**IMPROVEMENTS MADE BY NEW MEXICO TO ITS ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST**

Based on feedback from peer reviewers and U.S. Department of Education staff, New Mexico made the following changes to its request in order to meet the principles of ESEA flexibility.

**PRINCIPLE 1: COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

- New Mexico provided details on its plan to implement college- and career-ready standards, including its plans for public communications, assessments, and curriculum and instructional materials. The plan included timelines that meet the requirements of ESEA flexibility and outlined milestones and key implementation steps.

- New Mexico described how the State will work to improve access to advanced coursework and accelerated learning opportunities through funding teacher training in Advanced Placement (AP) instruction, working with three higher education institutions to expand teacher training opportunities, and developing with stakeholders a five-year strategy to develop quality pre-AP and AP opportunities for districts with large populations of Native American students.

- New Mexico provided action steps regarding curriculum and instruction as well as professional development to ensure equity and rigor for all students in meeting high standards, including activities to support teachers of English Learners and students with disabilities.

- New Mexico provided additional information on how the State will work with New Mexico State University and the University of New Mexico to transition teacher preparation programs to the use of college- and career-ready standards. The State will also work with college deans to establish new accreditation criteria relating to these standards.

- New Mexico provided a leadership plan with details on the how the State will coordinate implementation of the new standards. The plan describes the roles and responsibilities of the State staff in coordinating professional development, providing technical assistance, and monitoring progress and performance.

- The State shared the New Mexico Common Core State Standards Implementation Plan with schools and districts statewide at the end of January 2012.

**PRINCIPLE 2: STATE-DEVELOPED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT**

- New Mexico will no longer condition school status or student growth on student background characteristics and will instead weight growth based on prior student achievement.
• New Mexico created two sets of performance targets that would apply to all students statewide. Its proficiency targets would cut the achievement gap between the lowest-performing 25 percent of students and the other 75 percent of students in half in seven years and would require all schools to increase their proficiency rate to the current 90th percentile of school performance in equal annual increments over ten years. The State also set student growth targets that would require students who are already proficient to make at least one year’s growth, while students who are further behind would have to make enough growth to significantly close achievement gaps. The State also set graduation rate targets for all students.

• New Mexico provided additional data demonstrating the impact of its choice to reduce its minimum n-size to one and to include all students, no matter how long they were enrolled, in a school’s calculation. The State estimates they will capture approximately 28 percent more schools due to not having a minimum subgroup size, as well as an additional 20,000 students (6 percent of the State’s K-12 enrollment) who would otherwise be excluded due to not being enrolled for a full academic year.

• New Mexico clarified that its college- and career-readiness indicator will be based on a high school’s entering cohort of students, meaning that schools cannot earn credit in this indicator if a student drops out before receiving a diploma. This indicator, worth 17 percent of a high school’s grade, will encourage schools to keep students enrolled and ensure that they take rigorous college- and career-ready courses and earn their high school diploma.

• New Mexico provided additional safeguards on its use of a combined subgroup made up of the bottom 25 percent of students in each school. For example, the New Mexico Public Education Department will use its authority to review district budgets and programs to ensure that schools and districts with continued low performance of ESEA subgroups will align resources and strategies to tackling the issue.

• The State will work with districts to measure the number of students who are on-track to graduation by analyzing data on student matriculation at third grade, matriculation and proficiency as students move from eighth to ninth grade, and graduation rate. If students are not progressing, districts will implement targeted interventions.

• New Mexico described how it will identify the State’s lowest-performing schools and those with the largest achievement gaps, according to the definitions of priority and focus schools in ESEA flexibility, and will ensure that the schools implement meaningful interventions in each of these schools based on the academic needs of students. The State also established rigorous criteria for schools to exit priority or focus school status.

• In addition to priority, focus, and reward schools, New Mexico will also identify “strategic schools,” which are schools with the largest gaps between the school’s bottom quartile and the top three quartiles statewide.

**PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP**
• New Mexico provided additional detail on its plan to develop and implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems and it outlined a timeline with parties responsible and resources available to meet the timelines of ESEA flexibility.

• New Mexico provided draft legislation that it has submitted to the State legislature outlining changes to the State’s teacher and principal evaluation system. The legislation outlined the components for teacher and principal evaluations, including student growth in significant part and other measures; called for regular evaluations of teachers and principals; required timely feedback to educators after their evaluations; and outlined a process for using the results of the evaluations in personnel decisions.

• New Mexico provided information on a $3 million State funding request to support the implementation of the teacher and principal evaluation system, including convening a technical advisory committee, providing training on the new evaluations, and aligning existing professional development with the results of the new evaluation systems.

• New Mexico committed to convening an advisory council in the spring of 2012 that will include teachers and their union representatives, school administrators, the business community, colleges and universities, parent organizations, and other stakeholders within New Mexico. The council will be tasked with recommending an evidence-based observation protocol and other measures to be used in evaluations.

• New Mexico will begin piloting, in the 2012–13 school year, the observation protocol in seven districts that are participating in New Mexico’s Transition to Teaching program. The State will use an ongoing evaluation based on the results of this pilot to establish quality control measures and make modifications in advance of the larger pilot planned for the 2013–14 school year. New Mexico provided more information about how it will establish training on the new system, including conferences in the summer of 2012 for its Regional Education Cooperatives (RECs). The RECs will provide training to districts in their region, and will provide ongoing regional training opportunities for all districts.