

UDL in Wisconsin's ESEA Waiver

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Meetings with representatives from the organizations above included conversations on the waiver in which specific input was invited regarding issues related to cell size, transitions to new assessments, incorporation of subgroups in the accountability index, and the importance of **Universal Design for Learning principles**, among other issues. The change in minimum group size used for accountability calculations from 40 to 20 is a direct result of input from the organizations listed above. Further, DPI paid particular attention to **Universal Design for Learning** and the importance of addressing specific needs of students with disabilities in developing transition plans for new standards and new assessments in the narrative of this application. Since initial submission of Wisconsin's Request for ESEA Flexibility, DPI has met with several of the groups listed above to discuss ongoing work to refine DPI's work on the major initiatives presented in this request. In one meeting with the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities, DPI staff spoke with Board members and learned about concerns related to the importance of providing assessment systems that give students different ways and multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do. DPI staff also presented at the statewide Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS) conference in the winter, sharing information and answering questions about the proposed changes to the accountability system, as well as gathering important input and feedback. Continued outreach and conversations with these key stakeholders are critical to the successful implementation of the accountability system, and the improvement of that system over time.

DPI maintains its commitment to ongoing consultation with these stakeholder groups and outreach in the form of presentations and dialogue with educators in the field.

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Recurring themes in survey responses, whether addressed in this waiver application or not, have been noted by DPI and will inform ongoing work of the agency. Some of these themes include:

- The importance of more and even better professional development, especially targeted for instruction of students with disabilities and English language learners, i.e., differentiating instruction
- Time should be allocated for teacher collaboration
- Linking individualized education plans with college- and career-readiness planning to personalized learning
- The value of using technology to engage students
- Including advanced students in planning as well as lower-performing students
- The importance of **Universal Design for Learning** and how this relates to specific accommodations
- Proposed use of portfolio assessments
- Need for more bilingual programs
- Increasing graduation requirements is important; consider including requirements for fine arts and foreign language credits; financial literacy should be a graduation requirement
- Linking graduation requirements to experiences outside the classroom (i.e., internships, workstudy, and service learning)
- More vocational training is important

- Parent participation is a key indicator in school and student success
- There should be flexibility to have longer school years or days
- Life skills are important in addition to academic skills
- Consider requirements for pre-service teachers to have coursework in instruction of students with disabilities and English language learners, and coursework in **Universal Design for Learning**

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This important work is complicated and it benefits greatly from the cooperation of so many diverse stakeholders across the state and around the country. The outline of these systems and the direction this waiver opportunity is taking Wisconsin has been affirmed many times over by stakeholders. The number of refinements to this ESEA Flexibility Request based on DPI's extensive consultation effort is too many to delineate in full, but there are several key ways in which DPI modified this proposal as a direct result of input or feedback: In addition to raising the mathematics and science credit requirements needed for graduation, DPI is advocating for 6.5 elective credits as a graduation requirement across the state, so that art, music, world languages, and technical courses may be a part of every student's high school experience. This is critical to Wisconsin teachers and families, and was a key finding of WEAC's Speak Out series discussed above. In order that more students are recognized and included in this accountability system, and to avoid the masking of small subgroup performance, DPI will change the cell size used for accountability calculations from 40 to 20. This was a priority for the disability advocacy groups in Wisconsin. A combined subgroup will be used when at least two of the binary subgroups (ELL, SwD, economically disadvantaged) do not meet cell size, in recognition of the need to closely monitor the performance of these traditionally high-need student groups. DPI will continue to incorporate **Universal Design for Learning** principles into planning and development of resources for standards implementation, assessments, and instructional practices. DPI will raise cut scores on current assessments to reflect higher expectations for students during the two-year transition between current and next generation assessment systems. DPI confirmed support for the plans to waive SES in lieu of other extended learning opportunities as well as having significant parental input as part of these plans.

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Theory of Action

An education system will only impact every student's future when it guarantees equal, yet individualized opportunities for all students. Driven by this knowledge, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will differentiate and personalize Wisconsin's education system to transform teaching and learning across the state. Differentiation and personalization—for both student and teacher—mark the difference between successfully educating some and successfully educating all students.

Accordingly, DPI has committed to a robust, sensitive, and impactful statewide accountability system, as demonstrated in the state's plans across the four Principles of this request.

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

A detailed, high-quality plan for implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that includes

- Foundational Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning;
- Partnerships with educational leaders, regional service agencies, and institutions of higher education;
- Formation of an innovative Center for Standards, Instruction, and Assessment to develop rigorous, online instructional resources for the CCSS and assessment systems;
- **Universal Design for Learning Principles**;
- Alignment with Wisconsin's Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS);
- Development, adoption, and implementation of the Essential Elements of the CCSS;
- Lessons learned from a productive partnership with the Wisconsin Response to Intervention Center, which provides excellent methods for differentiation and personalization.
- Wisconsin is transitioning to next generation assessment systems through three assessment consortia:

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While the RtI Center focuses on structures of support (i.e., a multi-level system of support that reaches every child), the SIA Center provides specific resources aimed at all classroom educators (those working with general education students, special education students, English learners, and students with gifts and talents, early learners all the way through high school students) and educational leaders. The SIA Center resources tackle the question for teachers of how to prepare each student to be college and career ready through the CCSS, CCEE, and stellar instructional practices. Resources for classroom educators will focus on how they can improve their practices; resources for principals will focus on how they can best support their classroom educators' improvement. The SIA Center's focus on improving instruction situates it well to provide resources that are focused on helping principals and other administrators serve as strong, instructional leaders in their schools. By aiming strictly to address classroom practices, the SIA Center is well suited to improve those practices by addressing the need for content-driven, integrated professional development for all educators and, as such, to improve outcomes for individual students. Center resources will be designed using research-based professional development practices as identified in the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning and **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles**. Specific resources will be designed to ensure that instruction and instructional materials are not just made accessible for all populations, but are in fact designed specifically to reach all students by removing potential barriers to learning and to instruction. **UDL** follows naturally from the Guiding Principles, and is a necessary component of all standards, content, and assessment planning in order to ensure that Wisconsin honors those principles.

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These transitions represent a new day for assessment in Wisconsin, one in which assessments that are used for accountability purposes are also designed in such a way as to provide useful, actionable, and timely data directly to educators to help inform classroom practices in an ongoing manner. Further, these assessment consortia, which are designing assessments using **UDL principles**, are dedicated to considering accessibility issues before, during, and after assessment development to ensure the assessments provide all students opportunities to

demonstrate what they know and can do by removing barriers that interfere with access to learning and content.

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Plan to Improve Instruction

Universal Design for Learning should be a component of Wisconsin's plan to address the needs of diverse learners across issues related to access to college and career ready standards; professional development; instructional materials and access and design of college preparatory courses.

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Overview of SEA's Request for the ESEA flexibility

- We strongly support the emphasis on **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles**.
- We support the proposed use of Dynamic Learning Maps as the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) and applaud Wisconsin's participation in this national consortium. However, we believe that DPI should not emphasize that these alternative assessments should be used on 1% of all students, as this perpetuates a myth that there is no need to make individualized determinations for children with the most significant disabilities who should be involved in this type of assessment. In addition, in Wisconsin, 1% of students do not take the AA-AAS currently, in fact the number is lower and 1% should not become a new target. Current U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) WI data assessment data (2009-2010) shows the percent of students with disabilities (SWD) on AA-AAS: 8.8% in Reading; 8.9% in Math. It is also important that Wisconsin refer to this group of students who may take the AA-AAS consistently throughout the application as "students with the most significant disabilities."

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DPI posted a draft waiver proposal on January 23 to elicit feedback over a two-week public comment period, after which DPI refined the proposal for submission to USED on February 22, 2012. Ongoing work with the US Department of Education has prompted additional clarifications to the waiver document. Accountability and other changes affecting schools and districts are included in this overview. Some specific changes or plans included in the final draft that are a direct response to stakeholder input are below:

- In addition to raising the mathematics and science credit requirements needed for graduation, DPI is advocating for 6.5 elective credits as a graduation requirement across the state, so that art, music, world languages, and technical courses may be a part of every student's high school experience. This is critical to Wisconsin teachers and families, and was a key finding of WEAC's Speak Out for Wisconsin Public Schools.
- In order that more students are recognized and included in this accountability system, and to avoid the masking of small subgroup performance, DPI will change the cell size used for accountability calculations from 40 to 20. This was a priority for the disability advocacy groups in Wisconsin. Additionally, a combined subgroup will be used when at least two of the binary subgroups (ELL, SwD, economically disadvantaged) do not meet

cell size but when combined do meet cell size, in recognition of the need to closely monitor the performance of these traditionally high-needs student groups.

- DPI will continue to incorporate **Universal Design for Learning** principles into planning and development of resources for standards implementation, assessments, and instructional practices.
- DPI will raise cut scores on current assessments to reflect higher expectations for students during the two-year transition between current and next generation assessment systems. DPI

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Promoting a culture of high expectations for all students is a fundamental goal of the Common Core State Standards. In order to participate with success in the general curriculum, students with disabilities, as appropriate, may be provided additional supports and services, such as:

- Instructional supports for learning, based on the principles of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression.
- Instructional accommodations (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe & Hall, 2005), changes in materials or procedures, which do not change the standards but allow students to learn within the framework of the Common Core.
- Assistive technology devices and services to ensure access to the general education curriculum and the Common Core State Standards.

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Stakeholders: Who is the Center for?

With the goal of improving outcomes of all students, the SIA Center will create resources for classroom educators and other educational stakeholders with a focus on improving instructional practices. Resources for classroom educators will focus on how they can improve their practices; resources for principals will focus on how they can best support their classroom educators' improvement; resources for other school and district staff will similarly focus on bringing the Common Core State Standards to life for each and every student. To do this, all resources will incorporate **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** principles, and will take advantage of technology to the fullest extent possible to ensure greater accessibility.

CESA Role

In order to facilitate more district contact time for CESA staff, the SIA Center will provide highquality, standardized resources for use in every CESA. CESA staff will be able to focus their expertise to add value through one-on-one and group training and planning sessions with their districts. The training and other sessions will benefit from use of standardized resource that are diligently devised to reach specific audiences: general education and special education teachers; English as a second language and bilingual education teachers; and other educational leaders. By creating resources that incorporate **UDL principles**, the SIA Center will contribute to personalization of learning, and in doing so, open up the important content of the CCSS to all students.