

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, Oklahoma'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 Oklahoma'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.

Oklahoma's waiver application was approved based on a commitment by the state to provide the federal education department with final guidelines for its educator evaluation work 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

- Oklahoma's plan requires districts to provide all teachers rated below "effective" with a comprehensive remediation plan and instructional coaching to help them improve. Districts are expected to provide additional feedback to new teachers and those in need of the most improvement by evaluating probationary teachers twice a year, instead of just once.
- The state clearly describes how evaluations will inform personnel decisions. Only teachers who consistently receive evaluation ratings of "effective" or higher may secure Career Teacher Status (tenure). Additionally, district leaders must use evaluation results to dismiss ineffective teachers and make them the primary factor in workforce reduction decisions.
- The state plans to provide quality control for the new evaluation systems before and after implementation. Any modification to the default state system or other approved frameworks must be approved by the state and will be evaluated against a set of criteria based on the impact to student learning. The state also will review the alignment between effectiveness ratings and student test scores to ensure the new evaluation tools are valid.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

- 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. Oklahoma's plan does not explain how it will use evaluation results to monitor and address any inequities in the assignment of the least effective teachers or principals to students with the highest need.
 -
-

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 and principals:
 - 50 percent is based on quantitative student achievement measures (35 percent student growth, 15 percent on other academic measures)
 - 50 percent is based on qualitative assessment of practice

What are the roles of the state and districts in developing and implementing an evaluation system?

- The state education agency (SEA) will establish the default evaluation framework and allow districts to choose from a limited number of other approved frameworks.
- The State Board of Education (SBE) must approve any district requests for a modification to the default framework or other approved frameworks against a set of criteria based on impact to student learning.

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

- For both teachers and principals, the state plans to use a value-added growth model as 35 percent of the measure (although such a model has not yet been developed) and will base 15 percent on other academic measures (to be determined).
- The growth measure should be comparable across LEAs, but the overall achievement measure may not be, depending on how it is ultimately defined.

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

- For both teachers and principals, the state plans to use objective assessment measures such as student performance on end-of-year tests. However, the plan also states: "In the event that these options do not address the particular needs of the evaluation process, districts may have the option to place greater emphasis on qualitative measures."
 - The SBE wants to conduct more research and solicit educator input to determine an appropriate measure of student achievement for non-tested subjects and grades.

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

- The SBE adopted Tulsa's Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Observation and Evaluation System as the presumptive default framework, and two other frameworks as other approved options. The SBE will determine the final default framework after the pilot period.
 - Models include measurement of organizational and classroom management skills, demonstrations of effective instruction, evidence of continuous improvement, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills.

Will all educators be evaluated at least annually?

- Yes. The statute calls for all probationary teachers to be evaluated twice annually, and all other educators (both teachers and principals) at least once a year.

USE OF EVALUATIONS

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

- The evaluation system is designed to link improvement needs with professional development, but the state's waiver plan provides no further details.
- State law requires that districts provide all teachers rated as "ineffective" or "needs improvement" with a comprehensive remediation plan and instructional coaching.
- The plan does not discuss professional development or improvement for other educators.

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

- Career Teacher (tenure): New hires must do one of the following:
 - Complete three consecutive years with a rating of "superior" for at least two years and no rating below "effective."
 - Complete four consecutive years with average rating of "effective" or higher, and have a rating of "effective" or higher for the last two years.
 - Teachers may still attain Career Teacher status without meeting the effectiveness rating requirements above if the principal petitions the superintendent requesting that the teacher be granted career status, the superintendent agrees, and the school district board of education approves the petition.
- Teacher dismissal: District leaders must use evaluations as the primary factor for reduction-in-force decisions. Additionally, the following teachers shall be dismissed:
 - Any teacher rated as "ineffective" for two consecutive years
 - A Career Teacher rated as "needs improvement" or lower for three consecutive years, or who has not averaged at least an "effective" rating over five years
 - A probationary teacher who does not attain career teacher status within four years
- Teacher compensation: Districts can provide incentive pay to teachers who are rated "superior" or "highly effective."
- A principal who has received a rating of ineffective for two consecutive school years shall not be reemployed by the school district, subject to due process procedures.

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

- The plan has no clear strategy to address equitable access.
 - The Department of Education did not require states to address the issue of equitable access to effective teachers as part of their waiver plan, but for those students most in need of effective teachers, this is an important part of improving teacher quality.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS

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

- The state education authority (SEA) will provide presentations on each model framework through regional and district meetings and webinars in spring 2012. Districts will then select a framework and participate in state-led training and professional development on the implementation of this specific framework.
- The SEA will provide training and professional development tailored to each district during the pilot year (2012-13).
- The SEA will provide FAQs and other tools via its website.

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

- At the middle and end of the pilot year, the SEA will gather district data for the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) commission, which will review them and make recommendations to the State Board of Education. The SBE may then use this information to make final adjustments to the state system before full implementation.
- The TLE commission will review the correlation between quantitative and qualitative scores to ensure the evaluation system is valid and meaningful.
 - The commission must report its findings to the governor, speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, and president pro tempore of the state senate each year until 2016.

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

- The plan acknowledges that thoughtfully developing and implementing the new system will require “significant time” and could be a challenge within the current timeline.