

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, Georgia'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 Georgia'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.

Georgia'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:

- Georgia's plan offers specific guidance to districts on how to develop student learning objectives for incorporation into teacher evaluations when state assessment data is not available. Districts must use criteria provided by the state to create these student learning objectives and submit them to the state for approval.
- The state will provide incentives to more effective teachers in Race to the Top districts to encourage their relocation to high-need areas.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:

- The state's plan is vague about whether and how evaluations will be used to help teachers improve or to inform personnel decisions. It does not mention professional growth opportunities for teachers who are in the top two rating categories.
 - 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. Georgia's plan only addresses equitable access as it relates to the state's Race to the Top plan. It does not address the issue of equitable access for all districts and schools in the state.
 - Principal evaluations do not require the inclusion of student growth percentile data from state assessments. Also, the plan does not specify how principal evaluations will be used to inform personnel decisions.
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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 in tested subjects and grades: 50 percent student growth measures and 50 percent practice measures (40 percent from observations and 10 percent from student surveys).
- For teachers in non-tested subjects and grades: 30 percent student growth, 70 percent practice (60 percent from observations and 10 percent from student surveys).
- For principals, "similar measures" to those applied to teachers will be used, and the greatest weight will be given to measures of student growth, either from student growth percentile data or student learning objectives.

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

- The state is responsible for developing nearly all aspects of the system (student growth percentile model, research-based practice standards, and quantitative measures, such as surveys). The one exception is student learning objectives for non-tested subjects and grades which are developed by individual districts, but must be approved by the state.

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

- The state plans to use student growth percentiles which describe a student's "rank" on current achievement relative to other students with similar prior achievement.
- Student growth will be measured at the classroom level for teachers and at the school level for principals.
- The measure will be comparable across LEAs.

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

- The state requires districts to develop a student learning objective (SLO) for each non-tested subject/course to determine whether teachers are positively impacting student growth.
- Teachers who teach both tested and non-tested subjects will be evaluated by the SLO in non-tested subjects and student growth percentiles in tested ones.
- Principals' student growth measure will be based on either the student growth percentiles or the student learning objectives (or both).
- The state has developed a rubric to help districts develop SLOs. Districts must submit their SLOs to the Georgia Department of Education for approval.

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

- For teachers, practice will be measured via observational assessment of 10 performance standards and student surveys about instructional practice.
- For principals, practice will be measured by climate surveys, student attendance, retention of effective teachers, instructional practice, performance goal setting, and documentation of practice.

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 improve instructional practice?

- Teachers rated in one of the bottom two ratings categories on an individual practice standard, or overall, will be put on a Professional Growth Plan with guidelines and timelines to improve. Those who do not improve will be moved to a Professional Development Plan.
- Principals “who do not achieve appropriate evaluation scores” will be provided with opportunities for professional development.

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

- Teachers who perform unsatisfactorily on a Professional Growth Plan or a Professional Development Plan may be non-renewed or terminated.
- The state did not outline any personnel decisions related to principal evaluations.

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. Georgia’s plan only addresses equitable access as it relates to the state’s Race to the Top plan. It does not address the issue of equitable access for all districts and schools in the state.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS

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

- The state plans to train and certify all evaluators at the district and school level.
- For the pilot, the state will train teachers in the new system. For full implementation, the state will provide resources online and principals will provide teachers with orientation within the first month of the system’s implementation.

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

- The state will assess the spring 2012 pilot for validity of component measures, and for process and implementation issues. It will conduct a full validity and reliability study in 2013.

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

- The state's proposal acknowledges that the implementation timeline as outlined is aggressive and may be a challenge to meet.