

# Flexibility FAQ: 2017-18



*Our daily work is guided by the ambitious goals of the Denver Plan 2020, the five-year strategic plan developed with our community. Flexibility is one of five key strategies named in the plan to ensure we are on track to meet these goals. The flexibility strategy emphasizes empowering school leaders to create the environments that best meet the academic and social/emotional needs of their students.*

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**1. What does flexibility mean for 2017-18?**

DPS has a strong foundation of promoting school-based empowerment, particularly in the areas of people, time, and money. While additional decision-making is available to school leaders within existing DPS systems and processes, this document specifically relates to the annual flexible, school-based, decision-making process which allows school leaders to make choices around select academic areas. In 2017-18, flexibility means that schools leaders will have the freedom to choose curriculum, curriculum-aligned professional learning, and local and READ Act assessments for their school.

**2. When do school leaders make their flexibility decisions?**

School leaders must submit their 2017-18 flexibility decisions by 5pm on Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. Decisions can be made through a virtual [Flexibility Decision Form](#) (available after January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

**3. What resources are available to help me in making these choices?**

We are providing a series of trainings to guide school leaders through the flexibility decision-making process, as well as to provide information on the district-adopted options:

- **Flexibility Training:** Sessions will be held at December network meetings or via webinar. Participants will learn about the flexibility process and timelines, as well as the available curriculum, curriculum-aligned professional learning, and assessment options.
- **Consultations:** One-on-one meetings with experts from C&I and ARE to discuss your choices.

Additionally, we have created resources to assist in making these choices, including information about district options and guidance on requirements for school leaders considering selecting other options:

- [2017-18 Flexibility Decision Handbook](#)
- [Strategic Planning Guide](#)
- [Screencasts on the Flexibility Process and the Menu of Options](#)
- [Decline to Opt-In Legal Requirements and Technology Checklist](#)

**4. Who is eligible to make flexibility decisions for the 2017-18 school year?**

All school leaders (with the exception of charter leaders) are eligible to make decisions in the areas of curriculum, curriculum-aligned professional learning, and assessment. Depending on the school’s education level, school leaders will have to make the following decisions:

School Education Level	Curriculum Decisions	Professional Learning Decisions	Assessment Decisions
<b>Grades K-5</b>	No Adoption	No Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● READ Act</li> <li>● Local Assessments (3-5)</li> </ul>
<b>Grades 6-8</b>	Social Studies	Social Studies Curriculum- Aligned Summer Professional Learning	Local Assessments
<b>Grades 9-12</b>	Core Math*	Core Math Curriculum- Aligned Summer Professional Learning	Local Assessments (Pathways schools exempt)**
<p>*To facilitate a smooth transition to an integrated math model, HS Math 1 and 2 will be implemented in 2017-18; HS Math 3 will be implemented in 2018-19.</p> <p>**9-12 Pathway schools can opt-in to the district-supported local assessment, but if they decline to opt-in, they will not receive per pupil funds, as they receive funding for NWEA MAP assessments.</p>			

**5. If I am opting-in to district options, do I need to complete the Flexibility Decision Form?**

Yes, all school leaders must complete the Flexibility Decision Form by February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017.

**6. If I am declining to opt-in to district options, do I need to complete the Flexibility Decision Form?**

Yes, all school leaders must complete the Flexibility Decision Form by February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017.

**7. For how long does my decision apply?**

The length of the decision varies depending on the area of flexibility:

- **Curriculum:** Opt-in or decline to opt-in decisions made around or in conjunction with curriculum areas will be final for the duration of the adoption cycle. Schools can change their curriculum but no funding will be available outside of the adoption cycle.
- **Professional Learning:** School leaders can only opt-in or decline to opt-in to the curriculum-aligned summer professional learning for the first year of implementation of the new curriculum.
- **Assessment:** Opt-in or decline to opt-in decisions made around local assessments or READ ACT assessments can be revised on an annual basis, during the flexibility decision-making process. Please note that for continuity of data and student experience, schools should try to limit changing their assessment selections year to year. Furthermore, local assessment decisions should be made in consideration of how this aligns to the school's curriculum and data culture.

**8. What curriculum is the district adopting this year?**

- For 6-7: [National Geographic—Western Hemisphere and Eastern Hemisphere](#)
- For 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies: [Pearson—American History: Beginning through Reconstruction](#)
- For HS Core Math: [CPM—Core Connections](#)

For more information please see the [2017-18 Decision Handbook](#) or visit [flexibility.dpsk12.org](http://flexibility.dpsk12.org).

**9. What does this mean for grade band/content areas that are not being adopted in 2017-18?**

The district does not allocate dollars for new curriculum every year for all subjects and all grades as this is not financially feasible. Rather, the district targets its dollars to those grades and subjects most in need of new curricula. Over time, all grades and subjects will receive dollars for curriculum, but this will happen as part of a multi-year cycle. District funding will be made available to schools in rolling cycles, in tandem with the district's offering of options in these three areas. School leaders can choose to implement new resources in grades/content not up for adoption this year, but no devolvement funds would be available.

**10. What exactly does opting-in mean? What about declining to opt-in?**

**Opting-In** to a flexibility area means that you are choosing to implement the resource that the district is adopting and supporting. The district will ensure that your school receives all relevant materials and will provide ongoing support for your school through the implementation of the resource.

**Declining to Opt-In** to a flexibility area means that you are choosing to not implement the resource that the district is adopting and supporting. In exchange, your school will receive devolvement funds (determined by pupil or teacher count, depending on the flexibility area) which can be used to purchase or create an alternate resource. Central office will still be able to provide select resource-agnostic supports and services to your school but does not have the ability to fully support more than its recommended options. Schools choosing alternative offerings, therefore, will generally have to obtain supports from third parties or through their own internal capacity.

The [2017-18 Flexibility Decision Handbook](#) (Chapter 2) outlines in detail the available curriculum, assessment, and professional learning options, as well as key information to support school leaders in understanding the implications of an opt-in vs. decline to opt-in decisions.

**11. Can schools choose to build their own curriculum?**

Yes, schools may build their own curriculum. School leaders who are declining district options in favor of developing their own curriculum will need to meet with their Instructional Superintendent, as well as content experts from C&I to outline their proposed implementation plan as well as to ensure that they understand the legal requirements they must follow. These meetings will be scheduled in February and March, following the submission of the decision form.

**12. Will school leaders be provided district funding in any areas where they decline to opt-in?**

Yes, schools will receive devolvement funds (per pupil in impacted grade band for curriculum and assessment; per teacher teaching grade band and content area for professional learning). For 9-12 local assessments, Pathway schools will not receive devolvement funds, as they already receive funding for NWEA MAP assessments. Specific devolvement amounts are in the [2017-18 Flexibility Decision Handbook](#) as well as in this [summary document](#).

**13. If I decline to opt-in, what are my next steps and what will I be responsible for?**

The [2017-18 Flexibility Decision Handbook](#) (Chapter 2) highlights key considerations for school leaders in making their decisions, including steps they will need to take to implement an alternative resource. Schools that decline to opt-in to curriculum or assessment will be contacted once their decision has been submitted to schedule a meeting with their Instructional Superintendent, as well as content experts from C&I and/or ARE. The purpose of these meetings is for school leaders to share their implementation plan so as to create a common understanding across all parties. These meetings are also to ensure that all legal requirements are being met. Strategic sourcing is available to support schools who have declined to opt-in in purchasing alternative materials, but it is the school's responsibility to ensure that materials are secured.

**14. Does this flexibility apply to all schools? What about turnaround or tiered schools?**

All schools, including turnaround schools, can exercise flexibility. Schools do not need to earn their flexibility through their performance as DPS believe that flexibility is a tool to accelerating student achievement. Intensive tiered schools should reference their school snapshots when making their flexibility decisions to ensure alignment with previously identified priorities.

**15. What about innovation and IZone schools and other school waivers?**

All innovation school and waiver approvals are still in effect. Innovation schools, including IZone schools, are to follow the same timeline and process as traditional schools in terms of curriculum, curriculum-aligned summer professional learning, and assessment decisions. IZone schools that decline to opt-in are not required to attend a transition meeting (see question 16). Any school can choose to adopt a new curriculum or assessment outside of the adoption cycle but no funding will be available.

**16. Will I be held to different performance standards if I decline to opt-in to district-adopted curriculum, assessment, or professional learning? Who will monitor my school's performance?**

All schools will be held to the same performance standards, accountability metrics, and reporting requirements (e.g. UIP, school visit trackers), regardless of their school-based flexibility decisions. Instructional Superintendents will have insight into the resources implemented at all schools, including those that have declined to opt-in to district resources. This will enable them to coach and hold accountable all schools regardless of the resources used at each school.

School leaders that decline to opt-in (with the exception of IZone schools) are required to attend a transition meeting with their Instructional Superintendent and content experts from C&I/ARE to outline their intended implementation plan. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that legal requirements are met and to provide support to the school leader and the IS in thinking through how the school plans to implement their selected resource.

**17. Does an Instructional Superintendent have to approve choices made by school leaders?**

The default is that decisions are made at the school level. Choices on curriculum, assessments, and professional learning are for principals to make in collaboration with their Instructional Leadership Team. We encourage principals to discuss these decisions thoughtfully with their Instructional Superintendent, and we encourage our ISs to give candid feedback, respecting the fact that the ultimate decision lies with the principal, so long as legal requirements are met. More details on the role of the IS are available in the [Equity and Opportunity: School as the Unit of Change](#) theory of action.

**18. Under what circumstances, if any, can flexibility decisions be reversed?**

- All 2017-18 decisions must be submitted by February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, and will be final on that date.
- Since curriculum decisions are made in alignment with adoption cycles, schools can change their curricula at any time, but associated funding will not be devolved outside of adoption cycles. The district will not provide additional funding or purchase additional materials until the end of the adoption cycle.
- School leaders can only opt-in to the curriculum-aligned professional learning during the first year of the adoption cycle as all funding will be devolved at that time for the duration of the adoption cycle.
- Assessment decisions may be revised on an annual basis, during the annual flexibility decision process. Decisions for assessment may not be revised mid-year.

**19. Do schools opting-in to district-adopted options need to attend district summer professional learning?**

Schools can opt-in or decline to opt-in to curriculum-aligned summer professional learning for 6-8 social studies and HS math. If a school has opted-in to that professional learning, it is expected that teachers will attend the centralized summer professional learning. If a school has declined to opt-in to that professional learning, teachers and leaders cannot attend the centralized summer professional learning.

Professional Learning beyond that associated with curriculum is not part of the flexible, school-based decision-making process. For questions around requirements of other professional learning offerings outside of that which is offered through the flexibility process, please contact the [Professional Learning Center](#) or department experts.

*This document will be updated regularly (last update 12/11/16).*

*Please email [flexibility@dpsk12.org](mailto:flexibility@dpsk12.org) with additional questions.*

***Additional resources are available on our website at [flexibility.dpsk12.org](http://flexibility.dpsk12.org).***