



Questions and Answers: ESEA Renewal Webinar – March 17, 2015, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Q: Will the PowerPoint be made available?

A: The presentation used during the webinar is available [here](#).

Q: Does the waiver include charter schools?

A: Yes, the waiver covers all schools and districts in Arizona.

Q: What aspect does the waiver cover and how is this flexibility beneficial to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)?

A: ESEA Flexibility modifies the implementation of specific sections of Title I's requirements for accountability and school improvement. Benefits to LEAs include elimination of certain requirements for the expenditure of Title I and Title II funds because LEAs are no longer subject to identification for improvement, the number of schools identified for improvement is limited to 5% of the lowest performing and 10% of those with achievement gaps, and the 100% achievement goal has been extended through 2020. The Flexibility Request also includes description of how Arizona is implementing its college- and career-ready academic standards and assessments and an evaluation system for teachers and principals.

Q: There has been a lot of discussion about moving away from the AZCCRS since the new superintendent of instruction came on board. Is this something that can actually happen?

A: Yes, states are allowed to adjust their standards; however, they have to be significantly rigorous to be approved as "college and career ready." As we enter a review process, we will work closely with higher education to make sure that any new or revised standards will meet these requirements.

Comment: Good plan to avoid double testing middle schoolers.

Q: As a school administrator I am very concerned as to whether or not AzMERIT has been proofed and is a quality assessment that will do our students justice. Can you explain this process as to set our minds at ease?

A: It is a requirement that ADE ensure that the state assessment is valid and reliable. We adhere to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. In addition to meeting the test development standards we include Arizona educators to participate in review of items as well other pertinent resources. As part of the work that is done with the vendor we have a quality check system in place where ADE conducts the final review of materials.

Q: Will AMO's for AzMERIT be created after the 2nd year of AzMERIT implementation?

A: Arizona will identify AMO's based on 2014-2015 statewide assessment results; ESEA waiver compliance requires states to submit these AMO's in January 2016.

Q: The state legislature is currently considering a bill to suspend A-F letter grades for two years. Will the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) wait for this vote to happen? And if this vote is not in the affirmative what is the likely outcome?

A: The ADE will apply for a waiver by the deadline – March 31; the Department's waiver application outlines a transition plan which is not dependent on the A-F letter grade system. The Department is prepared to operationalize a transition plan consistent with the timeline described in SB1289.

Q: When can we see the pilot proposal for school and district accountability?

A: The new criteria to identify Reward, Focus, and Priority schools are included in the [PowerPoint](#). The criteria apply at the school level only.

Q: Will charter schools have to complete ECAPs? Currently, it's a choice.

A: There are no proposed changes to charter schools and the use of ECAPs.

Q: So, even though we are trying to suspend school labeling through this transition to a new assessment, you are still going to label schools?

A: The new criteria to identify Reward, Focus, and Priority schools are included in the [PowerPoint](#). The criteria apply at the school level only. Schools which meet the criteria will receive a label which allows them to receive support. The ESEA waiver application describes criteria for federal labels only – not A-F labels. Federal labels of Reward, Focus, Priority are developed by the State and submitted for approval through the ESEA flexibility process. If the state does not have a system in place to identify these schools, Arizona schools will revert to AYP labels and AYP implications.

In the absence of a state-developed accountability system, which has been the A-F Letter Grade Accountability System up until 2014, Arizona must have a method to identify schools in need of support in order to continue to receive Title I funds. Schools which receive Title I support will receive Title I support under ESEA flexibility if the state has an approved system in place which can replace AYP. Prior to ESEA flexibility and the A-F letter grade accountability system, ALL schools in the state received AYP determinations since Arizona is a Title I participating state. While there are no A-F labels proposed in this transition plan or Arizona's application for ESEA flexibility for the next school year, there is still a system in place to ensure that schools and the state can continue to receive and use their Title I funds in a manner more flexible than what is allowed under AYP/ESEA. Not all schools will receive a label; not all schools which qualify for Reward, Focus, Priority labels will realize any tangible outcomes from these labels. Also, SB1289 requires that schools continue to be identified as "below average" during the transition period. The "below average level of performance" is described in ARS 15-241 as a "D" letter grade. Implications of having "below average level of performance" continue for schools during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school year.

Q: Who is considered a sub group?

A: Arizona uses the Bottom 25%. Part of Arizona's current ESEA flexibility allows Arizona to identify the subgroup based on the lowest performing students at a school regardless of NCLB subgroups such as special education status, race/ethnicity, etc.

Q: Why are you calling it a hiatus? Is the intention to go back to letter grades?

A: The State Board has instituted a process to review accountability for Arizona schools. In the interim the Department will not issue an A-F letter grade. While the new state accountability system has not yet been adopted, we anticipate that there will still be a requirement to identify the lowest performing schools, using criteria yet to be finalized.

Q: Just clarifying - For the criteria, the percent passing and growth are using AZMerit results?

A: For the most part, yes. The Priority – Low performing criteria considers multiple years of low achievement. This may also include performance on 2014 AIMS. The Reward – High Progress and Priority – Lowest Performing criteria also consider performance on the 2014 A-F point scale.

Q: How does this work with charter schools?

A: This applies to both charter and district schools.

Q: So rewards schools cannot use Waiver 13?

A: The state receives the waiver – not the school. Waiver 13 allows ADE to allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs to provide interventions and supports for low-achieving students in other Title I schools when one or more subgroups miss either AMOs or graduation rate targets or both over a number of years.

Q: How/when will we know if we are "pre-focus" or "pre-priority"?

A: The criteria are currently posted and the timeline for identification is included in the [PowerPoint](#).

Q: Will there be new exit criteria for Focus and Priority Schools?

A: Yes, we will be using the current exit criteria before we transition to implementing this proposal. Exit criteria will be determined by annually reviewing the designations of priority and focus. The new Focus and Priority criteria will use new, corresponding exit criteria.

Q: Current evaluation criteria do not account for instructional models that leverage technology and face-to-face (blended) instruction. Whole group teaching is often absent in this model and teachers are coaches or facilitators. How does this work with current requirements and accountability when multiple teachers facilitate the same student but in different roles and modalities?

A: LEAs could match an individual student's assessment data to a teacher of record or teachers could share the student's data either fully or weighted based on the percent of time they spend in actual instruction of each student.

Q: What about schools that opened in 2014/2015? How are they being held accountable?

A: The proposed transition plan uses the first year of AzMERIT results mainly to develop a statewide baseline. The new criteria will be applied after the 2015-2016 test administration. This would give us two years of data based on the new assessment.

Q: What about charter schools that solely rely on online curriculum with students working independently at their own pace in terms of teacher accountability?

A: The student assessment data would be connected to the teacher of record that is responsible for planning and implementing the curriculum and overseeing the students' progress.

Q: What is the AZELLA reclassification percentage rate for the SY15?

A: There is no minimum AZELLA reclassification rate percentage in the absence of "ELL points" contributing to A-F points for a final letter grade; however, performance on AZELLA is included in the Reward, Focus, Priority criteria.

Q: Please clarify...for Group B teachers do I understand that the student progress data component for school-wide data can be no more than 17%?

A: Group "B" teachers (those with limited or no available classroom-level student achievement data appropriate to their individual content areas), can use school-level data which can account for 33-50% of the total evaluation outcome. Group "A" teachers should have at least 33% from classroom-level data and then up to 17% of school-level data to account for their student achievement measurements.

Q: If the legislators, Gov. Ducey and Supt. Douglas are pushing to eliminate the Common Core/Arizona College & Career Readiness Standards, and the AzMERIT assessment (which I disagree with), then why would Arizona reapply for the waiver? This seems like a waste of time and effort.

A: States are allowed to adjust their standards; however, they have to be significantly rigorous to be approved as “college and career ready.” As we enter a review process, we will work closely with higher education to make sure that any new or revised standards will meet these requirements. We will discuss any changes to state testing that result from legislative action with USED to determine what impact they may have on the renewal process.

Q: Does SB1289 include charter schools?

A: There is no exemption of charter schools in SB1289.

Q: You state that the waiver is in request for students who aren't enrolled in high school but are taking high school level work, which is fine, but what about double testing of high school students who are behind in credits and will be "double- tested" if they are enrolled in, for example, an English 9 course and an English 11 course?

A: The waiver is only allowable for students being double tested in middle school. The expectation for high school students would be to take an End-of-Course (EOC) test when they have completed the appropriate course (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, ELA 9, ELA 10, ELA 11). Unfortunately, students in credit recovery will be required to take the assessment as appropriate. While the high school assessment is currently not high stakes, LEAs might want to use the results as part of high school students' course grades. This is not a requirement by ADE or the State Board of Education (SBE) but an option that LEAs can consider.

Q: Why are only some schools receiving labels?

A: The flexibility process describes the 3 categories—reward, priority and focus—and limits the number of schools in priority and focus to 5% and 10% of the total Title I schools, respectively. The purpose is to target resources from school improvement to those schools that need most support. All schools will be evaluated. Schools that don't meet any of the listed criteria will not receive any designation

Q: How would the scores for those students in middle school who are taking high school courses affect the school's overall accountability level? Would the school be given credit for the number of students taking advanced courses?

A: The new criteria are described in the [PowerPoint](#).

Q: How will the waiver be impacted by any change in the state's implementation of AZCCRS?

A: States are allowed to adjust their standards; however, they have to be significantly rigorous to be approved as “college and career ready.” As we enter a review process, we will work closely with higher education to make sure that any new or revised standards will meet these requirements.

Q: So do I understand correctly that schools will not earn a rating of A-F for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, but rather, would receive a rating of R, F, or P?

A: The Department does not intend to issue A-F letter grades in FY15 or FY16; however, Title I schools will continue to be identified for Reward, Focus, and Priority status. Non-title I schools which meet these criteria will also be identified.

Q: When will we know if the waiver is approved?

A: This is an iterative process with the US Department of Education. Some states' applications are approved faster than others.

Q: Please list the accountability pieces for next year, in lieu of AIMS.

A: Please see the bullets in the [PowerPoint](#).

Q: What is the approximate timeline for the "new criteria for all schools during A-F hiatus" to be approved?

A: Use of these criteria to identify schools for Reward, Focus, Priority status will come from USED if our waiver is approved. Use of any criteria to identify an Arizona school as "below average" (the equivalent of a "D" letter grade) must be approved by the State Board of Education.

Q: The exit criteria for Focus schools previously had AIMS as a component. How will that factor in?

A: New criteria correspond with new exit criteria. We will be using AIMS data until the new assessment data is available.

Q: What if the school is not Title I?

A: Non-Title I schools have received AYP determinations in the past; Arizona is a recipient of Title I funds. Only Title I schools identified as Reward, Focus, Priority would be eligible to receive financial support.

Q: For schools that are not R, F, or P, will they retain their 2014 A-F label, or will there simply be no label?

A: The 2014 A-F letter grade is the last letter grade issued by the ADE. There is no plan to issue a 2015 letter grade at this time.

Comment: EOC testing is great, as long as students test when they actually finish the course. Otherwise, we will be having students finish courses, moving onto another course and having to "go back" to test.

Response: Beginning in 2015, EOC tests will be administered every spring. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) plans to offer them at two additional times (summer and fall) for students on alternate schedules. Students will take the exams while they are enrolled in the corresponding course. For more information, [click here](#).

Q: On an early slide, two assessments were listed: AZ Merit and NCSC. Please explain NCSC.

A: The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) is a project led by five centers and 24 states (13 core states and 11 Tier II states) to build an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The goal of the NCSC project is to ensure that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities achieve increasingly higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options. Arizona will administer the NCSC Alternate Assessments for ELA and Mathematics.