

NCLB WAIVER SUMMARY: EDUCATOR EVALUATION

While the application developed by the U.S. Department of Education for states seeking waivers from the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) required many specific details about states' efforts to improve education, it did not require a comprehensive list of such endeavors. Therefore, New Jersey's approved waiver plan may not capture all that the state is doing to improve education. State officials also note that they must resolve some details before implementing the new evaluation system. The following summary covers the evaluation aspects of New Jersey's waiver plan as it stood when approved. It may not tell the complete story of educator evaluation in the state, however, as that work continues to evolve.

New Jersey's waiver application was approved based on a commitment by the state to provide the Department of Education with final guidelines related to their work on educator evaluation by the end of the 2011-12 school year. The department will then coordinate a peer review of the guidelines to ensure that they align with the state's waiver plan.

PROMISING ASPECTS OF PLAN:

- New Jersey's timeline for implementation takes into account collective bargaining agreements and the need to align these agreements with the new requirements for teacher and school leader evaluation planned by the state.
- The state outlines the elements of the educator and evaluator training that the new evaluation systems must address. This effort to ensure consistent, quality training is essential to achieving reliable, valid implementation of the new systems, as well as to stakeholder buy-in.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:

- While the New Jersey plan mentions proposed legislation that would link evaluation results with teacher tenure, it contains little explanation of how it would use the evaluation results to inform professional development for teachers and principals.
 - The Department of Education did not require states to address the issue of equitable access to effective teachers as part of their waiver plan. Yet, for those students most in need of effective teachers, this is an important part of improving teacher quality. It is critical to view each state's plan in this context. New Jersey will require districts to report evaluation data to the state, which could enable analytics on placements. However, the waiver plan does not have a clear plan for equitable access.
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EVALUATION DESIGN

What are the components of the state's proposed teacher and principal evaluation system, and how are those components weighted?

- For all teachers: 50 percent of the evaluation is based on student achievement (with 70–90 percent of that from growth on state assessments, 10 percent from a school-wide performance measure, and 0–10 percent from other performance measures) and 50 percent is based on teacher practice (with 50–95 percent of that from a classroom observation tool and 5–50 percent from other measures of practice).
- For all principals: 40 percent of the evaluation is based on measures of effective practice, 50 percent on measures of student achievement, and 10 percent on differential retention of effective teachers.

What roles will the state and districts play in developing and implementing an evaluation system?

- The state will provide guidance on all aspects of the system (such as student achievement measures, teacher practice tools, and training requirements), but development of evaluation systems will happen at the district level.

How will the state measure student growth in tested grades and subjects? Will the measure be comparable across LEAs within the state?

- For tested subjects, student growth scores must account for the largest portion of the student-achievement component of the evaluation.
- The growth scores will be based on state calculations, so the measures will be comparable across LEAs.

How will the state guide development of student growth measures for non-tested grades and subjects?

- The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will provide guidance to districts on the selection and use of measures for non-tested subjects.
- For the 10 percent school-wide performance measure, the plan lists growth in graduation and proficiency rates or a narrowing of the achievement gap as examples.
- For principal evaluation, two categories of student achievement measures will make up the 50 percent:
 - Aggregated student growth on standardized assessments (35 percent)
 - School-specific goals, such as graduation rates, identified by principals or district leaders (15 percent)

How will the state approach observations of classroom instruction and other measures of teacher and leader practice?

- NJDOE will adopt updated teaching standards in June 2012 (likely based on those of the Interstate Teacher Assessment Support Consortium).
- Districts must use a high-quality, state-approved teacher practice evaluation framework, and, using this framework, provide the following:

- Non-tenured teachers get at least three formal observations, two of which must be unannounced.
- Tenured teachers get at least two formal observations, one of which must be unannounced.
- A staff member from outside the teacher's school should conduct at least one of the observations.
- Districts will adopt a principal practice framework which is aligned with the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders.

Will all educators be evaluated at least annually?

- Yes

USE OF EVALUATIONS

How will the state use teacher and principal evaluations to inform individual professional development and to improve instructional practice?

- The plan includes a requirement that the summative evaluation “results in a mutually-developed teacher professional development plan.”
- The principal evaluation must also result in a professional growth plan.

How will the results of teacher and principal evaluations inform personnel decisions?

- The waiver plan refers to proposed legislation that would align teacher tenure with evaluations.

Will the state use educator evaluations to ensure equitable access to effective teachers?

- The Department of Education did not require states to address the issue of equitable access to effective teachers as part of their waiver plan. Yet, for those students most in need of effective teachers, this is an important part of improving teacher quality. It is critical to view each state’s plan in this context. New Jersey will require districts to report evaluation data to the state, which could enable analytics on placements. However, the waiver plan does not have a clear plan for equitable access.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS

How will the state train educators and evaluators in the new evaluation system?

- The plan outlines elements that educator training must included and asserts that all teachers and those conducting evaluations must receive comprehensive training before conducting observations and evaluating educators.
- State and district-level advisory committees will also support implementation.

How will the state ensure the reliability and validity of LEA evaluation systems?

- The plan mentions the need for a process to ensure reliability and accuracy among evaluators but provides no additional details.

How does the state address other implementation considerations, such as ensuring a robust teacher-student data link or managing the rollout timeline?

- The plan's implementation timeline acknowledges the need to address current collective bargaining agreements.
 - New proposed evaluation regulations will require that collective bargaining agreements are consistent with the provisions of the regulations.
 - These regulations will not override current agreements, but given the timeline of most existing agreements, the state expects that the new regulations will be adopted prior to implementation.