



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

MAR 20 2014

The Honorable Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1502
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Commissioner Stewart:

I am writing in response to the Florida Department of Education's (FLDOE) request for a waiver of the school eligibility requirements and the definition of persistently lowest achieving (PLA) schools for the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, as set forth in section I.A.1 and I.A.3 of the SIG final requirements (75 FR 66363 (Oct. 28, 2010)). If granted this waiver, the FLDOE would replace its PLA definition and lists of Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III schools in its approved fiscal year (FY) 2013 SIG application with its priority and focus schools' definitions and lists.

Based on the approval of the FLDOE's ESEA flexibility request and the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) review of the information provided by the FLDOE, I am pleased to inform you that I am granting the FLDOE's request to waive the school eligibility requirements and the definition of PLA schools for the SIG program. I am granting this waiver because the FLDOE demonstrated, through its request for ESEA flexibility, that its priority and focus school definition provides an acceptable alternative methodology for identifying the State's lowest-performing schools. By seeking a waiver through your approved FY 2013 SIG application, the FLDOE's priority and focus school definition is an appropriate replacement for the eligibility requirements and definition of PLA schools in the SIG final requirements. Consistent with this decision, the FLDOE may use its lists of priority and focus schools to determine eligibility for its FY 2013 SIG competition. If awarded, priority and focus schools must use the funds to implement one of the four approved SIG models.

I appreciate the work you are doing to improve the performance of Florida's persistently lowest-achieving schools and provide a high-quality education for all of your students. If you have any questions, please contact David Yi at david.yi@ed.gov or (202) 453-5674.

Sincerely,

Deborah S. Delisle

cc: Sam Foerster, Deputy Chancellor of Student Achievement and School Improvement
Shannon Houston, Senior Educational Programs Director