

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, Massachusetts' 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 Massachusetts' 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:

- While each Massachusetts district may opt to create its own evaluation system in lieu of using the state model, the state is developing resources and processes to make sure district-developed systems are strong and reliable, including guidelines for securing state approval of those systems.
- All teachers and principals will be placed on a development plan — based on their overall evaluation rating and career stage — that includes goals to improve their practice and concrete steps to achieve those goals.
- All evaluations must also incorporate a self-assessment, which will encourage educators to reflect upon and analyze their own practice.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:

- In addition to a summative performance rating based on practice standards and other information, all evaluation systems must include a separate rating of impact on student learning. This model will help identify incompatibilities between performance ratings and teacher impact on students. However, it could also create opportunities for districts to downplay the importance of educators' impact on student learning.
- 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. Massachusetts' 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 teachers and principals, the evaluation system consists of a four-level summative performance rating. The summative rating is based on several categories of evidence including: judgments based on observation and artifacts of practice, student feedback, and multiple measures of student learning. It also requires the incorporation of staff feedback.
 - The state has not yet provided guidance on how much weight each of these categories should hold.
- Teachers and principals will also receive a separate "impact on student learning" rating. The intersection of the two ratings determines the educator's professional development plan. The state expects "strong [practice] ratings and at least moderate student performance ratings."

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

- The state education agency (SEA) created new regulations and a model evaluation system.
- Districts must adopt the state model or establish systems within the state guidelines.
- Districts are required to submit proposed systems and collective bargaining agreements to the state for review, but the process is still being developed.

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

- The state will use growth results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, when available, in combination with at least one other district-wide measure of achievement.
 - The measure will not be comparable across LEAs due to the variation in the locally-developed measures.

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

- When no state assessment data is available, two district-determined measures will be used. The state is developing a range of resources to aid districts in this task.

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

- Each LEA will establish its own practice measure.
 - For teachers, it must include all of the performance standards outlined in the SEA's regulations (curriculum, planning and assessment; teaching all students; family and community engagement; professional culture).

- For principals, it must include all of the performance standards outlined in the SEA's regulations (instructional leadership, management and operations, family and community engagement, professional culture).
- All evaluations must also incorporate a self-assessment, and student and staff feedback.

Will all educators be evaluated at least annually?

- Teachers without professional status (tenure) and those with professional status whose impact on learning is low will receive an annual summative evaluation. All others will receive a summative evaluation at least every two years, and a formative evaluation in any year that they do not receive a summative evaluation.
- Principals in first three years employed in the district will be evaluated annually. For others, evaluation occurs at least every two years, with a formative evaluation in any year that a summative evaluation does not occur.

USE OF EVALUATIONS

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

- All teachers and principals will be placed on an “educator plan,” based on their career stage and overall evaluation rating that outlines the goals and actions they must take to improve practice and increase student learning.
- Those rated less than “Proficient” are placed on a one-year improvement plan.
- If an educator receives a strong practice rating but shows low impact on student achievement, the improvement plan must address the discrepancy between the two.

How will the state use teacher and principal evaluations to inform personnel decisions?

- Teacher tenure: The waiver plan indicates professional status (tenure) should only be granted to educators who achieve a rating of proficient or higher on each performance standard. To do otherwise, a principal must consult with the district superintendent.
- Teacher dismissal: Educators placed on improvement plans who fail “to improve substantially” may be dismissed, but these decisions are left to districts.
- Teacher advancement/compensation: “Educators whose summative performance rating is exemplary and student learning is moderate or high shall be recognized and rewarded with leadership roles, promotion, additional compensation...”
- Individual administrator employment contracts must allow for the use of evaluation results to inform personnel decisions.

Will the state use educator evaluations to ensure that 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. Massachusetts' 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.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS

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

- The regulations hold superintendents responsible for evaluator training. The state will provide district-level and school-level planning/implementation guides; a guide to educator practice rubrics; a guide on rating educator impact on student learning with district-determined measures; and information on how to use staff/student feedback in the evaluation process.
- The state will provide online video training modules and additional train-the-trainer tools to the districts through its implementation support vendors.
 - The state will also provide a process to calibrate evaluator judgments against district rubrics to ensure inter-rater reliability.

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

- An independent evaluator will annually analyze data to ensure that district evaluations are being implemented effectively and in accordance with state regulations. The SEA must publicly report its review.
- If a teacher receives a strong practice rating but shows low impact on student achievement, the evaluator's supervisor must review the rating with the evaluator and confirm or revise the rating. Such discrepancies may be noted as a factor in the evaluator's own evaluation.

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

- As each district not participating in the Race to the Top competition will enter into separate collective bargaining agreements that will inform local evaluation system development, the state is providing model collective bargaining contract language that is consistent with the state's regulations. Race to the Top districts will implement the state's model evaluation system.