

NCLB WAIVER SUMMARY: ACCOUNTABILITY

PROMISING ASPECTS OF THE PLAN:

- Kentucky has set up a promising structure for supporting its Priority (lowest performing) schools. The state has established three regional assistance centers associated with universities. Each school is assigned an Education Recovery Leader to work with the principal and Education Recovery Specialists to work with teachers to build skills and capacities to improve student achievement.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Between its original application and the approval of its plan, Kentucky significantly lowered the improvement goals for its schools. According to the plan, the state's final goal is set at a level "where approximately a little over half the schools" would be able to meet it. This means that if all schools were to just meet Kentucky's expectations, the state would only continue — rather than accelerate — its current rate of improvement.
- Kentucky has put in place protections for the lowest performing student groups. However, the system may mask the performance of other groups. Once Kentucky's school index is fully developed, the combined performance of students who are African American, Latino, Native American, low income, English-language learners, or students with disabilities will count for between 14 and 21 percent of the school's overall score. This means that schools may be able to remain in good standing under the accountability system despite low performance and low improvement of one or more of these individual groups. The Kentucky Board of Education will establish separate gap-closing goals for performance by specific student groups, however, it is unclear whether schools that do not meet these goals will be required to take any action.
- Kentucky has not guaranteed students, even in its lowest performing schools, the right to choose to attend a higher performing school.

What indicators are used to measure school performance?

- Next Generation Learners (now worth 100 percent of overall score, will be worth 70 percent by 2014)
 - Overall proficiency in reading, math, science, social studies, and writing measured using an index that gives partial credit for students at the apprentice level and bonus credit for students at the highest level only if the number of these students exceeds the number of students at the lowest level.
 - "Gap-group" proficiency in reading, math, science, social studies, and writing
 - The gap group includes African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, low-income students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities.
 - The percent of students overall growing faster than at least 40 percent of students with similar achievement histories

- College/career readiness for students overall, measured by EXPLORE in middle school and ACT, Work Keys, ASVAB, several Kentucky assessments, and industry certification in high school
- Graduation rate
- Next Generation Instructional Programs and Support (not developed yet, will be worth 20 percent by 2014)
 - Results of Program Reviews that will look at areas such as arts and humanities, writing, K-3 and World Language, and practical living and career studies
- Next Generation Professionals (not developed yet, will be worth 10 percent by 2014)
 - The percent of teachers and leaders at the Accomplished level on educator evaluation system

What are the expectations for performance on these indicators?

- Each school gets a single annual measurable objective (AMO), the amount by which it has to increase its overall index score. The goal requires each school below the 70th percentile of performance to improve by one-third of a standard deviation over five years. Schools above the 70th percentile have to improve by half this much.
 - The standard deviation is calculated based on scores of all schools in each grade level. The goal will be reset every five years.
 - To meet the AMO, schools must also reach a 95 percent participation rate for all students and each group.
- High schools also have a goal of a 98 percent graduation rate in 11 years, with equal gains required annually. Graduation-rate goals are set for each student group, but only the overall rate counts for accountability.
- The Kentucky Board of Education will also set goals for reducing, by half within five years, the percentage of students in each group not meeting proficiency. Performance against these goals does not factor into the index.

How are groups included?

- The gap group's performance counts for between 20 and 30 percent of the Next Generation Learners index, which, once all components are developed, will count for 70 percent of the school's overall score. As a result, the score of all underserved groups combined counts for between 14 and 21 percent of the school's overall score.
- Focus Schools will comprise 10 percent of Title I schools with the lowest gap-group performance, and schools where any group's performance is three standard deviations below the statewide all-student average.
- School performance against the Kentucky Board of Education's group goals will be publicly reported and may result in an intervention plan.

How are overarching school determinations made?

- Each school gets an overall index score ranging from 0 to 100. Every five years, the state will calculate the overall score of the 70th-percentile school.
 - Distinguished Schools are those above the 90th percentile on the index.
 - Proficient Schools are those above the 70th percentile on the index.
 - Progressing Schools are those below the 70th percentile that meet their AMO.
 - Needs Improvement Schools are those below the 70th percentile that don't meet their AMO.
 - Focus Schools are Title I schools with low gap-group performance that are not meeting their AMO, and schools where a group is three standard deviations below the statewide all-student average.
 - Priority Schools are those already identified as persistently low performing under state law.
- Any school that meets its AMO is Progressing; this label can be attached to any other designation.

How are Priority Schools identified?

- Priority schools are schools that Kentucky already identified as persistently low performing under state law. The identification parameters are aligned with the requirements for identifying Tier I and II School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools.

How are Focus Schools identified?

- High schools with graduation rates less than 60 percent that are not Priority Schools
- Title I schools in the bottom 10 percent of all schools based on the gap group's performance, and not meeting the school-wide AMO for the past two years
- Any school where an individual gap group's performance is three standard deviations below the statewide all-student mean (the AMO doesn't factor into this identification)

What happens to Priority Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - Schools must select one of the four SIG turnaround models.
 - The state has three regional assistance centers to provide support. Each school is assigned an education recovery leader to work with the principal and education recovery specialists to help teachers build skills and capacities to improve student achievement. Recovery staff helps the school to install and implement both short-term and a longer term School Improvement Plans.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - Criteria for exiting Priority status: School has to meet its AMO and maintain a graduation rate of 70 percent or higher for three consecutive years.
 - If a school is identified for a second time, it has to submit its improvement plan for state approval. If it's identified again, it must accept the assignment of a monitor or partner if directed to do so by the state, and accept ongoing resources as assigned or approved by the state.

What happens to Focus Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - Create an improvement plan that includes additional requirements specifically related to gap issues with assistance from the district. Schools must use guidance designed by the state's Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council to inform the direction of the plan.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - Criteria for exiting Focus status: School has to meet its AMO for three consecutive years and raise the performance of the group for which the school was identified above the identification threshold.
 - If a school doesn't exit and doesn't meet the definition of a High Progress School (see Reward Schools) for three consecutive compilations of an overall score, it has to revise its improvement plan to meet requirements for Priority Schools and must submit this new plan for state approval. If identified again, it must, in addition, "participate in a set of improvement strategies resulting from an accreditation process," accept a mentor or partner, and accept any resources assigned or approved by the state.

What happens to schools that are not Priority or Focus?

- All schools must develop a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. The state will assign staff to monitor specific Focus, Progressing, and Needs Improvement schools or districts. These staff will oversee the revision and implementation of improvement plans. The state will put together teams to monitor progress and provide technical assistance.

Will the state continue to require public school choice?

- No. The state will allow funds previously allotted for Supplemental Education Services and choice to be used for implementing other interventions.

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

- Highest Performing schools are those in the top 10 percent of the overall index score. Schools in the top 5 percent of the state based on the overall index will be called Kentucky Schools of Distinction. Highest Progress schools are the top 10 percent of Title I and non-Title schools, respectively, ranked by the gains in overall score. To be eligible, schools have to meet AMOs, and high schools must have a graduation rate above 60 percent for the prior two years.
- Schools will receive recognition and other promotional materials. If money is available, they may qualify for funds for professional growth, or for partnering with lower performing schools and districts.

Is there a system of district accountability?

- Yes. It closely tracks the system for schools. There are Priority, Focus, Needs Improvement, Proficient, and Reward districts. Priority districts receive assistance from education recovery specialists, and have to implement several specific interventions. Districts are identified based on their index scores, not on school performance.