order to access and learn the core curriculum through the use of strategic instructional strategies introduced by MDE EL and Special education staff, and identified experts in the field of instructional strategies for classroom teachers.

Technical assistance and support to educators is the basic foundation of instruction by building educators' capacity in evidence-based instructional practices and leadership to meet the needs of ALL diverse learners. These students need not only access, but also attainment of the content information as delineated by state standards.

Technical assistance to support quality instruction of specific groups of students involves providing support to educators to build capacity in evidence-based practices to meet the needs of all learners in literacy, mathematics and other content areas.

Educators need to learn to build their understanding of content knowledge, standards, and pedagogy as well as the capacity to apply evidence-based instructional practices demonstrated to be effective in increasing student achievement and functional performance for ALL students. Regional staff will work to enhance instructional leaders' capacity to support, promote, lead and sustain professional learning that improves both teaching practices and learning outcomes for ALL students with disabilities.

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.

ELs and Students with Disabilities
In Focus Schools identified for persistently low-performing ELs or Special Education students, SSOS staff will work with MDE staff to tailor the technical assistance needed for teachers of these students in order to access and learn the core curriculum through the use of strategic instructional strategies introduced by MDE EL and Special education staff, and identified experts in the field of instructional strategies for classroom teachers.

These strategies could include (but are not limited to):

- Oral Language development – utilizing explicit teacher talk, dramatizing, books on tape, etc.
- Read-Alouds – carefully selecting books in a variety of genres, modeling phrasing, etc.

- Shared reading – demonstrating key concepts, following up with books made by students, etc.
- Small group reading instruction – assessing authentically and frequently, etc.
- Think-Alouds – modeling differentiated reading and writing strategies, modeling problem solving, etc.
- Shared writing – teaching explicit writing strategies, demonstrating revision, editing, and conventions,
- Process writing (Writer's Workshop) – conferencing with students individually, allowing self- selection of topics, etc.
- Independent writing,
- Phonemic awareness – providing opportunities throughout literacy practice, studying high-frequency words.

Technical assistance and support in Special Education and EL supports educators in the basic foundation of instruction by building educators' capacity in evidence-based instructional practices and leadership to meet the needs of ALL diverse learners. These students need not only access, but also attainment of the content information as delineated by state standards.

Technical assistance to support quality instruction of ELs involves providing support to educators to build capacity in evidence-based practices to meet the needs of English language learners in literacy, mathematics and other content areas. Professional learning outcomes that apply to teachers and leaders include the following:

- Apply deep understanding of Minnesota English Language arts standards including the descriptors for each of the five levels of language acquisition, and the relationship of the ELA standards to other instructional standards.
- Understand and apply effective instructional practices for ELs by gaining awareness of the difference between strategies that are effective for all learners and those differentially beneficial to ELs.
- Build support structures among teachers and leaders that enable continuous implementation of effective program models and instructional strategies for ELs.

For students with disabilities, schools need to develop standards-based IEPs for special education students. The SSOS will provide teachers with support that will focus on specific strategies to address the student needs. The strategies listed above for EL students may be applicable to the needs of special education students as well, depending on their specific disability.

Educators need to learn to build their understanding of content knowledge, standards, and pedagogy as well as the capacity to apply evidence-based instructional practices demonstrated to be effective in increasing student achievement and functional performance for ALL students. Regional staff will work to   enhance instructional leaders' capacity to support, promote, lead and sustain professional learning that improves both teaching practices and learning outcomes for ALL students with disabilities.

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 Focus Rating as the criterion.

Focus Schools are identified based on their performance on the growth gap reduction measurement and the proficiency of their students in lower-performing subgroups, which is combined to create a Focus Rating. 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 Focus Rating. In order to achieve this, Focus Schools will have to make significant improvement in both the proficiency and growth of their lower-performing subgroups.

Ambitious Goals for Low Achieving Students
Schools that are in the bottom ten percent of Title I schools on the Focus Rating are exhibiting extremely low levels of proficiency and student growth among their disadvantaged subgroups. To move from the bottom ten percent on the Focus Rating to outside of the bottom quartile for two consecutive years will be evidence that real progress has been made, and the trajectory of the schools has improved to the extent that they no longer need the level of support provided to Focus Schools. Schools that are able to achieve this goal will have made the kind of progress the Focus School designation is designed to prompt. Attachment 24 demonstrates what will be required of Focus Schools to exit their status.

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. 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.

Focus School Improvement Activities Following Exit
Focus Schools will be identified for three-year periods. The period of identification is based on Minnesota's experience with SIG Schools. In those schools, experience and data has shown that dramatically improving the performance of low-performing subgroups is not a one-year process, and it is rarely a two-year process. It typically takes three years before meaningful improvements can be measured. We anticipate that the same will be true at Focus Schools. However, we have created exit criteria that would allow Focus Schools to exit their status after two years if they move out of the bottom 25 percent of schools on the Focus Rating for two consecutive years. This would represent a substantial improvement in performance, and would be indicative of a rare case in which two years was the appropriate time period for the identified improvement activities to be implemented.

Upon exiting Focus Status through the exit criteria, a school will continue to be monitored for the duration of the three-year period to ensure that it does not revert to lower performance. Focus Schools that have exited their status prior to the end of the three-year period will be expected to draft and submit a school improvement plan. The SSOS will provide technical assistance and support with this improvement plan, which will need to identify interventions that could further alter the school's trajectory toward greater success. The SSOS will continue to provide technical assistance in implementing these plans, and will monitor the school for fidelity. Particular attention will be paid to the subgroup for which a Focus School was identified to ensure that exiting Focus Status does not lead to backsliding by the subgroup. In the event that a school regresses, the SSOS and MDE will work with the school to identify areas where improvement is needed.

2.F   Provide Incentive and Support for Other Title I Schools

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. It will be the responsibility of the LEA to provide oversight, monitoring, support and resources to implement these plans. Every year, the SEA will choose a random sample of the plans form these schools to complete and audit and site visit to provide oversight of the plan implementation. Schools that are found to not be implementing with fidelity will be identified for targeted technical assistance to successfully implement the plan. LEAs that fail to effectively implement school improvement plans in Continuous Improvement Schools could be subject to deferral of Title I funds until positive actions are taken, or in cases where the LEA is persistently low-achieving, be required to implement mandatory set-asides for state-approved LEA improvement activities. These set-asides would be linked to an LEA improvement plan that could include the identification of a need for a staff member dedicated to data analysis, or the designation of an LEA-level liaison between the LEA, MDE, the SSOS and the Priority School. The nature of an LEA's plan will vary depending on their existing capacity to lead turnaround efforts and the number of Priority and Focus Schools in the LEA.

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. In this way, the supports, interventions, and incentives for Title I schools that don't fall into one of the identified categories are directly linked to the new AMOs. Since these AMOs are linked to the goal of reducing the achievement gap by half within six years, there is great promise for this incentive to have a positive effect on the performance of lower-performing subgroups.

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.

The experience of No Child Left Behind has shown that even schools that have no sanctions attached to their status (namely, non-Title I schools) are just as concerned with their AYP status as those at risk of being sanctioned for their performance. We therefore believe that continuing to publish AYP results, and supplementing it with the MMR will be a strong incentive for schools to continue to improve their performance. Furthermore, by providing more data to parents and the community, we expect that these actors will play an important role in holding schools accountable. This has been the experience with non-Title I schools, and we anticipate that the MMR will make it easier for parents at all schools to identify areas of need and demand improvement from their schools.

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

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). Minnesota's SSOS will be guided by the goal of closing the persistent achievement gap students of color and their white peers, and economically disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. The SSOS will provide effective teacher assistance, providing a platform for disseminating and reinforcing the use of effective, research-based instructional strategies and evidence-based practices. In addition, MDE must ensure that in Priority Schools and their districts, the SSOS is supporting job-embedded professional development that increases teachers' knowledge of academic subjects they teach, provide in-depth training in math and reading (including pre-K-3 literacy) support the use of effective, research-based instructional strategies with a diverse range of students, including English Learners and students with disabilities.

Timely and Comprehensive Monitoring
Monitoring and technical assistance will be built around school improvement plans, which are required for Priority, Focus and Continuous Improvement Schools. The plans will delineate

specific performance indicators in each area of improvement, including interim measures of growth throughout the school year. These measures will be the foundation for ongoing technical assistance and support conversations between MDE staff, SSOS staff in regional centers, the LEA leadership team and the building leadership team. They will be formative in nature and provide the school with timely feedback on the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

The MDE Implementation team will be comprised of staff that are content specialists in reading and math, EL specialists, program staff from special education as well as school improvement specialists that have worked with the AYP and SIG grant programs. These staff members will be responsible for providing direction and support to the regional SSOS staff in the area of identifying and measuring leading indicators for each school in their respective area of need. Indicators will be monitored by SSOS and SEA staff to ensure fidelity of implementation/compliance with waiver expectations.

Minnesota' SSOS will provide direct and 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 and the SSOS 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
Funding for the SSOS would utilize the small percentage of Title I funding set aside for the purpose of implementing a statewide system of support. This amount would be allocated to the regional centers of support in a formula basis based on the number of Focus and Priority schools in the region to develop a team of regional specialist in the area of math, reading, EL instruction, special education programming, and data coaching. The administrative funds from this source of funding would continue to fund two positions at MDE to facilitate the cross-agency implementation teams that will direct to the work of the regional centers. A shortage of state funds will require the SEA to reassess current staffing levels to develop cross-agency terms to integrate the talents, skills and knowledge of the SEA staff to leverage the greatest impact in their work with the regional SSOS. MDE will also continue to look for ways to better coordinate between Title I funds to support reform efforts through cross-division teams. Additionally, MDE will leverage Title III funds for improvement activities such as professional development for general education classroom teachers of ELs.

MDE will strive to leverage additional funding from federal and private sources. This may include re-purposing state Title II funds for professional development activities at the regional level, a redirecting of future SIG funds to Priority schools to incorporate professional learning teams, increased learning time opportunities for students, and professional growth opportunities for teachers in the areas of EL and special education instructional strategies, standards alignment, and data analysis.

Donations from education foundations and other private sources are being leveraged by MDE to provide benefits for the Reward Schools and incentives for other schools to initiate systemic reform efforts. A significant collaborative partner in supporting early learners is the Minnesota Reading Corps. This is a vital partnership as the Minnesota Reading Corps looks to scale up their efforts in Minnesota. The Minnesota Reading Corps is one of the largest AmeriCorps programs in the country. The program places AmeriCorps members in various sites around the state to support a research-based early-literacy effort for preschool through grade 3 students.

The Minnesota Reading Corps program was establish in 2003 as part of the ServeMinnesota Innovation Act (MS 124D.36), a program established to provide funding for creating public service opportunities to serve students. The program utilizes a data-based problem-solving model of literacy instruction in helping to train local Head Start program providers, other prekindergarten program providers, and staff in schools with students in kindergarten through 3rd grade to evaluate and teach early literacy skills, including comprehensive, scientifically-based reading instruction to children age 3 to grade 3. Through this legislation Minnesota Reading Corps will receive $8.25 million over the next two years to scale-up implementation statewide in partnership with MDE. Currently, Reading Corps has 785 members serving 300+ schools in over 90 districts and supports over 20, 000 students in the state. It is anticipated that by the fall of 2013 they will have well over 1,000 members in schools serving Minnesota students. This collaboration provides coherence and alignment to our state goal of "Reading Proficiently No Later Than the End of Grade 3" which seeks to have every child reading at or above grade level no later than the end of third grade and ensures teachers provide comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction consistent with section 122A.06, subdivision 4.

Within the Minnesota Reading Corps program, members receive professional development on several research-based reading strategies and master coaches support members with ongoing data collection to monitor student progress. This is a key component to a response to intervention structure implemented by MDE and MN Reading Corps. This partnership will be utilized in promoting school improvement in Priority and Focus Schools, as well as other schools around the state.

All schools will have increased flexibility under this request due to the elimination of mandatory AYP set-asides. They will also have increased flexibility in transferring funds between certain Title funding allocations. This increased flexibility will allow schools and LEAs to better leverage their federal funds and direct them toward activities aligned with their unique school improvement needs. Priority and Focus Schools will be required to reassess the use of their Title I, II and III funds to address the specific components of their school improvement plan.

      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?

LEAs will be held responsible for the implementation of the improvement plans in Priority, Focus and Continuous Improvement Schools through regular involvement of 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 assume the role of monitoring the student progress reporting and program fidelity measurements, partnering each LEA with staff from the Regional Centers established within the SSOS. The SSOS will also provide direct assistance to LEAs in the school improvement plan development process which is current practice, however, the SSOS will also provide training for LEA leadership to build capacity for directing improvement or turnaround activities, and supporting and monitoring improvement and turnaround efforts at each building. As described in the explanation of the SSOS, with the assistance from the SSOS LEAs will have completed their own needs assessment to provide a systemic perspective to student achievement LEA-wide.

LEA representation on not only the district leadership team but the individual building leadership teams is critical to the success of the planning and implementation processes. It will be suggested that each LEA with an identified school have an LEA representative assigned as a liaison to MDE and the SSOS to ensure consistent and clear communication linkages. The liaison, or other district representation is required to attend all meetings and trainings that are conducted to support the schools in the district. This is critical to an effective systemic approach to school improvement and turnaround. MDE will expect LEA representation in all aspects of the building improvement process including district personnel and school board support for the process. In the event that the school is not making progress towards their indicators, the LEA will be expected to intensify their role to intervene in the school to ensure identified strategies and interventions are adhered to.

Public Reporting

LEAs will be held accountable for their performance in much the same way that schools falling outside of the accountability categories are held accountable: through public reporting of data. LEAs will still have their AYP performance reported along with schools on an annual basis. In this way, LEAs will be held accountable for the performance of all students in the LEA. The data center on MDE's website will also allow users to sort school performance on the MMR by district. This will allow users to identify trends in low- or high-performance within a district. The expectation is that in the case of LEAs without Priority, Focus or Continuous Improvement Schools, parents and community members will take the greatest amount of responsibility for holding LEAs accountable for their performance and demanding improvement activities. They will be able to do so using the wider array of data that will be provided under the proposed system.

Persistently Low-Performing LEAs

Departing from the current AYP system, LEAs will not be evaluated or sanctioned in the same way as schools. While LEAs will still have AYP results reported, they will not be given an MMR, and will not be subject to any sanctions based on their performance. However, in LEAs with Priority, Focus or Continuous Improvement Schools, MDE and the SSOS will monitor the performance of all the LEA's schools on the MMR, as well as the LEA's AYP results. In cases where the LEA is persistently low-achieving and is failing to affect positive change in their identified schools due to failure to develop or implement the required School Improvement Plan, the LEA might be subject to deferral of Title I funds until positive actions are taken. This is currently the practice that MDE follows with LEAs and schools that refuse to develop or implement AYP plans, although the occurrence of this has been extremely isolated. Given the new responsibility that is being given to the LEAs of Priority, Focus, and Continuous Improvement Schools, MDE will have a lower threshold for deciding whether to defer Title I funds under this proposal. The other possible consequence, as outlined in this request, is to create set-asides tied to specific LEA improvement activities for the LEAs who do not comply with the expectations of MDE in the development and implementation of school improvement plans. Minnesota is a local-control state, so MDE is limited in its authority to force activities upon LEAs, but we will use the data we have to identify LEAs that are failing to improve student performance and leverage federal funding to incentivize improvement. The leverage that will be used will include deferring Title I funds from low-performing, non-compliant LEAs, or mandatory set-asides for district improvement activities. These set-asides would be linked to an LEA improvement plan that could include the identification of a need for a staff member dedicated to data analysis, or the designation of an LEA-level liaison between the LEA, MDE, the SSOS and

the Priority School. The nature of an LEA's plan will vary depending on their existing capacity to lead turnaround efforts and the number of Priority and Focus Schools in the LEA.

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, provide:

   i.   The SEA's plan to develop and adopt guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011-12 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). This statute directs MDE, in consultation with stakeholders, to create and publish new teacher and principal evaluation processes and further requires LEAs to implement both. Stakeholder workgroups have been established to further define evaluation guidelines, implementation processes and LEA expectations for adopting the state model or developing a locally-developed model that meets state requirements for principal and teacher evaluation and support systems.

Five statutes are guiding the development of teacher and principal evaluation systems. MS 122A.60 defines the role of the staff development (SD) committee, and lists requirements for plans, outcomes focused on continuous improvement, and effective SD activities. MS 122A.40 and MS 122A.41 define requirements for the annual teacher evaluation and peer review process for all teachers and use of the evaluation for personnel decisions. MS 123B.147 defines requirements for the annual performance-based principal evaluation system. MS 123B.143 defines the responsibility of the superintendent to annually evaluate each school principal. Attachment 10 includes these five statutes.

   ii.   A description of the process the SEA will use to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines; and

Development of Teacher Evaluation Guidelines
The Teacher Evaluation Workgroup 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 workgroups will develop an evaluation model and support system designed to improve student learning and success. Both will be based on the 2011 Minnesota teacher evaluation legislation, ESEA waiver expectations and recommendations from the New Teacher Project, 2009. Together they will provide tools that:

•   Occur frequently
•   focus on teaching and learning
•   differentiate by years of teaching and area of teaching
•   provide a foundation for teacher development and improvement
•   play an important role in employment decisions

As stipulated in Minnesota statute, LEAs will be required to implement either the state model or a locally-developed evaluation model and support system that meets state criteria.

Development of Principal Evaluation Guidelines

During the 2011 Minnesota adopted legislation also provided specific parameters and guidelines regarding principal evaluation. MDE, in consultation with stakeholders, is required to create and publish a principal evaluation process. LEAs are required to either implement the state-developed model or a locally-developed model that meets state criteria.

The Principal Evaluation Workgroup was convened in October 2011. A list of required stakeholder membership, meeting schedule and agenda items can be found in Attachment 18. Workgroup members include the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Minnesota Association of Elementary School Principals. Additionally a group of recognized and qualified experts and interested stakeholders, including principals, superintendents, teachers, school board members, and parents, among other stakeholders have been appointed.

Their charge 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.   An assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011-12 school year. (see Assurance 15).

Minnesota will submit to the Department for peer review and approval a copy of the guidelines developed by the workgroup to be adopted 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?

Minnesota has been a leader in teacher effectiveness over the past decade. Five important statewide initiatives lay the groundwork for the development of a statewide Minnesota teacher evaluation and support model.

1.   Q Comp – This program is aimed at improving teaching and learning through job-embedded professional development. It connects the dots between teacher observation, professional growth, professional development and student achievement.
2.   School Improvement Planning - 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.
3.   Teacher Support Partnership (TSP)- Through this effort new teacher induction guidelines have been developed to assist LEAs in implementing comprehensive new teacher programs focused on standards-based observations, mentoring, coaching, professional development and teacher growth.
4.   Teacher Performance Assessment - 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.
5.   Professional Development Plans- MS 122A.41 requires LEAs to create and implement plans for professional development that support stable and productive professional communities through ongoing and school-wide progress and growth in teacher practice. Plans must emphasize coaching, professional learning communities, classroom action research, and other job-embedded models. They must maintain a strong subject matter focus premised on students' learning goals. Plans must ensure specialized preparation and learning issues related to teaching students with special needs and limited English proficiency and English Learners and reinforce national and state standards of effective teaching practices.

Transition to a Formal Teacher Evaluation Model
Minnesota is beginning the work of extending the lessons learned from current practices and initiatives into a widely-accepted, effective teacher evaluation model. A carefully articulated implementation timeline has been established that outlines activities over a five-year period and includes a phased approach is attached as set forth in MS 122A.41. The five phases are summarized below:

1.   2011-2012 Model Development
Develop core competencies, training requirements

2.   2012-2013 Model Refinement
Design evaluator training, enhance state data systems and determine SEA approval process of LEA models

3.   2013-2014 Pilot Year
Select schools will participate in the new evaluation process including evaluator training, model revision based on pilot feedback, monitor initial fidelity of implementation

4.   2014-2015 Full Implementation
All LEAs statewide will implement

5.   2015-2016 Implementation Refinement
Adjustments will be made to the model and implementation strategies based on lessons learned

Evaluation Model Components

Based on preliminary workgroup recommendations the final 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.

Probationary teachers are defined as those in their first three years of teaching and do not have a continuing contract. Their model 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

Tenured or continuing contract teachers are defined as teachers having successfully completed their three-year probationary period. Their model will require:
•   a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes a peer-review process
•   at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator
•   peer review in the years when a tenured teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained evaluator

The Workgroup 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.

Models for both probationary and continuing teachers will be based on Minnesota's professional teaching standards as established in rule (Minn. Administrative Rule 8710.2000). Only qualified, trained evaluators will perform summative evaluations. Thirty-five percent of the 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.

Both models will include an option for teachers 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.

Measures of teacher performance via portfolio 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).

All model development will be research-based. Guidance will be provided from experts within the workgroup as well external technical assistance from New Teachers and New Leaders to

develop valid and reliable evaluation measures and ensure consistent application across LEAs. Our key sources are noted below:

• A Practical Guide to Designing Comprehensive Teacher Evaluation Systems (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, available at:
http://www.tqsource.org/publications/practicalGuideEvalSystems.pdf).

• Great Teachers and Leaders: State Considerations on Building Systems of Educator Effectiveness (Reform Support Network, available at:
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/great-teachers.doc).

• Guide to Teacher Evaluation Products (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, available at: http://www3.learningpt.org/tqsource/GEP).

• Getting It Right: A Comprehensive Guide to Developing and Sustaining Teacher Evaluation and Support Systems (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, available at: http://www.nbpts.org/userfiles/file/NBPTS_Getting-It-Right.pdf).

Inclusive and Equitable Teacher Evaluation Model

Workgroup membership includes teachers of English learners and teachers of students with disabilities. As their teaching situations are often qualitatively different from their full time general education colleagues it is critical to ensure their unique perspectives are taken into consideration. They frequently teach general education students part of the time and specialized groups part of the time or in combination, teach multiple classes, or serve as resource teachers. Evaluation rubrics and corresponding evaluator training processes will explicitly address the education of English Learners and students with disabilities.

During the pilot year, data will be collected to include information and feedback from teachers who teach students with disabilities and English Learners and used to refine or modify the state model to best meet all teaching contexts.

Special attention was given to ensure workgroup membership included representatives of non-tested grades and subject areas to ensure their unique perspectives are taken under considerations in the development of the state model. The workgroup will address equitable methods to tie student performance to teachers in tested and non-tested grades and subject areas. The evaluation rubric and corresponding evaluator training to be developed will address non-tested grades and subject areas.

The following research will be used to guide workgroup tasks related to the development of a state teacher evaluation model:

• Measuring Student Growth for Teachers in Non-Tested Grades and Subjects: A Primer (Reform Support Network, available at:
http://www.swcompcenter.org/educator_effectiveness2/NTS__PRIMER_FINAL.pdf).

• Alternative Measures of Teacher Performance (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, available at: http://www.tqsource.org/pdfs/TQ_Policy-to-PracticeBriefAlternativeMeasures.pdf).

• Measuring Teachers Contributions to Student Learning Growth for Non-tested Grades and Subjects (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, available at:
http://www.tqsource.org/publications/MeasuringTeachersContributions.pdf).

Principal Evaluation Models
As with teacher evaluations, Minnesota has a decade of history leading the effort to establish principal evaluations. Currently there are three important principal effectiveness initiatives occurring statewide that will inform the development of a statewide LEA principal evaluation and support model.

1.   The Minnesota Principal Academy—This group 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.
2.   SIG Principal Evaluations- 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.
3.   K-12 Principal Competency Evaluations- 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.

Transition to a Formal Principal Evaluation Model
Minnesota is beginning the work of extending the lessons learned from current practices and initiatives into a widely-accepted, effective principal evaluation model. A carefully-articulated implementation timeline has been established that outlines activities over a five-year period and includes a phased approach is attached as set forth in MS 122A.41. The five phases are summarized below:

1.   2011-2012 Model Development
Develop core competencies, evaluator training requirements, enhance data systems and determine SEA approval process of LEA models

2.   2012-2013 Pilot Year
        Select schools will participate in the new evaluation process including   evaluator training, model revision based on pilot feedback, monitor initial   fidelity of implementation

3.   2013-2014 Full Implementation
 All LEAs statewide will implement

4.   2014-2015 Implementation Refinement
Continue monitoring evaluation system for continuous improvement, provide ongoing professional development

5.   2015-2016 Monitor for Fidelity of Implementation
Continue monitoring evaluation system for continuous improvement, provide ongoing professional development

Principal Evaluation Model
The Principal Evaluation Workgroup will collaborate with MDE to create and publish a principal evaluation model that complies with guidelines established in statute. The law requires MDE to:

- 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. It informed the creation of Minnesota's principal evaluation legislation. "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 workgroup 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 final evaluation model will include an annual evaluation to support and improve a principal's instructional leadership, organizational management, and professional development. The model is intended to 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 is intended to 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.

Additional Outside Support and Technical Assistance
MDE has secured philanthropic external support for the technical assistance needed to develop and implement teacher and principal evaluation systems.
- The Bush Foundation- The Bush Foundation recently awarded MDE $311,000 to support the development and implementation of the principal and teacher evaluation systems. These funds will be used in three primary areas: 1) statewide educator collaboration and feedback, 2) technical assistance from national experts and 3) additional internal staff positions at MDE.

• 		Vision Idea Voice Action Project (VIVA) - Vision Idea Voice Action Project (VIVA) will lead moderated discussions via social media with teachers across the state on the emerging competencies, evaluation tools, and elements of the new evaluation systems. The feedback gathered from VIVA will be used to develop recommendations to the workgroups, the legislature, and the Commissioner. This process will continue into the 2012-13 school year and be used to provide ongoing feedback about the implementation of the new evaluation system, its effectiveness and its impact on their success as teachers.

• 		Joyce Foundation New Teacher Project - We are currently awaiting final approval from the Joyce Foundation to partner with the New Teacher Project (NTP) on teacher and principal evaluation efforts. They have an open contract with TNTP and will dedicate external assistance from the NTP to Minnesota. Joyce Foundation will support phases two and three of the Viva Project.

• 		Minnesota Philanthropy Partners - The Minnesota Philanthropy Partners are currently funding additional support from the New Leaders New Schools group to help MDE with the development of the principal evaluation model. This external technical support is helping us craft better core competencies and measures for principal evaluation based on national research and expertise.

College- and Career-Ready Standards

The workgroup 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.

Implementation Timeline for Teacher and Principal Evaluation Models

Phase	Teacher Evaluation	Principal Evaluation

Phase I 2011-12	**Model Development**
	• Complete core competencies w/ indicators through stakeholder input
	• Present recommendations to legislature
	• Select/adapt/develop state model instruments (tasks continue into 2012-13)
	   o Rubrics
	   o student and/or parent surveys
	   o Observation tools
	   o Professional growth plan forms
	• Allocate funds for state-level training and set requirements for local training (tasks continue into 2012-13) to include:
	   o Use of instruments, how to set
		Model Development
		
		• Complete core competencies w/ indicators through stakeholder input
		• Present recommendations to legislature
		• Select/adapt/develop state model instruments (tasks continue into 2012-13)
		   o Rubrics
		   o Staff/community surveys
		   o School visit/observation tools
		   o Professional growth plan forms
		• Allocate funds for state-level training and set requirements for local training (tasks continue into 2012-13) to include
		   o Use of instruments, how to set

Phase	Teacher Evaluation	Principal Evaluation
	student outcome targets, how to interpret examples of evidence, how to give effective feedback and how to align supports based on evaluation outcomes o Activities to ensure inter-rater reliability in evaluator's use of evaluation instruments o Technical assistance will be provided through MDE's new regional model for Statewide System of Support o Delivery options include face-to-face, distance learning, web-based and networking opportunities	student outcome targets, how to interpret examples of evidence, how to give effective feedback and how to align supports based on evaluation outcomes o Activities to ensure inter-rater reliability in evaluator's use of evaluation instruments o Technical assistance will be provided through MDE's new regional model for Statewide System of Support o Delivery options include face-to-face, distance learning, web-based and networking opportunities • Design evaluator training based on state model (Spring 2012) to support launch of pilots in 2012-13; • Enhance current state's data systems to share state-level student outcome information with LEAs (continued into 2012-13) • Determine a SEA approval process for LEAs seeking to implement their own model. Assurances need to include o High standards for instruction design o Training of key personnel n use of locally-developed tools o Review of correlations between practice ratings and student outcomes
Phase 2 2012-13	**Model Refinement** • Select/adapt/develop state model instruments (tasks continues from 2011-12) o Rubrics o Student and/or parent surveys o Observation tools o Professional growth plan forms • Design evaluator training based on state model to support launch of pilots in 2013-14; include use of instruments, how to set student outcome targets, how to interpret examples of evidence, how to give	**Pilot Year** • LEAs design or select instruments and seek approval for use in their pilots • Implement a statewide pilot o Pending further legislative action, to include student outcome measures o SIG schools will be required to participate in the pilot using either local or state model • Select a small number of LEAs to pilot all state instruments (rubrics, surveys, site visits and/or observations, growth measurement tools) o SIG schools will be required to

Phase	Teacher Evaluation	Principal Evaluation

	effective feedback and how to align supports based on evaluation outcomes
	• Enhance current state's data systems to share state-level student outcome information with LEAs
	• Determine a SEA approval process for LEAs seeking to implement their own model. Assurances need to include
	    o High standards for instruction design
	Training of key personnel n use of locally-developed tools
		participate in the pilot using either local or state model
		• Implement evaluator training based on piloting of state model (Summer 2012 to support launch of pilots in 2012-13)
		• Revise all state model instruments in Spring 2013 based on pilot information
		• Revise training based on lessons learned
		• Prepare for full implementation in 2013-14
		• Design a process to monitor fidelity of implementation may include
		    o Implementation checklist and/or rubric
		Random audits of selected districts

Phase 3 2013-14	**Pilot Year**
	• LEAs design or select instruments and seek approval for use in their pilots
	• Implement a statewide pilot
	    o to include student outcome measures
	    o SIG schools will be required to participate in the pilot using either local or state model
	• Select a small number of LEAs to pilot all state instruments (rubrics, surveys, site visits and/or observations, growth measurement tools)
	    o SIG schools will be required to participate in the pilot using either local or state model
	• Implement evaluator training based on piloting of state model
	• Revise all state model instruments in Spring 2014 based on pilot information
	• Revise training based on lessons learned
	• Prepare for full implementation in 2014-15
	• Design a process to monitor fidelity of implementation may
		Full implementation
		• SEAs monitor evaluation system as a basis for continuous improvement
		    o LEAs report on evaluation model and process to monitor fidelity of implementation
		    o Auditing selected LEAs in Focus and Priority Schools
		    o Creating opportunities (conferences, webinars, etc.) for LEAs to share promising practices and implementation challenges
		• SEAs provide ongoing professional development and resources
		    o Norming activities
		    o Designing robust examples of evidence
		    o Providing guidance and skills on student outcomes goal setting
		• Ongoing training on the state model and implementation

Phase	Teacher Evaluation	Principal Evaluation
	include - o Implementation checklist and/or rubric - o Random audits of selected districts	

Phase 4
2014-15
	Full implementation
	- SEAs monitor evaluation system as a basis for continuous improvement
	  - o LEAs report on evaluation model and process to monitor fidelity of implementation
	  - o Auditing selected LEAs in Focus and Priority Schools
	  - o Creating opportunities (conferences, webinars, etc.) for LEAs to share promising practices and implementation challenges
	- SEAs provide ongoing professional development and resources
	  - o Norming activities
	  - o Designing robust examples of evidence
	  - o Providing guidance and skills on student outcomes goal setting
	- Ongoing training on the state model and implementation
		Implementation Refinement
		- Review, refine and revise the evaluation model based on implementation lessons learned from the field, as well as local and national research
		- SEAs continue monitoring evaluation system as a basis for continuous improvement
		  - o LEAs report on evaluation model and process so that fidelity of implementation and can be monitored
		  - o Auditing selected LEAs in Focus and Priority Schools
		  - o Creating opportunities (conferences, webinars, etc.) for LEAs to share promising practices and implementation challenges
		- SEAs provide ongoing professional development and resources
		  - o Norming activities
		  - o Designing robust examples of evidence
		  - o Providing guidance and skills on student outcomes goal setting
		- Ongoing training on the state model and implementation

Phase 5 **2015-16**	**Implementation Refinement** - Review, refine and revise the evaluation model based on implementation lessons learned from the field, as well as local and national research - SEAs continue monitoring evaluation system as a basis for continuous improvement - o LEAs report on evaluation model and process so that fidelity of implementation and can be monitored	**Monitoring Fidelity of Implementation** - Ongoing monitoring of fidelity of implementation - Ongoing professional development and support activities

Phase	Teacher Evaluation	Principal Evaluation

	o Auditing selected LEAs in Focus and Priority Schools
	    o Creating opportunities (conferences, webinars, etc.) for LEAs to share promising practices and implementation challenges
	• SEAs provide ongoing professional development and resources
	    o Norming activities
	    o Designing robust examples of evidence
	    o Providing guidance and skills on student outcomes goal setting
	• Ongoing training on the state model and implementation	

*Adapted from Driving Alignment and Implementation: The Role of the Principalship in ESEA Flexibility (New Leaders, 2011).

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. The exact process will be determined through workgroup recommendations to MDE. This review and approval process will be first used with pilot schools prior to the pilot and full implementation phases for each model. Each workgroup 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 workgroups. Implementation timelines for both the teacher and principal evaluation include specific phases and activities intended to refine the existing models and monitor the fidelity of implementation.

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 involve collective bargaining organizations, incorporate professional growth and alignment with personal decision making of individuals being evaluated.

Role of Collective Bargaining
During the 2011 Minnesota Special Legislative Session, a major shift occurred regarding teacher and principal evaluation requirements (see Attachment 10). The new laws require all districts to be held to the same standard of annual evaluations for teachers and principals. The teacher evaluation model requires districts to develop a teacher evaluation process through joint agreement (collective bargaining). If the district does not develop a teacher evaluation model by the 2014-15 school, then the district must adopt the state model. Statutes pertaining to district requirements for principal evaluation are not linked to collective bargaining. Recommendations will be made to legislature to require principal evaluation through a joint agreement process (collective bargaining).

Teacher Evaluation Aligned with Professional Growth and Personal Decisions
The Teacher Evaluation Workgroup will provide guidance on how LEAs must coordinate the results of teacher evaluations with LEA and school professional development plans and use individual professional development plans for professional growth and improvement that are driven by student achievement data.

The workgroup will recommend how teacher quality and current tenure practices should be 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. The workgroup will be asked to provide guidance to define "making adequate progress" to inform personnel decisions.

- Probationary Teachers: During the three-year probationary period, any annual contract with any teacher may or may not be renewed as the school board shall see fit. (MN Statute 122A.40/122A. 41)
- Probationary and Continuing Contract Teachers. Personnel decisions include last chance warning, termination, discharge, nonrenewal, transfer to a different position, a leave of absence, or other discipline a school administrator determines is appropriate. (MN Statute 122A.40/122A.41)

Student Achievement Measures used in Evaluation
The Principal Evaluation Workgroup is considering how to incorporate student achievement measurements in the model. The Workgroup is currently considering the use of longitudinal data and school-wide student academic growth data as an evaluation component. District achievement goals and targets will also be incorporated into the evaluation process. The recommendations of the Workgroup will determine the degree to which student achievement measurements will be a part of the statewide principal evaluation model.

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.

Principal Evaluation Aligned with Professional Growth

Principal evaluations will include timely feedback linked to professional development plans that emphasize improved teaching and learning, improvements in curriculum and instructional methodologies, and a collaborative professional culture. The model will require implementation of this plan for the purpose of improving the principal's performance specifying the procedures and consequences if performance is not improved. The workgroup will recommend additional 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 21st 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 workgroup 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 are currently being refined by the principal evaluation work group members. A combination of evaluation by supervisor, school performance measures and other measures that include feedback from stakeholders will be used to develop a principal's rating. A professional growth plan will be developed from the summary report consistent with the performance rating assigned and be determined by both parties. Ratings include:

4 - Distinguished (Exemplary): Consistently exceeds standards of performance.
- A self-directed growth plan.
- Eligible for additional leadership roles and responsibilities.
- Encouraged to assume role of mentor or coach.

3 - Accomplished (Proficient): Consistently meets standards of performance
- A Self-directed growth plan.

2 - Proficient (Basic): Demonstrates basic competence on standards of performance
- One-year jointly designed growth plan.

1 - Unsatisfactory: Does not meet acceptable standards of performance
- One-year directed improvement plan stemming from unsatisfactory or concerning performance items; generated by the supervisor and specifically identifying areas for improvement.

Developing: The designation of "developing" may be added to one of the above ratings where a limited number of performance items are targeted and where one of the following conditions exist:
1) Principal is a probationary principal,
2) Principal assumed a new assignment,
3) A significant change has occurred in district goals, curricula, leadership, or strategic vision during the year.

Failure to remedy or improve a performance designation of "Unsatisfactory" shall result in disciplinary action per MS 123B. 147 or local district policy.
- Personnel decisions include last chance warning, termination, discharge, nonrenewal, transfer to a different position, a leave of absence, or other discipline a school administrator determines is appropriate. (MN Statute 122A.40/122A.41).

- Specifically, for both principals and teachers, MN Statute 122A.40, Subdivision 9, was amended during the 2010 Legislative session to read: Subd. 9. Grounds for termination. A continuing contract may be terminated, effective at the close of the school year, upon any of the following grounds:
(1) inefficiency in teaching or in the management of a school, consistent with subdivision 8, paragraph (b);
(2) neglect of duty, or persistent violation of school laws, rules, regulations, or directives; conduct unbecoming a teacher which materially impairs the teacher's educational effectiveness; or
(3) other good and sufficient grounds rendering the teacher unfit to perform the teacher's duties.

The workgroup is the process of making final recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature by February 1, 2012 to the Minnesota State Model for Principal Evaluation and will 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 Workgroup 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, workgroups 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. Students who test with the main assessments as well as alternate assessments are included in the MMR. 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	Workgroup convenes; model completed	Pilot year	Full implementation at LEA level	
Teacher	Legislation enacted	Workgroup 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:
- LEA with Priority Schools and those receiving federal school redesign grants. These sites 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 Workgroup has a rigorous meeting schedule intended to result in a formal report to be reviewed and adopted in January 2012. The workgroup 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:

Date	Time	Location	Agenda
Monday, October 24	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	- Introductions

Date	Time	Location	Agenda
			• Charge to the group • Review of legislation • Presentations by BOSA and MESPA & MASSP of work completed • Next Steps • Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings
Monday, November 7	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	• Review of information at federal level-NCLB Waiver Principles • Review of models from state and national sources (NC, IL, IA & Other) • Compare and contrast models • Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings
Monday, November 14	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	• Presentation: MN Principals Academy • Presentation: New Leaders for New Schools • Terminology & structure of model • Begin development of model, recommendations & report • Issues: Proficiency categories & Core Competencies • Set calendar and agendas for upcoming meetings
Monday, December 5	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	• Presentation by Val-Ed • Legal Implications • Continue development of model, recommendations & report • Issues: Indicators/Descriptors; Evidences • Set calendar and agendas for upcoming meetings
Monday, December 12	1:00 – 4:00	TIES Building	• Prepare & discuss questions for January meeting on assessment & longitudinal data • Continue development of model, recommendations & report • Issues: Timelines, process, forms & developmental expectations • Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings
Thursday, January 19	1:00 – 4:00	MDE	• Joint meeting with teacher evaluation working group on issues related to testing, assessments and longitudinal data • Review outline of draft report; discussion and revisions
Monday,	1:00 – 4:00	TIES	• Review and Adopt Final Report

Date	Time	Location	Agenda
January 23		Building	• The Teacher Evaluation Workgroup has a similar work schedule with monthly meetings scheduled through August of 2012
December 13	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	• Introductions • Charge to the group • Review of legislation • Review of information at federal level (NCLB—Federal Legislation) • Other teacher evaluation processes in law–Q Comp, SIG • Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings
January 19	1:00 – 4:30 PM	Room	• Review of Board of Teaching professional teaching standards established in rule • Identification of terms that need agreement • Prepare questions for January meeting on assessment/growth, longitudinal data, etc. • Legal implications • Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings
February 23	1:00 – 4:00 PM	Room CC 15-16	• Joint meeting with Principal Evaluation Working group for presentation from MDE on what assessment, value-added, longitudinal data is available. • Discussion of information from presentation • Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings
March 21	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	• Definition of terms and agreement of terminology • Requirements and role of "trained evaluators" • Review of models from local, state and national sources • Compare and contrast models • Set calendar and adjust agendas for upcoming meetings
April	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	Begin development of model Issues:
May	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	Development of model Issues:
June	4:00 – 6:30 PM	Room	Development of model Issues:
July	TBD	TBD	Development of model Issues:
August	TBD	TBD	Development of model

Date	Time	Location	Agenda
			Issues:
TBD	TBD	TBD	Review outline of draft process; discussion and revisions
TBD	TBD	TBD	Review and Adopt Final Work Product to present to Commissioner

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?

Consistent High-Quality Implementation

The Teacher and Principal Evaluation Workgroups and national experts will provide recommendations for processes to monitor the implementation of state- and locally-developed evaluation models. Final plans for monitoring for fidelity and rigor of LEA implementation for both teacher and principal evaluation models will be developed by MDE based on this input. The plans will include:

- Timelines for districts determining their evaluation model.
- Required use of an MDE-developed implementation rubric for LEA use including the types of evaluation tools (surveys, observation tools, student growth models, professional growth plans, etc), requirements ensure inter-rater reliability training for evaluators and training of educators in the evaluation model including timelines and processes.
- LEA assurances that all evaluators are adequately trained to demonstrate the ability to make accurate judgments.
- LEA assurances that their evaluation model is implemented with fidelity by reviewing the accuracy and utility of the data produced and reviewing the decisions made for fairness and consistency.
- Notification of periodic audits of LEA evaluation process of selected districts, using either the state model or locally developed models, to ensure evaluations are fair and accurate and adhere to the MDE standards.

Evaluator Training and Support

During implementation, each evaluator will be required to complete a series of training sessions focused on the specifics of the evaluation system and ensure inter-rater reliability. Evaluator training activities will include:

- Orientation to the evaluation model, controlling for bias, understanding the observation instrument, applying the rubrics to observation and document review, scoring practice, exemplars, etc.
- Training sessions focused on the specifics of the evaluation system, including sessions on student learning, professional growth plans, observations and feedback, and conferencing.
- Training venues provided by MDE and conducted regionally as well as web-based. Beyond initial orientation to the state model, evaluators will receive more targeted follow-up training.
- Feedback loops to regularly evaluate quality and effectiveness of training as well as keeping all stakeholders informed about the process.

- Communication tools for administrators to share directly with teachers and/or administrators in their districts to ensure educators receive information about the model.

Implementation plans, resources and technical assistance
The Principal and Teacher Evaluation Workgroups 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 workgroup 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 workgroup 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 workgroup 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.