

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, Minnesota'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 Minnesota'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.

Minnesota'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

- 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. Minnesota is taking steps to make sure that those students who most need strong teachers get them by requiring districts to review the quality of all staff at Priority Schools, retaining only those who are determined to be effective, and preventing ineffective teachers from transferring into the schools.
- The state's implementation plan takes into account the reality of collective bargaining agreements. The plan articulates that teacher evaluation models that meet state criteria must be developed through collective bargaining. However, if a district does not develop and agree on a model by 2014-15, it must adopt the state model.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

- First and foremost, teacher and school leader evaluations should be aimed at improving teacher practice. But tenured teachers are only required to have a summative evaluation by a trained evaluator every three years. Although teachers will participate in a peer review process during off years, such infrequent opportunities for formal evaluation and feedback are causes for worry.
- Minnesota has established work groups for both teacher and school leader evaluation, and these work groups are determining evaluation components and deciding requirements for the use of evaluations in personnel decisions and professional development. The decisions made by these work groups could make for a strong system that makes a meaningful difference in the experiences of teachers and students, or they could lead to weak systems that do little to

improve the quality of teaching and the resulting student outcomes in the state. Much remains to be seen.

EVALUATION DESIGN

What are the components of the state's proposed teacher and principal evaluation system, and how are those components weighted?

- For teachers, evaluations include three components:
 - 35 percent based on value-added performance measures
 - Observations on professional teaching standards
 - Longitudinal data on student engagement and connection
- Teacher evaluations may also include portfolios and other evidence and artifacts of practice.
- The state legislation does not currently differentiate between teachers in tested and non-tested subject areas.
- Principal evaluation will include three components:
 - On-the-job observations
 - Surveys
 - Student achievement data, including graduation rates, progress on closing the achievement gap, and student growth.
- The weighting of the components of the principal evaluation is still being determined.

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

- LEAs are required to implement either a state model or a locally developed model that meets state criteria.
- The state currently has a Teacher Evaluation Workgroup and a Principal Evaluation Workgroup working to develop evaluation models and details relating to the implementation of systems.

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

- The evaluation model will utilize the student growth score used in the Multiple Measurements Rating as part of the state's accountability system. For teacher evaluation, the growth scores will be used to measure an individual teacher's ability to achieve high student growth.

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

- This subject will be addressed by the teacher evaluation work group. In creating the work group, special attention was paid to ensuring representation of non-tested grades and subject areas.

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

- The work group plans to develop guidance on the process and content of observation cycles, including various forms of feedback (such as parent and student surveys).
- In addition to the three measures required in all teacher evaluations, district teachers may opt to include a portfolio that demonstrates evidence of reflection and professional growth.

Will all educators be evaluated at least annually?

- The planned model distinguishes between probationary and tenured teachers in frequency of evaluation.
 - Probationary teachers are evaluated periodically throughout each school year, with the first evaluation occurring within the first 90 days.
 - Tenured teachers must have one summative evaluation by a trained evaluator at least every three years and, in off years, must have a peer review process.
- Principals will be evaluated annually.

USE OF EVALUATIONS

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

- The Teacher Evaluation and Principal Evaluation Work Groups will provide guidance on how districts must coordinate evaluation results with school and individual professional development.
- Probationary teachers will be coached by trained peer observers.
- For all teachers and principals, individual professional development plans will be driven by student achievement data, along with other information such as self-assessments and student feedback.

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

- The Teacher Evaluation and Principal Evaluation Work Groups will provide guidance on how districts must link evaluation results with tenure practices and other teacher-quality decisions.

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. Schools in Minnesota that are identified as Priority will be required to review the quality of all staff, retaining only those who are determined to be effective and preventing ineffective teachers from transferring in.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS

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

- Each evaluator will be required to complete a series of training sessions, part of which will include strategies for supporting teachers as participants in the evaluation process.
- Training will be ongoing and will be revised and refined as systems are implemented.

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

- The implementation timeline notes the state's need to develop a process to monitor the fidelity of implementation and outlines elements to include in this process, such as LEA assurances on evaluator training and periodic audits.

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

- The implementation timeline for both teacher and principal evaluation accounts for the need for both funding and time to develop state training and local training requirements, as well as activities to ensure inter-rater reliability among evaluators.
- Teacher evaluation models must be developed through collective bargaining, but if the district does not develop a model by 2014-15, it must adopt the state model.