



# COLORADO

## **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, Colorado'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 Colorado'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.

### **PROMISING ASPECTS OF PLAN:**

- Colorado's plan outlines how evaluation results will be used to improve teaching practice for *all* educators, and to provide support and remediation for educators not meeting standards. Districts are expected to provide additional feedback to new teachers and those in need of the most improvement by requiring two additional observations per year for probationary teachers.
- The state clearly describes how evaluations will inform personnel decisions, including barring teachers who are consistently rated as ineffective from maintaining non-probationary status and requiring that evaluation information inform layoff decisions.
- The state will monitor district implementation by collecting data on the number of educators assigned each rating, the retention level correlated with the ratings, and student performance outcomes associated with the ratings.

### **ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:**

- The state will require districts to base 50 percent of an educator's evaluation rating on a measure of student growth. However, the plan does not specify what portion of the growth measure for tested subjects (which comprises multiple measures) is based on state assessment and growth model results.
  - 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. Colorado's plan says the state will monitor and analyze data related to the distribution of effective educators, but does not provide a clear plan for how it will address any inequities in the assignment of the least effective teachers or principals to the highest need students.
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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 teachers and principals, 50 percent of the overall evaluation rating is based on student growth, and 50 percent on measures of professional practice.

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

- The state is clarifying the extent to which LEAs have the "flexibility" to create their own teacher and principal evaluation systems that meet state standards.
- The state is developing a set of practice standards and an evaluation scoring matrix to aggregate evidence from multiple measures. School districts are allowed to develop their own standards as long as they meet or exceed those of the state and report their performance evaluation data using the statewide ratings.
- The state education authority (SEA) will collect assurances from each district indicating that the local evaluation system satisfies the requirements of the law. The state is creating an online, searchable resource bank to help districts develop and implement local evaluation systems.

### **How does the state intend to measure student growth in tested grades and subjects? Will the measure be comparable across LEAs within the state?**

- For teachers, any student growth measure must include: calculations of a teacher's individual contribution to student academic growth; the collective impact of a group of teachers (at the school, grade, or subject level) on student academic growth; student performance on state summative assessment results; and "other measures aligned with [Colorado Department of Education] guidelines."
  - Student growth shall include results from Colorado's growth model, when available.
- For principals, measurements are based on the school performance framework and other measures aligned with state guidelines, but the plan provides no further details.
  - The statute indicates that progress towards postsecondary and workforce readiness for successive cohorts may also be included.
- The Colorado growth model measure should be comparable across LEAs within the state, but other components of the growth measure may not be.
- For educators teaching two or more subjects, the student growth measure will be a composite of student academic growth scores from all subjects for which they are responsible.

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

- The state still needs to develop guidance on this area. To inform this work, the state has created a content collaborative initiative, which will draw upon local and national experts to develop and vet appropriate measures for both tested and non-tested grades and subjects.

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

- Teachers will be observed on a set of standards including content knowledge, environment expectations, facilitating learning, reflecting on practice, demonstrating leadership, and taking responsibility for student growth.
- Probationary teachers will receive at least two documented observations each academic year. The number of required observations for other teachers is not specified.
- School leaders will be measured against state principal standards and an individual performance plan. Evidence must include teacher survey data, the percentage and number of teachers who are rated at each performance level, and those who are improving. Districts may include student and parent surveys, observations, or artifacts that reflect school climate.

**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?**

- All teachers will receive a written improvement plan outlining recommendations and professional development opportunities. Teachers rated as not meeting performance standards will receive a remediation plan.
- All principals will receive a Professional Performance Plan that outlines annual goals for the principal and the school. Districts or local school boards shall continually monitor principal performance relative to the performance plan’s goals, providing feedback and support as needed.

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

- Teacher tenure status: Probationary teachers must receive effective rating or higher for three consecutive years to earn non-probationary status. Two consecutive ratings of lower than effective will result in loss of non-probationary status for teachers who already have it.
- Teacher and principal placement and dismissal: Failure to remediate outlined deficiencies in a timely manner could lead to dismissal. When deciding on workforce reductions, district leaders must look at performance evaluations before considering tenure or years of experience.
- Teacher advancement and compensation: The state council is still developing recommendations and the legislature must vote to adopt them.

## **Will the state use educator evaluations to ensure students have 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. Colorado will monitor and analyze data related to the distribution of effective educators, but its waiver plan does not provide a clear strategy for promoting equitable access.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS**

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

- The statute requires school districts and the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide training to all evaluators and educators to provide an understanding of their local evaluation system.
  - The Department of Education must develop a process for approving evaluator training programs.
- The state education agency (SEA) plans to collect educator survey data about whether teachers understand the new system, and know how to find resources to support their development.
- The SEA plans to develop an online resource bank for districts on implementing the state model system or their own local system.

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

- The state will request data from districts and school boards and report it publicly. The state's monitoring and data analysis will include trends in performance evaluation ratings, and correlations with retention data and student performance data, as well as the equitable distribution of effective educators.
- Districts or local school boards must validate the evaluation methods they select by ensuring inter-rater reliability between evaluators, consistency among the multiple measures used for evaluations, and consistency of data used to evaluate performance and the performance ratings assigned. They must then submit assurances to the district indicating that they have satisfied requirements for reliability and validity.

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

- Colorado has created student and educator identifiers, and is working to create a teacher-student data link. The state has not furnished further details on the criteria for "teacher of record."

- The proposal mentions that the legislature must review and approve the rules developed by the Colorado State Board of Education by May 2012.