

ESEA Flexibility Talking Points Provided by the Arkansas Department of Education

- States were offered the opportunity to seek waivers from some of the provisions of the No Child Left Behind legislation in September 2011, after Congress failed to reauthorize the legislation. Arkansas sought a waiver in an effort to move away from a narrowly defined accountability system that gave a limited and often misleading view of a school or district's success in improving student achievement.
- The approval of the state's ESEA Flexibility request does not eliminate accountability measures for improving student achievement, but it does allow us to implement an accountability system that will provide a more meaningful measure of the success and progress of Arkansas students and schools.
- Schools will no longer have to focus on meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – a single measure, assigned arbitrarily that was the same for everyone regardless of where they were starting from or the challenges in their student population. Instead, we'll be able to look at performance, growth and graduation rate for high schools and establish Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) that are unique to each school.
- The new accountability system maintains a focus on helping students achieve proficiency in both literacy and math, but also gives credit for improving performance along the way. The system provides a more accurate and fair view of performance among students.
- We'll begin using the new accountability system in the 2012-2013 school year.

The Old Accountability System

- One-size fits all; miss one, miss them all
- Blanket sanctions imposed on schools in improvement status; no discretion on how set-aside funds were spent
- Overly focused on standardized test scores
- Focused schools' efforts on students close to meeting proficiency instead of improving all students

The New Accountability System

- Arkansas's accountability system designed by Arkansas stakeholders
- Maintains focus on most at risk student populations – will continue to report disaggregated data
- Focused on performance and growth for all students

