

NCLB WAIVER SUMMARY: ACCOUNTABILITY

PROMISING ASPECTS OF THE PLAN:

- The growth measure that is a key component of school determinations requires that all students — including those who are already meeting standards — continue to grow academically. This is critical because low-income students and students of color who are high performing too often do not get the supports they need and, as a result, lose ground.
- There are clear consequences for Focus and Priority Schools that, after receiving support and interventions, do not improve. These schools must undergo governance change or be closed.
- There is a system of district accountability that aligns closely with the school accountability system, and there are clear consequences for low-performing districts that do not improve. This is important given the critical role that districts play in setting the conditions for school improvement.
- The state will maintain choice options for families of students in the lowest performing schools, and requires districts to take steps to ensure that these schools are staffed with strong teachers and leaders.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- The performance of low-income students, students of color, English-language learners, and students with disabilities counts for about a quarter of a school's determination, which means that, in some cases, high overall performance could compensate for low performance for some groups.
- A school's proficiency rate is evaluated on the basis of how it compares with other schools, as opposed to against a meaningful "stretch" goal. A school can meet proficiency expectations by having proficiency rates at the state baseline year average. The state set stretch proficiency goals for students overall and for each group, but these goals are not tied to the school ratings that drive the system. In terms of prompting action, performance against the proficiency stretch goals is secondary to the relative ratings.

What indicators are used to measure school performance?

- Proficiency in reading, math, writing, and science for students overall
- Growth in reading, math, and writing for students overall and for student groups
 - The measure looks at how much growth students are making relative to other students with similar academic histories, and whether that growth is enough to get them to proficiency within three years or by 10th grade, whichever comes first.
 - For English-language learners, growth to English proficiency also is calculated.
- For high schools: overall graduation rates, group graduation rates, overall dropout rates, and overall ACT performance

What are the performance expectations for these indicators?

- For each indicator, schools get one of four ratings: Does Not Meet, Approaching, Meets, or Exceeds.
- For proficiency, growth, dropout, and ACT performance: The ratings are based on a school's performance relative to other schools in the state. The criteria for a Meets rating include:
 - Overall proficiency = at or above the 50th percentile, using 2009-10 performance as the baseline.
 - Overall growth and group growth = at or above 45th or 55th median student growth percentile, depending on whether demonstrated growth is enough to get students to proficiency on time.
 - Overall dropout rates = at or below state average, using 2008-09 performance as the baseline.
 - Overall ACT performance = at or above state average, using 2009-10 performance as the baseline.
- The graduation-rate goal, both overall and for groups, is 80 percent.
- The State Board is charged with reaffirming or adopting new performance criteria annually.
- There also are Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) based on getting from the 50th percentile of 2010 performance (the Meets criteria) to the 90th percentile of 2010 performance (the Exceeds criteria) in six years. These AMOs are the same for all schools and groups. They will be publicly reported but do not factor into overarching school determinations.

How are groups included?

- Group growth counts for 25 percent of elementary and middle school determinations, and 15 percent of high school determinations.
 - The groups considered are low income, minority, English learners, students with disabilities, and students scoring below proficient in the prior year.
- Group graduation rates count for 8.75 percent of high school determinations.
 - The groups considered are low income, minority, English learners, and students with disabilities.
- Both growth and graduation rates are measured individually for each group. Each group's value is then aggregated to generate one, school-wide group value.

How are overarching school determinations made?

- Schools get between one and four points per indicator based on the rating earned on that indicator.
- Points earned for each indicator are summed and compared with the total possible points, which generates an overall performance rating. The performance ratings and their criteria include:
 - Turnaround = below 33 percent of total points.
 - Priority Improvement = 33 – 47 percent.
 - Improvement = 47 – 60 percent.
 - Performance = at or above 60 percent.¹
- The State Board is charged with annually reaffirming or adopting new criteria.

¹ Criteria given are for high schools. The elementary/middle school criteria differ by a few percentage points.

How are Priority Schools identified?

- All Title I high schools with a graduation rate of less than 60 percent
- All Tier I or Tier II School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools

How are Focus Schools identified?

- Title I schools that are given Turnaround or Priority Improvement status, and have the lowest proficiency or graduation rates for groups
 - For Focus School identification, the groups included are low income, minority, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- Title I high schools with graduation rates less than 60 percent that are not Priority Schools

What happens to Priority Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - Districts are responsible for: implementing one of the four SIG turnaround models, aligning funding in support of turnaround activities, providing a district-level contact whose primary job is turnaround implementation, and taking action (such as replacing key staff, leadership, or external providers) when progress is not being made.
 - Schools and districts must work together to develop a state-approved Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), which includes: data analysis, target setting, and improvement strategies. Schools will have monthly visits from Performance Managers.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - The criteria for exiting Priority status is two consecutive years of an Improvement rating.
 - A Priority Improvement or Turnaround School (which includes Priority Schools) that does not improve for five consecutive years must have its charter revoked, become a charter or innovation school, have its board replaced, operate under different management, or be closed.

What happens to Focus Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - Implement a state-approved UIP and implement turnaround strategies, including one of the following: employing a lead turnaround partner, reorganizing management/oversight, becoming an innovation school, hiring a proven manager, converting to a charter, or other actions of comparable or greater significance, including the SIG models. Schools will also have bi-monthly implementation checks from Performance Managers.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - The criteria for exiting Focus status is two consecutive years of an Improvement or Performance rating for the school overall, two consecutive years of group proficiency equivalent to a Meets rating, or two consecutive years of a Meets rating for graduation rates.
 - A Priority Improvement or Turnaround School (including Focus Schools) that does not improve for five consecutive years must have its charter revoked, become a charter or innovation school, have its board replaced, operate under different management, or be closed.

What happens to schools that are neither Priority nor Focus? Does underperformance against goals trigger action?

- Turnaround and Priority Improvement Schools that are not Priority or Focus are subject to the same consequences as Priority Schools. A Priority Improvement or Turnaround School that does not improve for five consecutive years must have its charter revoked, become a charter or innovation school, have its board replaced, operate under different management, or be closed.
- Schools that miss AMOs overall or for groups are eligible for school-level diagnostic reviews and improvement partnership grants, but are prioritized below Turnaround and Priority Improvement schools for related funds. These schools will also receive closer scrutiny of their use of funds.
- All schools develop a publicly available UIP, which includes performance data analysis for all student groups.

Will the state continue to require public school choice?

- Yes. Districts with Title I Priority Improvement and Turnaround schools must set aside 15 percent of Title I funds to offer choice as well as supplemental educational services to families.

How are Reward Schools identified, and what incentives are provided?

- Title I schools with an Exceeds rating for overall proficiency and for graduation rates, and all groups meet AMOs
- Title I schools that change from Does Not Meet to Meets or Approaching to Exceeds in overall proficiency and in graduation rates within three years, and all groups meet AMOs
- Reward Schools receive public recognition and eligibility for financial rewards

Is there a system of district accountability?

- Yes. It closely tracks the school system in terms of indicators, goals, categorizations, and interventions in the lowest performers. All districts must develop a publicly available UIP, and districts that are persistently low performing may be restructured or closed.