News Release:

Contact: Malissa Valdes-Hubert
334-750-0276
mvaldes@alsde.edu

NOTICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT FLEXIBILITY WAIVER REQUEST

Montgomery, AL. - On behalf of all of its school districts in the state, the Alabama Department of Education has posted the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Request, a request to waive certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and to implement a new educational system aligned with Alabama Plan 2020.

To view the document, click here. The purpose of posting the proposed waiver is to allow time for public comment, as required by the U.S. Department of Education.

Written comments may be emailed to eseaflexibility@alsde.edu by Tuesday, August 21.

Click links below to view comments and materials related to Alabama’s new plan for assessments, Plan 2020.

- Plan 2020 Ustream Video (Description of the Plan begins at 2:59 into video)
- Powerpoint on Plan 2020

###
Dr. Maddox, thank you for your offer to provide attachments. Specifically, I request the following:

Attachment 4
Attachment 12
Attachment 19
Attachment 21
Attachment 22
Attachment 23
Attachment 24

I have attached a list of questions and input I have regarding the ESEA Flexibility Waiver request. I do not know to whom to ask these questions. I hope that you can direct these to the appropriate person within the ALSDE. I have copied the official e-mail address given in the press release as well.

Thank you.

Trisha Powell Crain

Executive Director

Alabama School Connection

www.alabamaschoolconnection.org

205.527.0904
1. Page 28 – Mention is made of an “interactive blog” to allow feedback and personal responses from ALSDE staff. When will that be live and online? The plans are to incorporate this feature with the release of our new ALSDE website as referenced on page 48. An exact timeline has not been determined by the developers but tentative date of release is January 2013.

2. Pages 40-41 – Reference is made to “the combined results of all three assessment types”. Is there further breakdown of how this calculation is made? Not at this time.

3. Pages 40-41 – It appears that no end-of-course (EOC) assessments will be given for students who working with Alabama Extended Standards and no alternate EOC assessments will be given to those students. How will you assess progress for students working on Alabama Extended Standards? They will still use the Alabama Alternate Assessment – see pages 36 and 37.

4. Page 41 – You state that the “N-count used will be 20.” Currently the N-size is 40. This document indicates we are lowering that number from 40 to 20. Is this for each subgroup in each school? yes

5. Page 46 – Four LEAs have chosen not to use EDUCATEAlabama to evaluate their teachers. Which districts are those? Mountain Brook, Opelika, Homewood, and Butler County. Butler County has been a recipient of a grant that required them to use a certain system but once the grant is over they have indicated they will move to EDUCATEAlabama.

6. Page 48 – Each district will be given an opportunity to create one indicator, complete with an AMO that is unique to its district. What are the parameters of that indicator? To be determined.

7. Page 48 – Annual school performance targets are mentioned. Is this the “single school performance index” mentioned? No, they are two different items. We will work to reword this section to explain. The AMO’s (annual school performance targets) are defined in Section 2B. The single School Performance Index is defined in Section 2A.

8. Page 48 – Regarding the “single school performance index”: what is the actual calculation? I see that it “incorporates a robust set of success factors” which are outlined generally in the following sections, but no actual benchmarks and targets and calculations are shared in the document. I recognize that the benchmarks are still being set, but there must be some framework for the calculation? This cannot be determined in detail until we have the data to evaluate and review impact possibilities. We will be doing this over the course of this upcoming school year and refining as new assessments are incorporated.

9. Page 49 – “The new state accountability system will prompt all stakeholders to ask difficult questions about increasing academic achievement and raising instructional quality within Alabama’s schools”. That statement may be true, and asking a question has never been difficult. Rather, getting a respectful response to questions that are asked has proven difficult at the school and district level since the inception of AYP and NCLB. Often, when parents and interested community members ask about achievement results, teachers and principals ask “well, how is your child doing?” and proceed to work hard to keep the focus on the individual child of the questioner. It is well-researched and well-understood how important peer relationships and peer achievement are in school, and the lack of willingness of teachers and principals to recognize that often leads to frustration for parents and family members. For example, when a parent learned that less than 60% of her child’s classmates in a particular grade level scored at or above proficient, she was alarmed and worried about her own child’s potential for success given the number of struggling students. When she inquired about what the school was doing to address this lack of achievement, she was rebuffed by the principal who told her she should only be concerned with her own child’s achievement and not that of other students….that the school was taking care of those students. When she pushed further for a
plan of action to address the lack of achievement, she was simply told that was not her business to be concerned. We all know that is not the right answer. It is that parent’s business to be concerned. I would like to see specific training/information shared with teachers and principals and superintendents to educate them on why they actually do want their parents to care about “other people’s children” and to learn to see that as an opportunity rather than a threat to their authority (which is apparently how some of them see it now). The entire community should “own” the problems/struggles/achievement of the public schools in their community. Their concerns should be graciously appreciated rather than rebuffed by teachers, principals, and superintendents. This paradigm needs to change. I hope that you will incorporate a way to educate the educators about the need for community members to care about these results and when they show concern, that school personnel should be gracious with their response. This is a very good point you have raised. I will take this back to the writing team and see if they can incorporate a paragraph that includes this concept.

10. Page 54 – A “set of targets” for all subgroups is mentioned. I read Option A, and it appears that the 2011-2012 results will be used to set the targets initially, then reset them after the 2013-2014 results are in. Is that correct? Yes, because the new measures to be incorporated are not yet available. Therefore, additional data is required to set the targets. For example, adjustments will need to be made as new assessments are added.

11. Page 55 – The N-size to report any results at all is said to be 20. If the N-size is below 20, no results will be reported. Currently, that N-size is 10. Why do you feel it necessary to increase that number by 100%? How many schools will now have zero accountability for subgroups due to this change? The number of 20 determines if a subgroup is held accountable. The current N-size is 40; therefore we lowered it to 20. However, with the new gap calculation, every student will be used in the calculation so in effect the N count is zero. As it relates to reporting of data, the N size is still 10.

Regarding Attachments: the document provided from the U.S. Department of Education lists specific attachment numbers on page 2 of the document. Therefore, the attachments that you refer to conflict with those numbers. For example, you indicate that “Attachment 4” is documentation of Superintendent response to Plan 2020 (p. 12). The USDOE indicates that Attachment 4 is something different (p. 20). We will be taking our attachment numbers and adding in parenthesis the USDOE label number as it will reflect on the Table of Contents.

Using your attachment numbers, could you please provide the following attachments via e-mail?
Attachment 4
Attachment 12
Attachment 19
Attachment 21
Attachment 22
Attachment 23
Attachment 24

Thank you for this opportunity to ask questions and provide input. I hope to receive the Attachments in a timely fashion to afford the opportunity to provide more comment and input prior to the August 21 deadline.

Trish
Trisha Powell Crain
Executive Director
Alabama School Connection
205.527.0904
TrsCrain@aol.com – personal e-mail
Dr. Maddox, thank you for taking the time to respond to my questions. You had me at "N-size is 20". Wow. Voluntarily reducing the N-size is something I truly did not expect. This is very good news for children in special education. Thank you.

I am looking forward to seeing this roll out and even though many of the details are not ironed out, I have the utmost confidence in you, Dr. Bice and the rest of the team to ensure the end result is meaningful for Alabama's children.

Good luck with the application. If you need any letters of support, I would be happy to oblige.

Trish
Trisha Powell Crain
Executive Director
Alabama School Connection
205.527.0904

---

Hello,

I am wondering if the appendices referenced in the waiver request document are available to the public? If they are, I am interested in Appendix 1-5.

Thank you.

Patricia Johnson, PMP
Senior Director, State Assessment Programs
Data Recognition Corporation
1-800-826-2368
Local: 763-268-2217
Cell: 763-300-5216
Fax: 763-268-3007
pcjohnson@datarecognitioncorp.com

---

Attachments requested were sent 8/21/2012 at 7:55 a.m.