ESEA Flexibility

Peer Panel Notes

State Request: Connecticut

Date: 3/28/12

REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF REQUESTS

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) will use a review process that will include both external peer reviewers and staff reviewers to evaluate State educational agency (SEA) requests for this flexibility. This review process will help ensure that each request for this flexibility approved by the Department is consistent with the principles, which are designed to support State efforts to improve student academic achievement and increase the quality of instruction, and is both educationally and technically sound. Reviewers will evaluate whether and how each request for this flexibility will support a comprehensive and coherent set of improvements in the areas of standards and assessments, accountability, and teacher and principal effectiveness that will lead to improved student outcomes. Each SEA will have an opportunity, if necessary, to clarify its plans for peer and staff reviewers and to answer any questions reviewers may have during the on-site review. The peer reviewers will then provide comments to the Department. Taking those comments into consideration, the Secretary will make a decision regarding each SEA's request for this flexibility. If an SEA's request for this flexibility is not granted, reviewers and the Department will provide feedback to the SEA about the components of the SEA's request that need additional development in order for the request to be approved.

This document provides guidance for peer review panels as they evaluate each request during the on-site peer review portion of the review process. The document includes the specific information that a request must include and questions to guide reviewers as they evaluate each request. **Questions that have numbers or letters represent required elements.** The italicized questions reflect inquiries that reviewers will use to fully consider all aspects of an SEA's plan for meeting each principle, but do not represent required elements.

In addition to this guidance, reviewers will also use the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*, including the definitions and timelines, when reviewing each SEA's request. As used in the request form and this guidance, the following terms have the definitions set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*: (1) college- and career-ready standards, (2) focus school, (3) high-quality assessment, (4) priority school, (5) reward school, (6) standards that are common to a significant number of States, (7) State network of institutions of higher education, (8) student growth, and (9) turnaround principles.

Review Guidance

Consultation

1. Did the SEA meaningfully engage and solicit input on its request from teachers and their representatives?

   ➢ *Is the engagement likely to lead to successful implementation of the SEA's request due to the input and commitment of teachers and their representatives at the outset of the planning and implementation process?*

   ➢ *Did the SEA indicate that it modified any aspect of its request based on input from teachers and their representatives?*

   Consultation Question 1 Panel Response
   Tally of Peer Responses: 5 Yes, 1 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• The Connecticut Department of Education (CDE) provides evidence of efforts and activities conducted specifically to invite and enable teachers and their representatives to provide input and feedback on the waiver request. Many of these input initiatives build upon work that was already in progress around state level education reforms. The work described in this request began before the waiver option was announced. CDE used multiple methods, including a statewide survey, to engage teachers and other stakeholders in establishing a baseline for change. Data from the various measures are presented in the flexibility request and used to validate decisions in the design process. There are plans to continue to engage these groups to provide formative feedback and monitor the implementation progress.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Strengths	- CDE's future plans include continuing to engage stakeholders over the life of the waiver to ensure that this change works for Connecticut. - CDE used several forums to invite and enable teachers and their representatives to provide input and feedback on the flexibility request, including: meetings with state leaders of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) and the - Connecticut American Federation of Teachers (AFTCT); committees and councils made up of teacher unions and administrators; commissioner's Listening Tour at schools and school districts across the state; a baseline statewide survey of superintendents; public comment sessions at a regional facility open to everyone, with invitations sent to individuals and groups; and an ESEA Flexibility Waiver webpage on the CDE website and an e-mail address specific for providing input on ESEA Flexibility waiver (title1waivers@ct.gov). - Consultation sessions were diverse in format, well structured, and CDE's flexibility request demonstrates that the input stakeholder groups provided was used in developing and revising this flexibility request. - Opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the development of the plan occurred in a variety of settings, locations, and modalities. - CDE provided examples of changes as a result of the input, including information that a statewide survey of superintendents directly influenced the education agenda outlined in the request.. (See list of activities, groups, and dates on pp. 16 and 23). - Additionally, there is evidence that CDE took this opportunity to reflect upon and change its practices regarding regulations, funding and support to schools.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	Some peers felt that the focus of the outreach was teachers' representatives, rather than direct conversations with teachers (p. 17, para. 3). Table I describes input activities, however, it is not clear how many people participated or which ideas were generated or refined.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should use a broader range of channels to reach more teachers in seeking a diverse range of teacher views. • CDE should continue to document input and describe how it guides implementation and design; ensure appropriate methods for communicating this cycle of continuous improvement and collaboration with educators to assure them that they play a meaningful role in the major initiatives the CDE has planned. • The statewide survey and the well-structured flexibility web site used by CDE could be useful as models to other SEAs seeking to gain broad input and establish a baseline.

2. Did the SEA meaningfully engage and solicit 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?

   ➤ *Is the engagement likely to lead to successful implementation of the SEA's request due to the input and commitment of relevant stakeholders at the outset of the planning and implementation process?*

   ➤ *Did the SEA indicate that it modified any aspect of its request based on stakeholder input?*

   ➤ *Does the input represent feedback from a diverse mix of stakeholders representing various perspectives and interests, including stakeholders from high-need communities?*

Consultation Question 2 Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 4 Yes, 2 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE appears to have placed emphasis on the input of all stakeholders as the request describes and documents efforts to solicit and respond to the input of diverse stakeholders. • Involvement of students and English Learners and their families was not described.
Strengths	• Communication inviting stakeholders was widely distributed; a flexibility website and e-alerts were used to continuously share information with stakeholders. • Some peers felt that the flexibility waiver request appeared to build on significant input from teachers and administrators representing both urban and rural settings. This included input from teachers and administrators who are serving English Learners and students with disabilities. Furthermore, demonstrates a strategy to gain input from students, parents, and community organizations and leaders (Table 1, pp. 17-22). • Input received was used to make modifications in the request. Outcome of the consultations are presented in ESEA Flexibility Principle 1. The listing of activities was extensive, beginning in September 2011 and involving the Governor, Commissioner of Education, a statewide survey of superintendents, a statewide workshop, and many other meaningful events. • Establishment of the P-20 Council to focus on preparing students for college and careers has increased collaboration, information sharing, and planning among stakeholders from early childhood through higher education and workforce trainers. • CDE has implemented several changes to ensure success, including: partnership with Achieve, development of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI), some re-organization of CDE, engaging partners in developing and delivering specific and targeted professional development.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE has provided limited evidence of meeting with parents or community members of English Learners. • CDE presented some evidence of changes made based on feedback from educator groups; however, it is difficult to discern what changes were made based on specific input from community-based groups and organizations.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should clarify what changes were made specifically as a result of input from teachers, their representatives, and community-based groups and organizations. • CDE should provide and/or document opportunities for involvement of parents of English Learners through further development and implementation of its flexibility request.

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

Note to Peers: Staff will review 1.A Adopt College-And Career-Ready Standards, Options A and B.

1.B   Transition to college- and career-ready standards

1.B   **Part A:** Is the SEA's plan to transition to and implement college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the 2013−2014 school year realistic, of high quality?

Note to Peers: See ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance for additional considerations related to the types of activities an SEA includes in its transition plan.

1.B Panel Response, Part A
Tally of Peer Responses: 6 Yes, 0 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE has a clear timeline for implementation of college and career-ready standards. • In July 2010, CDE adopted the common core state standards (CCSS) and has focused on awareness, professional development, and curriculum development with its districts to ensure implementation. CDE also conducted a thorough standards comparison study to identify alignment between its existing standards and CCSS. CDE has provided various types of professional development and support for teachers and administrators. • CDE has also endorsed a definition of college and career readiness (January 2009) and established a P-20 Council charged with a mandate to prepare students for college and careers. • Since CDE began quite early on this path of change, it is realistic to think it will be able to implement college and career ready standards in 2013-2014.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Strengths	• CDE's strategy links to and builds upon both the new standards initiative and recognition of the need to reorganize its SEA in an effort to reduce gaps in achieving the new standards. An alignment study between CDE's standards and CCSS standards reveals a strong relationship between the two. • The P-20 Council was established in 2009 to address college and career readiness and increase collaboration, information sharing, and planning in CDE from early childhood through workforce trainers. • It is clear that CDE views CCSS implementation as a process and not an event; CDE is using a tiered approach to support CCSS implementation, recognizing that different target audiences have unique needs and require specialized support. CDE's CCSS leadership team has developed an implementation plan that consists of four key areas: communication and public outreach, curriculum frameworks and materials, professional development, and assessment. Each key area is intended to work in tandem and complement each other (Table 1.3 on p. 36 for examples of CDE's support to PK–16 educators and other stakeholders) and is designed to build ownership and capacity among relevant stakeholders. CDE's CCSS leadership team, associate commissioners, bureau chiefs, content area staff, and many local partners including Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) and districts are designing a self-assessment tool to help monitor the implementation process (p. 32). • Data on the state context are provided throughout the document, making it easy to see how the request is aligned with state characteristics and needs. CDE cited achievement gap baselines (p. 25). CTs Governor declared 2012 the "year for education reform", which indicates strong support for education reform from the highest levels of state government. In CDE's reorganization, the Chief Accountability Officer (CAO) will be charged with implementation of CCSS. CDE has also infused CCSS throughout science, social studies, and technical subjects.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE's training in English Language Arts (ELA) seemed somewhat limited even though the discrepancy between current standards and CCSS standards is greater in this area than in mathematics. • There is no description of how CDE will promote Institute IHE transition beyond collaboration on professional development (PD) for teachers and pre-service candidates (i.e., plans to use Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment for entrance requirements; revision of coursework and certification standards to align with CCSS). • Although CDE has an Alternate Assessment based on Modified Academic Achievement Standards (AA-MAAS) there is no evidence or activities described regarding transition for those students or their teachers toward the traditional assessment which will be administered in 2014-2015.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• Spell out clearly the role CDE plays in encouraging its Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to move toward transition and alignment with CCSS. Consider developing clear plans for collaboratively developed expectations for IHEs transition to CCSS and how CDE plans to revise teacher certification standards to align with CCSS. • CDE should describe activities for transition for students for taking the AA-MAAS. • CDE should assess the confidence levels of ELA personnel to implement the new standards and monitor whether additional training is needed.

Part B: Is the SEA's plan likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with the college- and career-ready standards?

Note to Peers: See ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance for additional considerations related to the types of activities an SEA includes in its transition plan.

1.B Panel Response, Part B
Tally of Peer Responses: 6 Yes, 0 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• Special attention is given throughout the request to closing the achievement gap and to addressing the needs of English Learners and students with disabilities. CDE recognizes the need for greater capacity to train teachers as well as support schools and districts to effectively deliver new learning content and identify strategies for doing so. • Beginning in 2010, CDE has focused on building its capacity to support training and technical assistance, aligning the CCSS with ELL and Career Technical Education (CTE) standards, supporting educators of English Learners and students with disabilities, creating instructional materials to support curriculum development in districts, and engaging stakeholders across the state. With this foundation in place, CDE plans to continue to offer regional professional development through collaboration with local partners, provide technical assistance on CCSS-based curriculum, transition to new assessment items, and continue communication with educators, districts, and other stakeholders (p.36).

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Strengths	• Data are provided on the demographic and achievement characteristics of English Learners and students with disabilities. Special support is offered to teachers of those students in general and special classrooms. A timeline for activities for English Learners and students with disabilities is provided which is both extensive and strategic. There are strong ties with other state and national efforts. There are efforts to coordinate across all CDE divisions to promote timely and effective support to local educational agencies (LEAs). • CDE is a part of the State Collaborative on English Language Acquisition which will develop common expectations for English Leaners that align with the CCSS. • CDE is working with teachers of English Learners and other experts to provide a crosswalk between the English Learners framework to CCSS for the five percent of Connecticut students who are English Learners. CDE has created a high school level team to support the 12 percent of students with disabilities in addressing CCSS standards. • Efforts to expand accelerated learning initiatives focus on low-income students. These include Project Opening Doors, Bridges Program, Advanced Placement Incentive Program, and Dual Enrollment. • CDE has also proposed to develop a readiness assessment for high school juniors to better diagnose remediation needs before graduation (p. 58). • CDE created documents with Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), bilingual, and ELA experts to identify instructional links between CCSS and English Learners Framework indicators, so district professionals can have meaningful ways to help students access CCSS regardless of their English language proficiency.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• There are so many initiatives being implemented, it was difficult to understand how they would be coordinated or how they might complement each other. • Ongoing monitoring of the success of these transition efforts and plans for low-achieving students, English Learners, and students with disabilities are not specifically mentioned, though these students may be part of CDE's implementation monitoring tool (p. 32).

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should ensure that there is a clear process for assessing successful transition and support for low-achieving students, English Learners and students with disabilities through the implementation-monitoring tool and other methods determined in collaboration with relevant stakeholder groups. • CDE should provide a "roadmap" of initiatives to illustrate how components of the plan work together to support implementation of CCSS and promote college and career readiness.

1.C   Develop and Administer Annual, Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth

1.C   Did the SEA develop, or does it have a plan to develop, annual, statewide, high-quality assessments, and corresponding academic achievement standards, that measure student growth and are aligned with the State's college- and career-ready standards in reading/language arts and mathematics, in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school, that will be piloted no later than the 2013–2014 school year and planned for administration in all LEAs no later than the 2014–2015 school year, as demonstrated through one of the three options below? Does the plan include setting academic achievement standards?

Note to Peers: Staff will review Options A and C.

If the SEA selected Option B:
If the SEA is neither participating in a State consortium under the RTTA competition nor has developed and administered high-quality assessments, did the SEA provide a realistic, high-quality plan describing activities that are likely to lead to the development of such assessments, their piloting no later than the 2013–2014 school year, and their annual administration in all LEAs beginning no later than the 2014–2015 school year? Does the plan include setting academic achievement standards?

1.C, Option B Panel Response

☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 1.C, Option A or Option C*

Tally of Peer Responses: X Yes, X No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

Principle 1 Overall Review

Is the SEA's plan for transitioning to and implementing college-and career-ready standards, and developing and administering annual, statewide, aligned high-quality assessments that measure student growth, comprehensive, coherent, and likely to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement? If not, what aspects are not addressed or need to be improved upon?

Principle 1 Overall Review Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 6 Yes, 0 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE has articulated a clear plan based on stakeholder input, reorganized the CDE to aid implementation, obtained the support of CTs Governor, LEAs, RESCs, IHEs, and other partners, and developed a strategy for monitoring implementation. CDE's plan is designed around increasing achievement, improving college and career readiness, and reducing achievement gaps. Students with disabilities and English Learners are specifically addressed throughout the plan, including in the area of assessment. CDE has a plan for monitoring and sustaining progress. The reduction of duplication and unnecessary burden on districts is a key focus of the plan.
Strengths	• CDE's plan for the transition to the new standards and assessment began early (in 2009), is thorough and well laid out with numerous communication channels, including a statewide survey to establish a baseline, and opportunities for input and ongoing improvement. • CDE conducted a crosswalk between CCSS and current state standards and results have been shared with the public and used to inform transition plans. A tiered and sequenced transition plan is evident and places emphasis on regional support and developing local capacity. In addition to math and ELA, CDE is working to align Science, Social Studies, and career and technical education (CTE) standards and offerings to the skills and rigor required by CCSS. • CDE's approach to implementing CCSS is well articulated and supported by Governor Malloy. • CDE's reorganization and strategies to develop capacity for training and support indicate that CDE is aware that it will take heightened efforts to achieve the desired level of improvement. CDE has a detailed plan for transition to the next generation of assessments. • The proposal suggests that CDE recognizes the differing implementation requirements at the high school level.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE's involvement of parents and students could be strengthened to include parents beyond those parents who may be members of an advocacy group, particularly for English Learners. • Much of the plan is dependent upon CDE's capacity to provide train-the-trainer and other development offerings; while the request mentions a reorganization at CDE to align with these new, intense efforts, it is not clear how the work will be managed at the state level and how adequate capacity will be apportioned to monitor and execute the extensive transition and implementation plans. • Training for ELA seems somewhat limited even though it has the biggest discrepancies in alignment with the college and career ready standards.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should consider including additional descriptions of how it will manage the work and appropriate capacity and funds to retired support educators (pp. 46-47), regional offices, IHEs, etc. • CDE should explore external models and/or seek technical assistance in efforts to transition at the high school level.

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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   Did the SEA propose a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, and a high-quality plan to implement this system no later than the 2012–2013 school year, that is likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students? (*note to Peers, please write to this question after completing 2.A.i.a and 2.A.i.b*)

2.A.i Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 6 Yes, 0 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	- CDE expands school accountability to include writing and science for all grades assessed. CDE cites compelling data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and its own assessment to verify the need to improve subgroup performance. The strategy provides incentives and intervention supports to its objective to raise the performance to the "Goal" level. The strategy includes recognition for reward schools as well specifying appropriate supports for priority and focus schools (pp. 67 – 68). - CDE's request reflects a sense of urgency to implement the changes necessary to improve student performance and reduce achievement gaps. The plan requires higher rates of growth for historically underperforming subgroups and reduces the minimum n-size to allow for more inclusive accountability calculations.

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Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Strengths	• CDE presents a coherent and comprehensive plan to hold all schools accountable for improved performance across all subgroups. The decision to reduce the n-size for school reporting from 40 to 20 will increase validity of school level data by capturing more students in the accountability system. • The system includes both accountability and incentives and will use Accountability Performance Targets and Aspirational Performance Targets for all schools and subgroups. The primary metric will be Student Performance Index (SPI) with a goal of all students and subgroups achieving an SPI of 75 and reduce the state's performance deficit by half by 2018.. CDE will recognize "Schools of Distinction". CDE provides plans for increased financial support for schools which need it most. The Chief Performance Officer (CPO) will lead the accountability efforts. The Chief Turnaround Officer (CTO) will work with Turnaround Schools. • A Commissioners Network, Turnaround Team, and Performance Teams are being established to provide support to districts. • CDE's proposed intervention has a strong emphasis on improving student academic achievement and closing the achievement gaps, and requires three years of sustaining student improvement to exit priority and focus school status.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE's statement suggesting that schools with fewer than twenty students would not be included in the calculation indicates possible confusion between confidentiality in reporting versus the inclusion of all students in the data set calculations. The narrative does not discuss cautions in the review and release of results based on small numbers. • The plan for implementation contains many new entities and the rollout may have some challenging obstacles to be resolved. • It is unclear whether the local communities understand the recognition designations and what these distinctions mean.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE may need technical assistance in relation to the inclusion of small populations of students in the calculations.

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 LEAs 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 identified 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 the performance and progress of all subgroups?

2.A.i.a Panel Response

Tally of Peer Responses: *6 Yes, 0 No*

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE's system has three components: a new set of measures for school performance and growth, a new classification system for schools, and an intensive intervention strategy to produce desired improvement. The system contains measures of student achievement, student growth, college and career readiness as measured by graduate rates, and subgroup performance on all metrics. School climate measures are also included. • CDE cites evidence from NAEP to document lower performing subgroup gaps, and presents a strategy to transform low performing schools, as well as support all other schools to uncover new practices to raise student performance. • CDE has included student achievement, graduation rates and school performance and progress in its plan.

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Strengths	• CDE's plan includes the creation of an SPI as a common metric for describing performance and tracking changes in student performance across proficiency levels and over time. The SPI will enable schools to see clearly patterns of progress or stagnation at both the school and subject levels. • CDE's new accountability system has been implemented for a year. A detailed description of SPI calculation is provided and data on the first year of implementation are included in the request. It is clear from the data that the target SPI of 75 represents a shift toward higher expectations and that CDE acknowledges it has a lot of work to do, especially for English Learners and students with disabilities. CDE also conducted a series of studies on the relationship between the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) performance assessments and the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), college grade point average (GPA), and postsecondary degree attainment. Goals are clearly stated and various scenarios based on data are presented. There are plans to monitor the impact of SPI on reporting low performing students. • CDE elected to reduce the minimum threshold for school-level subgroup size, n-size, from 40 to 20 to ensure that more students are included in its accountability calculations. • CDE has set a clear standard for different aspects of its accountability system, specifically school classification. CDE's school classification system ensures that high performance is meaningful and accurate by reserving the top classification for schools that exhibit the highest performance across categories (Table 2.11, p. 92R).
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE is challenged to ensure transparency and to build understanding among educators and the public on the use of SPI in its accountability system.

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE may need technical assistance to ensure the integrity/stability of the SPI metric as new assessments are added. • While it is laudable to extend accountability to additional subjects, including writing and science, CDE should take care to ensure that stakeholders understand how student performance in writing and science will be incorporated in school performance. • CDE should continue to monitor the impact of use of a "high-needs" subgroup and a compensatory model to prevent negative consequences to students and ensure that all students are included and well served.

b. Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system create incentives and provide support that is likely to be effective in closing achievement gaps for all subgroups of students?

2.A.i.b Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 5 Yes, 1 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• The components being implemented hold promise for having a positive impact on closing gaps for all subgroups of students. • CDE describes launching a Commissioner's Network which is intended to provide a system of supports and interventions aimed at improving chronically low-performing schools. This initiative appears to be supported by creating CDE-level positions of CPO and CTO with specific responsibility for supporting schools to improve performance (pp. 68-70). • CDE will provide more support and monitoring for provision of services to students with disabilities and English Learners and their teachers in an effort to promote higher levels of performance in line with college and career ready expectations. • The accountability system proposes meaningful ways of identifying, recognizing, and sharing the best practices of high performing schools and districts across the state, including those serving low-achieving students, students with disabilities, and English Learners. Similarly, all schools will be provided with information and resources to drive continuous improvement.

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Strengths	• Subgroup performance and growth are key indicators in the school classification system and support mechanisms. • CDE will recognize "Schools of Distinction" in one of three ways: by achieving the highest levels of performance with traditionally underperforming subgroups of students; by increasing the performance of students – especially the students who are most behind – by substantially more than the accountability system requires; or by driving the growth of their low-performing students at rates that put them on a trajectory to move two performance bands within six years. CDE will further recognize schools that sustain high performance, change in performance, or growth for a three-year period by awarding monetary grants coupled with the responsibility to share best practices with lower-performing schools (p. 67). All schools however, will be classified in one of five categories and receive appropriate levels of support accordingly. CDE's approach emphasizes aligned support and recognition coupled with building capacity at the local and regional levels (p. 69). • CDE's proposed system emphasizes sharing strategies that are bringing the desired results.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE provides limited information regarding the representation of subgroups in its overall accountability system (e.g., CDE's high risk aggregate subgroup as compared to its individual subgroups).
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should provide greater specificity regarding the representation of subgroups in its overall accountability system. • CDE should ensure continued dialogue about the new accountability system with all educators and stakeholders particularly with English Learners, students with disabilities, and parents of low-achieving students.

c. *Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.A.i.c*
Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.A.ii Option A.

ONLY FOR SEAs SELECTING OPTION B: If the SEA elects to include student achievement on assessments other than reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system by selecting Option B, review and respond to peer review questions in section 2.A.ii. If the SEA does not include other assessments, go to section 2.A.iii.

2.A.ii   Did the SEA include 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?

   a.   Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.A.ii.a

   b.   Does the SEA's weighting of the included assessments result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve the State's college- and career-ready standards?

   c.   Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.A.ii.c

2.A.ii.b PANEL RESPONSE

☐ Not applicable because the SEA selected 2.A, Option A

Tally of Peer Responses: 6 Yes, 0 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE's proposed system appears to take a sound approach to incorporating rigorous science and writing assessments in addition to the reading and math assessments given across grades and school levels.
Strengths	• Table 2.5 provides a description of the SPI calculation (p. 80). The SPI provides a common metric for viewing progress of schools, and subgroups achieving AMO targets. Table 2.6 presents the baseline based on 2010 performance results (p.81). The SPIs capacity to measure change provides schools with evidence of student movement across the four defined thresholds (i.e., from Basic to Proficient). Being able to show progress toward the "Goal" across thresholds provides a measure of success, rather than encouraging discouragement by the distance to the final target. • SPIs are weighted equally across all four subjects and averaged for the overall SPI in high schools and proportionately in elementary and middle schools, depending on the number of tested students in each subject (p. 80).
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• None indicated.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• None indicated.

2.B   Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives

2.B   *Note to Peers: Staff will review Options A and B.*

Did the SEA describe the method it will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics, for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups, that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts through one of the three options below?

If the SEA selected Option C:
Did the SEA describe another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups?

   i.   Did the SEA provide the new AMOs and the method used to set these AMOs?

   ii.   Did the SEA provide an educationally sound rationale for the pattern of academic progress reflected in the new AMOs?

   iii.   If the SEA set AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup, do the AMOs require LEAs, schools, and subgroups that are further behind to make greater rates of annual progress?

   iv.   Did the SEA attach 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? (Attachment 8)

➤   *Are these AMOs similarly ambitious to the AMOs that would result from using Option A or B above?*

➤   *Are these AMOs ambitious but achievable given the State's existing proficiency rates and any other relevant circumstances in the State?*

➤   *Will these AMOs result in a significant number of children being on track to be college- and career-ready?*

2.B, Option C (including Questions i–iv) Panel Response

☐ Not applicable because the SEA selected 2.B, Option A or Option B

Tally of Peer Responses: 3 Yes, 3 No

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Rationale	• CDE's methodology for calculating and monitoring the SPI approach in conjunction with other performance measures (p. 78) appears to be thoughtful, including analysis and risk mitigation over time as the system is implemented (p. 84). As part of that analysis and attempt to mitigate risk, CDE should particularly review the allocation of student-level points as calculated for school-level designations.
Strengths	• The approach proposed attempts to capture a holistic picture of achievement and growth at the school and district level by including SPIs, change in SPIs, student growth, graduation rate and sub-group performance (p. 78). CDE is also taking measures to ensure that implementation does not cause unintended consequences for low-performing students and thus has commissioned an external study to monitor the point system that undergirds the new SPIs (pp. 83-84). • The criteria of SPI at 75 definitely represents an ambitious shift to higher standards and will result in a significant number of children being on track for college and career readiness. CDE has generated trajectories for different subgroups and types of schools. CDE recognizes that the amount of improvement that will be needed is significant, especially for students with disabilities and English Learners subgroups.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE's approach could be challenging to communicate and report to educators and the public. • There is a disconnect between CDE's stated goals (p. 74) and the compensatory nature of CDE's system for school designations, which may mask individual student or subgroup performance needs and the assignment of interventions and supports.

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• Though there appear to be plans in place to vet the new reports (p. 98), care will need to be taken to communicate and report information to both educators and the public, especially as changes are made to the new system. It will be important for educators and stakeholders to understand the new metric and data reports, as well as the plans to provide targeted interventions and supports. • CDE should demonstrate to the United States Department of Education (Department) that its proposed shift to a compensatory based accountability system will not unintentionally allow high performance by some groups to mask low performance by other groups. CDE should provide empirical evidence that its system is sensitive to subgroup performance in a way that ensures identification and service delivery that is appropriate to the needs of subgroups. For example, CDE might reconsider the point designation at the student level and/or put in another check on its system prior to determining school level designations.

2.C   Reward Schools

2.C.i   Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as reward schools?

2.C.i PANEL RESPONSE NA

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Rationale	• CDE's attempt to focus on subgroup performance is laudable; however, CDE's methodology for determining reward schools does not align with the ESEA flexibility guidance definition, particularly as it relates to all student performance and graduation rate requirements.
Strengths	• CDE's methodology appears to provide continued motivation for high-performing schools to improve performance over time, especially as it relates to subgroup performance.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• Based on the ESEA flexibility definition, CDE's method for designating highest-performing schools does not take into account the performance of all students. Additionally, CDE's methodology does not include graduation rate.

Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.C.ii.

2.C.iii Are the recognition and, if applicable rewards, proposed by the SEA for its highest-performing and high-progress schools likely to be considered meaningful by the schools?

> ➤ *Has the SEA consulted with LEAs and schools in designing its recognition and, where applicable, rewards?*

2.C.iii PANEL RESPONSE

Tally of Peer Responses: 5 Yes, 1 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE describes a multilayered reward/recognition for schools, including: Schools of Distinction – with recognition for progress with under-performing subgroups, high-performing subgroup, highest-progress, and highest-growth schools (pp. 101-104). • CDE will provide incentives to schools for high performance and/or progress with recognition and monetary awards. CDE consulted with stakeholders to determine the most meaningful recognition for schools and used feedback to design the program. • CDE has worked to design incentive and recognition plans that are meaningful and likely to encourage high performance for all schools. • CDE consulted with stakeholders to determine the most meaningful recognition and reward for schools which led to changes in the design of the program, specifically, the creation of partnerships among reward, focus and priority schools.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Strengths	• CDE's recognition system includes both public acknowledgement and grants ($50,000 to $250,000) for Schools of Distinction showing sustained growth. The recognition also includes an opportunity for teacher/administrator sabbaticals allowing them to share experiences with other schools as a member of the state's turnaround team. • CDE has worked with educators to design a system of recognition and reward for its Schools of Distinction (p. 101). Incentives and rewards include creation of a network of high-performing schools that establish partnerships with lower-performing schools to serve as models and to share best practices. In addition, discretionary grants will be awarded, as funds allow, to schools making sustained progress. Finally, a year-long sabbatical will be awarded to one educator, chosen by staff at sustained high-performing schools; the chosen educators will be deployed as part of the state's turnaround team to support efforts at lower performing schools. • CDE's request includes criteria for identifying Reward schools and provides distinction for sustained progress.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE's recognition labels and criteria may not be readily understood by community members and parents. • Some peers expressed concern that – in tight budget times – CDE's proposal to reallocate funds from struggling schools to high-achieving schools should be reconsidered.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should be sure that schools and districts recognize the potentially transitory nature of discretionary grant funding and work to develop and emphasize the importance of more feasible and budget-neutral incentives and methods of recognition (e.g., public honors, year-long sabbaticals of chosen educators, etc.). • CDE should continue to be thoughtful about the purpose and expectation for use of the monetary awards and should also continue to engage stakeholders in this aspect of their reward system. • CDE should consider an awareness campaign to educate stakeholders about its reward labels and designations.

2.D   Priority Schools

Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.D.i and 2.D.ii.

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?

    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;

        (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;

        (iii) redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;

        (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;

        (v) using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data;

        (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

        (vii) providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement?

2.D.iii.a (including questions (i)-(vii)) Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 0 No, 6 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE presented a coherent and comprehensive approach to identifying and supporting schools identified as priority schools. The level of support is based on the SPI metric for identifying the lowest-performing schools and a diagnosis of the situation through the Commissioner's Network. The level of assistance may range from technical support to an intervention that replaces the governance and staffing of the schools. Identification and interventions of turnaround schools are scheduled to begin in 2012 and continue through the 2014-2015 school year. • CDE has included all of the interventions listed below to lead to systemic change in priority schools, including: evaluate current leadership and take necessary steps to ensure strong effective leadership, attract effective teachers, provide additional for student learning and teacher learning, strengthening the school's instructional program, using data to inform instruction and continuous progress, school climate, and ongoing mechanism for family and community engagement. • CDE's plan for priority, or turnaround, schools is thoughtful, comprehensive, and indicative of a real commitment to supporting change and improvement in CDE's lowest-performing schools. Plans are to be implemented for a minimum of three years. • CDE's intervention for turnaround schools includes all of the prescribed activities and is likely to increase the quality of instruction, improve leadership and teaching, and student achievement. • CDE's system of state support and interventions provided for the turnaround schools which are consistent with the turnaround principles.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Strengths	• CDE's plan includes several important elements and considerations including diagnosis, strong leadership, effective teachers, additional learning time, strong instruction, data, culture/climate, and community engagement (pp. 108-111). These elements give maximum flexibility and funding for executing successful improvement strategies. • The 19 current school improvement grant (SIG) schools will be automatically classified as Turnaround Schools. • CDE, through the creation of a turnaround organizational structure, is establishing its capacity to address directly the needs of its lowest-performing schools. Further, the turnaround process may access outside resources such institutions of higher education or charter school organizations, as needed. • CDE's turnaround teams will lead the design and administration of the strategies of the Commissioner's Network. This network will share best practices among schools. • CDE's plan, pending legislative approval, provides sufficient operational flexibility for principals through mutual consent and other provisions (p. 109). • CDE will survey families and communities in turnaround schools to assess climate and satisfaction with school and student performance. • CDE's plan includes strong wraparound services, including: health services, adult education, leadership development, social services, and other varied support services. • CDE's plan for turnaround schools is linked to its community schools initiative.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• It is unclear that there is sufficient information to evaluate the decision-making process for intervening in a school or school district. This is particularly important for understanding the decision to replace local governance or staff leadership. • It is unclear where the state capacity will reside for this work (i.e., CDE's central office? RESCs?). It is also not clear how the effectiveness of teachers will be determined in year one while CDE's new system is under development. • It is unclear whether any special training was provided for the members of the Commissioner's Network or the turnaround team.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should seek technical assistance from other states with intervention experience. • CDE should provide more detailed information about state and district appointed capacity for managing and executing the turnaround work to enable a more complete understanding and determination regarding the probability its success. • CDE should review its wording to avoid possible inferences of placing blame on families and communities for low student performance (p. 111).

b. Are the identified interventions to be implemented in priority schools likely to —

(i)   increase the quality of instruction in priority schools;

(ii) improve the effectiveness of the leadership and the teaching in these schools; and

(iii) improve student achievement and, where applicable, graduation rates for all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and the lowest-achieving students?

2.D.iii.b (including questions (i)-(iii)) Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 1 No, 5 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE begins the process with a comprehensive assessment program for setting the baselines to identify priority schools. CDE's SPI appears to increase the utility of current performance data by improving the capacity to track changes within and across proficiency benchmarks. • CDE will provide much support and intense professional development that will lead to improving the quality of instruction and providing leadership and teachers with skills to be more effective. There will be ongoing student data analysis of all students so instruction can be adjusted, as necessary. • The identified interventions are based upon CDE's experience with current SIG schools. • However, some peers felt that without explicit plans for addressing English Learners and students with disabilities, along with a need to describe how professional development will be tailored in year one, the proposed plan does not meet the above requirements.
Strengths	• CDE appears to be reallocating staff and adding new financial resources to address the needs of schools for improving performance. The focus of the intervention strategy on lower-performing subgroups is particularly promising. • CDE's turnaround schools will focus on, among other things, the quality of instructional programs (p. 110). This will involve piloting a new, personalized system of learning. Similarly, requirements for professional development will mean teachers and principals participate in evaluation-based professional development, which is largely embedded and tied directly to student outcomes and conducted at the school level. • Programming will be tailored to fit the specific needs of a school. • A menu of effective practices will be available. • Schools will address total school programming, including: assessment, school safety and climate, family and community engagement.

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Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• There is a lack of clarity around whether the turnaround team has the capacity to evaluate the ability to determine teacher and administrator effectiveness. • There is no mention of specific interventions and supports for English Learners and students with disabilities in the turnaround plans. It is unclear how evaluation-based professional development will be implemented prior to the new evaluation system's implementation in 2013. • Specifics regarding graduation rate for all students was not addressed to any degree.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should provide more information to assess the capacity of the turnaround team evaluation of teacher and administrator capacity in identified schools. • Turnaround plans need to address explicitly the supports and considerations of English Learners and students with disabilities in priority schools and how these schools will provide tailored professional development in the first year of the program, while the evaluation system is still in development.

c.   *Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.D.iii.c*

2.D.iv Does the SEA's proposed timeline ensure that LEAs that have one or more priority schools will implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each priority school no later than the 2014–2015 school year?

➢   *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?*

2.D.iv Panel Response

Tally of Peer Responses:0 No, 6 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE's plan builds on current program resources so that interventions will begin in the spring of 2012 and continue through 2014-2015. • CDE has presented a clear timeline of interventions for priority schools with turnaround principles. • The plans described in CDE's request assure that interventions will be implemented well before the 2014-2015 school year. • CDE provides a timeline (p. 113) based upon its current SIG experience.
Strengths	• Table 2.17, Intervention Timeline for Turnaround Schools, provides a listing of major milestones and completion dates. • CDE's plan ensures early implementation and monitoring each year for schools within the Commissioner's Network (p. 113). • Some peers felt that CDE adequately defined the roles and responsibilities of members of its turnaround team.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• Little detail was presented on the innovative compensation plans (p. 109).
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should give careful consideration to developing meaningful, sustainable compensation systems in support of turnaround schools.

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?

        ➢ *Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit priority status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?*

2.D.v and 2.D.v.a PANEL RESPONSE

Tally of Peer Responses: 3 No 3 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE exit requirements specify sustained improvement based on SPI, individual growth, and meeting targets for the graduation rate. • CDE will consider factors including making their SPI, individual growth, and graduation rates for three consecutive years. • CDE's exit criteria from priority status which include achievement and graduation rates requires sustained improvement. However, some peers felt the criteria were vague and needed further clarification.
Strengths	• Once exit status is met, districts may return to full governance. However, a district may choose to retain some of the Network supports. • Exit criteria appear directly linked to the state's new accountability system. • CDE's schools must demonstrate sustained improvement for a period of three years. • Implementation of the reform model will be evaluated.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE did not define "sufficient" in "sufficient progress" and "sustained" in "sustained improvement." (p. 114).
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should clarify the meaning of "sufficient" in "sufficient progress" and "sustained" in "sustained improvement" (p. 114). • CDE should clarify what risk mitigation will take place to ensure there are not a disproportionate number of turnaround schools in later years. • CDE should annually evaluate focus schools progress toward meeting exit criteria to determine whether additional interventions or supports are needed.

2.E   Focus Schools

Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.E.i, 2.E.i.a, and 2.E.ii

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? If the SEA's methodology is not based on the definition of focus schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but is instead, *e.g.*, based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), did the SEA also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department's "Demonstrating that an SEA's Lists of Schools Meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions" guidance?

      a.   Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.E.i.a.

      b.   Is the SEA's methodology for identifying focus schools educationally sound and likely to ensure that schools are accountable for the performance of subgroups of students?

2.E.i.b Panel Response

Tally of Peer Responses: 0 No, 6 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE will select the lowest 10 percent of schools based on SPI scores. This includes schools with high-needs subgroup which encompass English Learners, students with disabilities, and students eligible for free or reduced lunch. CDE has established that additional consideration is given to African-American and Hispanic subgroups (p. 117). • CDE's methodology places acute emphasis on gap analysis and sub group improvement (p.115). CDE has provided list of unidentified schools (p. 122).

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Strengths	• CDE reduced its minimum threshold for school-level subgroups, n-size, from 40 to 20. • CDE's methodology captures its lowest performing schools with respect to subgroups. • While a less intense intervention than the priority schools, CDE has provided a comprehensive plan for focus school intervention and support. This intervention is based on diagnosis and considers the capacity of the school and district to implement goal setting and other interventions. The process provides for a connection with the RESC. • CDE provided a list of its focus schools based upon 2011-2012 data as a means of validating the 10 percent rate of identification. • CDE created a high needs subgroup, including: English Learners, students with disabilities, and students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. • Schools with either an African-American and/or a Hispanic subgroup exhibiting an SPI below that of the highest high needs subgroup will be added to the focus school category.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• Although the creation of a high-needs subgroup does bring more students into the accountability system, it could make it more difficult to identify specific subgroup needs or target services to individual students within those subgroups.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should ensure that adequate safeguards are in place as part of its accountability system so that low-performing students and student groups are not masked by higher-performing students.

2.E.ii   *Note to Peers: Staff will review 2.E.ii*

2.E.iii   Does the SEA's process and timeline ensure that each LEA will identify the needs of its focus schools and their students and implement interventions in focus schools at the start of the 2012–2013 school year? Did the SEA provide examples of and justifications for the interventions the SEA will require its focus schools to implement? Are those interventions based on the needs of students and likely to improve the performance of low-performing students and reduce achievement gaps among subgroups, including English Learners and 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?*

➢ *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)?*

2.E.iii Panel Response

Tally of Peer Responses: 1 No 5 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• Table 2.18, Intervention Timeline for Focus Schools, establishes an expectation of the production of a list of identified schools by June 2012. This table describes milestones in the process through 2013 and beyond. • CDE has a timeline for focus school intervention and measures for districts to utilize for interventions, implementation for improvement plans, and support, monitoring, and professional development. CDE will provide professional development for specific subgroups; teachers of English Learners, students with disabilities, and target racial and ethnic subgroups. • CDE's focus schools are located in thirty Alliance districts which are eligible for increased funding. The State Performance Office (SPO) and State Turnaround Office (STO) are responsible for working together to support and monitor district progress. • CDE's districts and RESCs will provide primary support and guidelines for these schools.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Strengths	- CDE's plan provides a comprehensive decision-making model including data examination, analysis/diagnosis, goal setting, intervention selection, implementation planning, and monitoring (pp. 117-118). - CDE's plans are strong and cover appropriate elements for addressing subgroup performance (pp. 116-120). - CDE's methods also include differentiated interventions by subgroup and state sponsored workshops for targeting English Learners and students with disabilities. CDE's turnaround and performance offices appear to be a sound way to disseminate information and provide support services (p. 116). - Each focus school must submit a school improvement plan (SIP) that contains required elements.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	It is unclear how much of an emphasis focus schools will be required to have on performance of English Learners and students with disabilities, it seems that these groups may be addressed in the differentiated intervention plans. Details are not provided on the State Turnaround Office and Teams (i.e., where and how are they configured throughout the state?).
Technical Assistance Suggestions	Clarify information describing the State Turnaround Offices and Teams, as noted above.

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?

       ➤ *Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit focus status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?*

2.E.iv and 2.E.iv.a PANEL RESPONSE

Tally of Peer Responses: 0 No 6 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• The exit requirements specify that focus schools must meet the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) targets over a three year-period for the specific subgroups identified. In addition, high schools must meet graduation rate targets.
Strengths	• CDE's exit criteria are clear and aligned with accountability system. • Schools can achieve exit status when they have met their AMOs over a three-year period for the particular low-performing subgroup or subgroups that were the reason for their identification.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• None indicated.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should re-evaluate exit criteria after each year to ensure ambitious and achievable progress toward exit criteria. • CDE should annually evaluate focus schools' progress toward meeting exit criteria to determine whether additional interventions or supports are needed.

2.F   Provide Incentives and Support for other Title I Schools

2.F.i   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?

2.F.i Panel Response

Tally of Peer Responses: 5 No 1 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE intends to apply the accountability system to all its schools with consideration for Title 1 status. All schools will be classified as: Excellent, Progressing, Transition, Review, or Turnaround. It is unclear what intervention approaches are available for Transition schools.
Strengths	• CDE's five-category system of classifying school performance allows for intentional, differentiated levels of support and intervention (pp. 126-128). • This group of schools will be monitored by the district and supported by the RESCs.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE is lacking a mechanism to account for schools that may make significant gains or drops in performance during the three-year period, which may not be reflected in the levels of support and intervention. • It is not clear that CDE's AMOs inform interventions. • It is unclear which interventions are targeted for CDE's focus schools.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should consider ways to provide mid-course correction within the three-year period to modify the proposed system of differentiated support and intervention if a school's performance changes. • CDE should delineate the types of supports and interventions as they will be targeted to specific schools and subgroups.

2.F.ii   Are those incentives and supports likely to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for all students, including English Learners and students with disabilities?

2.F.ii Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 6 No 0 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE does not mention the specific interventions that will be targeted toward students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students.
Strengths	• CDE provided a strong list of activities for its Excelling Schools (p. 127). • CDE requires all schools to submit strategic plans and will provide the quantitative and qualitative tools to engage in continuous improvement.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• There may be small numbers of low-performing students at high-performing schools who are not recognized as needing significant interventions and thus may have instructional needs that go unaddressed. • CDE is silent on specific interventions for students with disabilities and English Learners.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should provide mechanisms to ensure that low-performing students in high-performing schools are identified and receive the services they need. • CDE should detail specific interventions for addressing the needs of students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students in this system of differentiated recognition. • CDE should provide information on the incentives and supports themselves, rather than simply providing its school classification process.

2.G   Build SEA, LEA, and School Capacity to Improve Student Learning

2.G   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?

    i.   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?

> *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?*

    ii.   Is the SEA's process for ensuring sufficient support for implementation of interventions in priority schools, focus schools, and other Title I schools under the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system (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?

    iii.   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?

2.G (including i, ii, and iii) Panel Response

Tally of Peer Responses: 0 No, 6 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE has taken important, comprehensive steps toward ensuring strong capacity at the state, regional, district, and school levels. This includes six regional support centers, funding mechanisms that facilitate additional district capacity, reorganization at CDE to align with delivery of services, ongoing support for high quality professional development through CALI and by removing barriers, screening external providers and ensuring appropriate mechanisms for district accountability (pp. 131-136).
Strengths	• CDE's RESCs, CALI, and innovative use of funding all represent best practices at the state level for facilitating capacity at the regional and local levels. • CDE is reorganizing itself to ensure success of the capacity building effort. Assuming that the legislature follows through with the funding, the CDE's Alliance Districts seem to be an effective strategy for working with the lowest performing districts. • The provision of professional development that focuses on sustaining district-level reform to close the achievement gap. • CDE will remove or modify policies and regulations that are barriers to school improvement initiatives. • CDE's Red Tape Task Force and reciprocity for out of state educators are support capacity building initiatives.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• None indicated.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• None indicated.

Principle 2 Overall Review

Is the SEA's plan for developing and implementing a system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support likely to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality of instruction for students? Do the components of the SEA's plan fit together to create a coherent and comprehensive system that supports continuous improvement and is tailored to the needs of the State, its LEAs, its schools, and its students? If not, what aspects are not addressed or need to be improved upon?

PRINCIPLE 2 OVERALL REVIEW PANEL RESPONSE

Tally of Peer Responses: 1 No 5 Yes

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE's waiver request requires CDE, as well as its schools and districts, to realign financial and staff resources to address documented significant performance gaps for subgroups. The differentiated accountability plan, reflects significant input from appropriate stakeholders, and appears to have substantial legislative and governmental support. This request builds on earlier initiatives and seeks to minimize or compensate schools for new burdens. • CDE has considered all steps necessary to develop and implement a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that will improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality of instruction. CDE has thought of student subgroup needs, leadership and teacher quality, ongoing professional development, incentives, and intense monitoring where needed, differences of schools to be considered. • CDE's system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support seems underdeveloped and lacks specific strategies for service to students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students.
Strengths	• CDE's proposed accountability system represents a significant shift to higher standards across multiple content areas and all grade levels. CDE is reorganizing to implement and support the academic improvement/accountability model. • A CDE cabinet level position, CTO, and staff will be responsible for supporting new practices in low-performing schools and districts. • CDE is increasing the capacity of SERC and RESC services to support the new initiative, including expansion of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). Additionally, CTs Governor is supporting a $39.5 million package to support CDE's lowest performing schools (30 Alliance Districts).

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• Supports and monitoring for schools other than priority and focus schools are unclear. Reward school methodology appears to be inconsistent with ESEA flexibility definitions. • CDE's system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support seems underdeveloped and lacks specific strategies for service to students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should further explicate supports and monitoring for schools other than priority and focus schools. • CDE should take full advantage of the resources and expertise available in various consortiums and national organizations.

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 two options below?

If the SEA selected **Option A**:
If the SEA has not already developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3:

i.   Is the SEA's plan for developing and adopting guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems likely to result in successful adoption of those guidelines by the end of the 2011–2012 school year?

3.A.i, Option A.i Panel Response

☐ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option B*

Tally of Peer Responses: 6 Yes, 0 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE has a plan and timeline to develop and adopt guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems in place. Framework for teacher and principal evaluations have been adopted and approved.
Strengths	• CDE's proposed guidelines include: development of a state model; a focus on student learning; professional development aligned to evaluation results; and a balance between state and local roles (p. 148). • Teachers will comprise the Advisory teacher Evaluation Work Group. • Principals will comprise the Advisory Administrator Evaluation Work Group. • Pupil Services personnel will comprise the Advisory Pupil Services and Implementation Work Group. • A timeline and relevant milestones seem to assure that proposed guidelines will be adopted by the end of SY 2011-2012.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• It is not clear how the state will monitor the fidelity of the implementation, both for the evaluation systems themselves, and for quality and success of linked professional development efforts. • CDE's plan appears to place the onus on educators to seek resources and support for improvement, instead of specifying LEAs and CDE's roles and responsibilities (p. 145).

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should provide evidence that use of formative assessments is appropriate for evaluation purposes. If there is no available evidence, CDE should consider removing the connection between formative assessments and evaluation (p. 142). • CDE should take care to determine clear plans and processes for monitoring implementation, including efforts to ensure inter-rater reliability, quality of professional development for teachers and principals and assessment of the relationship between measures (i.e., logical relationship between observation scores and student growth, etc.). • CDE should continue to specify and refine CDE and LEA roles and responsibilities (p. 145).

ii.   Does the SEA's plan include sufficient involvement of teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines?

3.A.i, Option A.ii Panel Response
☐ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option B*
Tally of Peer Responses: 5 Yes, 1 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• It appears that CDE has involved educators throughout the design process; this work should continue throughout the pilot and implementation phases with a range of opportunities and mechanisms for teacher engagement.
Strengths	• The state has created a committee, the PEAC, comprised of educators and stakeholders to guide the decision making process of establishing a state set of guidelines for evaluation and development. They also have plans to convene additional work teams of various educators to guide additional decisions around design and implementation (p.143). • CDE's district guidelines will require multiple student learning indicators.
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• It is not clear how many teachers and principals have participated and to what extent their ideas have been incorporated into the design and plans for implementation (p. 149).
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should continue to engage educators to inform the work and further develop the evaluation system. This is difficult work and is best guided by practitioners from the field.

iii.   *Note to Peers: Staff will review iii.*

If the SEA selected **Option B**:
If the SEA has developed and adopted all guidelines consistent with Principle 3:

i.   Are the guidelines the SEA has adopted likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement? (See question 3.A.ii to review the adopted guidelines for consistency with Principle 3.)

3.A.i, Option B.i Panel Response
☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: X Yes, X No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

ii.   *Note to Peers: Staff will review ii.*

iii.   Did the SEA have sufficient involvement of teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines?

3.A.i, Option B.iii Panel Response
☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: X Yes, X No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

ONLY FOR SEAs SELECTING OPTION B: If the SEA has adopted all guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by selecting Option B in section 3.A, review and respond to peer review question 3.A.ii below.

3.A.ii   Are the SEA's guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with Principle 3 — *i.e.,* will they promote systems that:

a.   Will be used for continual improvement of instruction?
  ➢   *Are the SEA's guidelines likely to result in support for all teachers, including teachers who are specialists working with students with disabilities and English Learners and general classroom teachers with these students in their classrooms, that will enable them to improve their instructional practice?*

3.A.ii.a Panel Response
☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

b.   Meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels?

  ➢   *Does the SEA incorporate student growth into its performance-level definitions with sufficient weighting to ensure that performance levels will differentiate among teachers and principals who have made significantly different contributions to student growth or closing achievement gaps?*

3.A.ii.b Panel Response
☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

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c.   Use multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys)?

(i)   Does the SEA have a process for ensuring that all measures that are included in determining performance levels are valid measures, 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?

3.A.ii.c(i) Panel Response
⊠ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

(ii)   For grades and subjects in which assessments are required under ESEA section 1111(b)(3), does the SEA define a statewide approach for measuring student growth on these assessments?

3.A.ii.c(ii) Panel Response
⊠ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

(iii) For grades and subjects in which assessments are not required under ESEA section 1111(b)(3), does the SEA either specify the measures of student growth that LEAs must use or select from or plan to provide guidance to LEAs on what measures of student growth are appropriate, and establish a system for ensuring that LEAs will use valid measures?

3.A.ii.c(iii) Panel Response
☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

d. Evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis?

3.A.ii.d Panel Response
☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*
Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

e. Provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development?
  ➢ *Will the SEA's guidelines ensure that evaluations occur with a frequency sufficient to ensure that feedback is provided in a timely manner to inform effective practice?*

  ➢ *Are the SEA's guidelines likely to result in differentiated professional development that meets the needs of teachers?*

3.A.ii.e Panel Response

☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*

Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

f. Will be used to inform personnel decisions?

3.A.ii.f Panel Response

☒ *Not applicable because the SEA selected 3.A, Option A*

Tally of Peer Responses: NA

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	NA
Strengths	NA
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	NA
Technical Assistance Suggestions	NA

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?

➢ *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?*

➢ *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?*

➢ *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 (i.e., process for ensuring inter-rater reliability)?*

➢ *Does the SEA have a process for ensuring that teachers working with special populations of students, such as students with disabilities and English Learners, are included in the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation and support systems?*

➢ *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?*

➢ *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?*

➢ *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?*

➢ *Is the pilot broad enough to gain sufficient feedback from a variety of types of educators, schools, and classrooms to inform full implementation of the LEA's evaluation and support systems?*

3.B Panel Response

Tally of Peer Responses: 5 Yes, 1 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• It is unclear whether CDE'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 CDE's adopted guidelines likely to lead to high-quality local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems • CDE will develop a timeline for districts with specific milestones and deadlines to ensure that districts have an appropriate evaluation system in place, or that it is piloted by 2013-2014 school year. CDE will provide written instructions to guide districts through the process of developing and implementing a new teacher and administrator evaluation systems • CDE will conduct a pilot to test components and requirements of the new evaluation systems and to identify districts' needs for technical assistance and ongoing support. • CDE's Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) agreed on the design for the state model for administrator evaluation in February, which will rely heavily on student learning measures and other high-quality measures of teacher and principal performance. The more detailed system that is in the process of being developed establishes a state model as well as standards for districts that wish to develop their own models. The state also has a thoughtful timeline for pilot and implementation phases. • CDE's plan of action is well developed with clear goals and activities. Goal 1 is complete and work on Goals 2 and 3 has begun. • An implementation timeline has been developed to guide the work that has to be done to lead to full implementation of the evaluation system by September 2014.

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Strengths	• CDE has a process for reviewing and approving an LEA's teacher and principal evaluation and support system to ensure consistency with CDE's guidelines and will result in the successful implementation of such systems – focus is appropriate (e.g,. on whether key components comply with core requirements and state standards; whether indicators are valid, reliable, fair and useful; whether the district involves stakeholders; and whether the design will allow systems to be compared across jurisdictions) (p. 151). • CDE's timeline calls for implementing these systems no later than the 2013☐-2014 school year. • CDE's plan for teacher and principal evaluation is built on sound principles for meaningful evaluation and linked to professional development. Statutory regulations require annual review of all educators and ensure that all districts will be required to implement a new system that heavily factors in student learning. A state model plan and resources will assist districts who do not have the capacity to develop a high-quality plan on their own, but allowing districts the option to develop their own plan also encourages ownership wherever possible. • There are a number of working groups to advise and monitor the development, implementation, and impact of the evaluation system. • Evaluation guidelines have been adopted by the Connecticut State Board of Education for teachers, administrators, and support personnel. • An implementation timeline has been developed. • Working groups have been established to work out some of the details and information required for implementation. • CDE has outlined a review process for approval of district evaluation models; indicated that a pilot will be conducted in ten to twenty districts in the fall of 2012; and established that a communication plan will be developed to share the reform vision and its implementation requirements with local leadership and stakeholders. • Additionally, CDE will provide the districts with training, materials, and support for implementation; and • use data from its pilot to refine the process before full state implementation.

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• CDE's process does not ensure that all measures used in its LEAs' evaluation and support systems are valid: meaning measures 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 (i.e,. CDE's process for ensuring inter-rater reliability is insufficient.) CDE has established a process and and intends to provide technical support which are necessary but not sufficient steps for achieving this goal (p. 155). • CDE did not include a process for ensuring that teachers working with special populations of students, such as students with disabilities and English Learners, are included in the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. • CDE did not clarify how teachers will be involved in the rollout. The description of "involvement" is very vague (p. 151). • CDE's plan for providing adequate guidance and other technical assistance to LEAs in developing and implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems is mixed. The train-the-trainer model (p. 153) is promising but the communication plan is weak (i.e., emails and a helpline). There is no evidence that CDE plans to use teacher-to-teacher communication, which might be more effective, as would in-person information in schools (p. 153). • Sections of CDE's timelines reflect a clear understanding of necessary steps and a logical sequencing and spacing of the key steps required to implement evaluation and support systems consistent with the required timelines; however, aspects of it could be improved. For example, six to eight weeks may be insufficient for the state review and approval process of district evaluation plans (p. 151) and three months may be insufficient for training for remaining evaluators and district personnel (p. 152). • CDE's plan does not appear to build in time for districts that propose alternate models to pilot their systems. Plans for establishing new growth measures may underestimate the time and effort needed to identify, develop and adequately train educators. CDE's training plans may need additional consideration to ensure transfer and inter-rater reliability of evaluators. CDE's monitoring alternate plans may be a challenge if districts are not able to enter real time data into CDE's data system. There does not appear to be formal plans in place to evaluate CDE's model system and adapt over time. It is not clear how results will be used to inform personnel decisions other than possibly through proposed tenure legislation. • Teachers of students with disabilities and English Learners are not mentioned specifically.

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should confirm that those charged with ensuring the indicators are "valid and reliable" are equipped to make this determination (p. 151). • CDE's pilot starts in the fall 2012; however, more information is needed regarding CDE's 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 (p. 152). • CDE should clarify how it plans to ensure inter-rater reliability (p. 154). • CDE should consider modifications to its timeline to allow sufficient time for state review and approval and for training of evaluators and district personnel. • CDE should ensure that teachers working with special populations of students, such as students with disabilities and English Learners, are included in the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. • CDE should add more information about the pilot – and whether it is broad enough to gain sufficient feedback from a variety of educators, schools, and classrooms to inform full implementation of the LEA's evaluation and support systems. • CDE should give careful consideration to the time and effort needed to establish high-quality growth measures for non-tested educators; no state has yet solved this issue entirely and it is wise to have a contingency plan for year one implementation if individual growth measures are not established for all educator types. Similarly, if Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are used, there is extensive training and monitoring that will be required to ensure fidelity of implementation and scaling of results. Especially in the face of implementation of a new system that requires new skills to implement more robust observations of teacher and principal performance, it may be challenging to also train and implement on time-intensive, challenging new growth measures. CDE should determine methods for ensuring inter-rater reliability of evaluators and determine plans for monitoring fidelity of implementation, including the relationship between observation scores and student learning measures. CDE should further consider stipulation for districts that elect to adopt their own plans but whose evaluation data do not appear to yield the expected spectrum of performance. If possible, CDE should partner with an external organization to perform annual review of CDE and district plans to inform changes to the systems over time. Finally, CDE should ensure that results are appropriately used to inform personnel decisions at the local level.

Principle 3 Overall Review

If the SEA indicated that it has not developed and adopted all guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with Principle 3 by selecting Option A in section 3.A, is the SEA's plan for the SEA's and LEAs' development and implementation of teacher and principal evaluation and support systems comprehensive, coherent, and likely to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement? If not, what aspects are not addressed or need to be improved upon?

If the SEA indicated that is has adopted guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with Principle 3 by selecting Option B in section 3.A, are the SEA's guidelines and the SEA's process for ensuring, as applicable, LEA development, adoption, piloting, and implementation of evaluation and support systems comprehensive, coherent, and likely to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement? If not, what aspects are not addressed or need to be improved upon?

Principle 3 Overall Review Panel Response
Tally of Peer Responses: 6 Yes, 0 No

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Rationale	• CDE has designed a plan for principal and teacher evaluation that includes involving districts in the baseline assessment of evaluation systems, developing guidelines for teacher and administrator evaluation, building out frameworks for a model teacher evaluation program, and establishing an advisory teacher evaluation work group, advisory administrator evaluation work group, and a development plan and timeline. • CDEs plan is coherent and includes the components necessary for a trial implementation in the pilot districts which may help to ensure a smoother statewide implementation.
Strengths	• CDE has a thoughtful plan and sequencing of design and implementation. CDEs plan offers a balance between state resources and standards coupled with locally determined design options. Districts may implement CDEs model or develop one of their own to be approved by the Connecticut State Board of Education. • CDE's work groups are addressing specifics for the groups of which they are a member; teacher administrator, and support staff. • CDE's principles for evaluation for each of the three groups of staff have been completed. • CDEs core requirements for district-developed evaluation and support systems have been developed.

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• More thought needs to be given to NTGS and monitoring fidelity of implementation for locally determined evaluation systems. • Six to eight weeks may be insufficient for CDE's proposed review and approval process and three months may be insufficient for remaining evaluators and district personnel (pp. 151-152).
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should consider methods for ensuring fidelity of implementation of all plans, high quality training and sustainability over time. • CDE should carefully consider the time allocated to the various training and reviews necessary to implement the evaluation system, and particularly for the pilot. • CDE should consider teacher-to-teacher communication, perhaps in the form of "champions" or "ambassadors", for teachers engaged in the pilot prior to the statewide use of the evaluation system.

Overall Request Evaluation

Did the SEA provide a comprehensive and coherent approach for implementing the waivers and principles in its request for the flexibility? Overall, is implementation of the SEA's approach likely to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement? If not, what aspects are not addressed or need to be improved upon?

Overall Request Evaluation Panel Response

Response Component	*Peer Panel Response*
Rationale	• CDE started early and has a thoughtful and detailed plan for implementation of CCSS that includes reading, math, science, and writing. CDE's plan sets a very high bar for student success. CDE has a demonstrated record of working with national thought leaders and other experts, consortia of states, and stakeholders within the state. CDE has appropriate strategies for including students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students within its proposed accountability system. CDE has a strong foundation for an evaluation system that is closely linked to professional development in a way that holds promise for promoting the ongoing improvement of instruction and student learning. CDE recognizes the importance and challenges of this work and has reorganized the SEA to achieve continued student performance gains. • However, much of CDEs proposal is dependent upon pending legislation.
Strengths	• CDE's plan for the transition to the new standards and assessments began early in 2009 and is thorough and well laid out with numerous communication channels, a statewide survey to establish the baseline, and opportunities for input and ongoing improvement. • Crosswalk between CCSS and current state standards was created early in the implementation process and the results have been shared with the public as well as used to inform transition plans. A tiered and sequenced transition plan is evident and places emphasis on regional support and developing local capacity. • CDE's proposed accountability system represents a significant shift to higher standards across multiple content areas and all grade levels. CDE is reorganizing to implement and support the academic improvement/accountability model. • CDE has a thoughtful plan and sequencing of design and implementation. CDE's plan offers a balance between state resources and standards coupled with locally determined design options. Districts may implement CDE's model or develop one of their own model based on state frameworks which must be approved by the SBE. • Work groups are addressing specifics for the group to which they belong (i.e., teacher, administrator, support staff.)

Response Component	Peer Panel Response
Weaknesses, issues, lack of clarity	• The involvement of parents and students appears to be minimal except for parents who may be members of an advocacy group. Training for ELA seems somewhat limited even though it has the biggest discrepancies in alignment with the college and career ready standards. • CDE's system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support seems underdeveloped and lacks specific strategies for serving students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students. • More thought needs to be given to NTGS and monitoring fidelity of implementation for locally determined evaluation systems.
Technical Assistance Suggestions	• CDE should further explicate supports and monitoring for schools other than those for priority and focus schools. • CDE should consider methods for ensuring fidelity of implementation of all plans, including high quality training and sustainability over time.