

NCLB WAIVER SUMMARY: ACCOUNTABILITY

PROMISING ASPECTS OF THE PLAN:

- The performance of low-income students, students of color, English-language learners, and students with disabilities against ambitious achievement and graduation-rate goals is a significant component of the school ratings that drive the system. Another significant component is the gap between the growth of a given student group at a school and that of higher performing groups statewide.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- The growth measure for school accountability looks at whether a school is improving student learning faster than other schools. This means that if most schools are doing a mediocre job of increasing student learning, a school could get credit for slightly bigger gains in student achievement even though students remain far below grade-level standards. The state will report whether students are gaining enough to meet standards, but will not include this growth-to-standards measure in the school ratings.
- For schools that don't meet achievement goals *and* are neither Focus Schools nor in the bottom 25 percent statewide, the plan leaves unclear whether they will have to do anything more than write a school improvement plan.

What indicators are used to measure school performance?

- Achievement index in reading and math, overall and for each student group
- Growth in reading and math for students overall
 - The growth measure looks at the degree to which a student grew more or less than all students statewide with the same prior-year performance.
- Growth-gap reduction in reading and math
 - The growth-gaps measure looks at the growth, as defined above, of low-income students, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, American Indians, students with disabilities, and English learners in a school compared with the growth of the relevant reference group statewide (for instance, a school's black students are compared with white students statewide).
- Graduation rates, overall and for each student group

What are the expectations for performance on these indicators?

- For achievement, the goal is a 50 percent reduction in the difference between the 2011 achievement index value and an index value of one (the total possible index value) by 2017, overall and for each group.
 - Goals are set at the state level, as opposed to the school level.
- There are no specific expectations for growth and growth-gap reduction. School performance on these indicators is measured relative to other schools.
- The graduation-rate goal for students overall and each group is 85 percent.

How are student groups included?

- The weighted percentage of students overall and of student groups meeting their achievement index goals counts for 33 percent of the elementary/middle school determination, and 25 percent of the high school determination.
- The weighted percentage of students overall and student groups meeting their graduation-rate goal counts for 25 percent of the high school determination.

- For achievement and graduation-rate calculations, the groups included are low-income, African American, Latino, Asian, American Indian, white, students with disabilities, and English-language learners.
- A school's weighted growth-gap reduction relative to other schools counts for 33 percent of the elementary-middle school determination and 25 percent of the high school determination.
 - For growth-gap reduction, the groups included at the school level are low-income students, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, American Indians, students with disabilities, and English-language learners.

How are overarching school determinations made?

- On each indicator, schools are compared with all other schools with similar grade ranges and are given a percentile ranking. That percentile ranking is multiplied by the indicator's weight (such as 25 percent for achievement in high schools) to generate points earned for the indicator. Points earned are totaled and divided by the total points possible. That percentage is the school's Multiple Measures Rating (MMR).

How are Priority Schools identified?

- Every three years, the state identifies the 5 percent of Title I schools with the lowest MMRs as Priority Schools.
- Tier I School Improvement Grant schools are also Priority Schools.
- Priority Schools are identified on a proportional basis by grade span, meaning that the proportion of Priority Schools that are elementary schools will be equal to the proportion of schools statewide that are elementary schools.

How are Focus Schools identified?

- Every three years, the state identifies the 10 percent of Title I schools with the lowest Focus Ratings as Focus Schools. The Focus Rating includes the weighted percentage of Focus groups that make their achievement-index goals and the growth-gap measurement in the MMR.
 - The Focus groups included are low-income students, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, American Indians, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- High schools with six-year graduation rates less than 60 percent are also Focus Schools.
- Focus Schools are identified on a proportional basis by grade span.

What happens to Priority Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - The state, through regional support centers, will provide a comprehensive needs assessment, data analysis, curriculum alignment, and identification of evidence-based instructional strategies. The state will also work with the district to determine if the current principal is effective or should be replaced.
 - Districts must do a needs assessment and support improvement plan implementation. Title I funds could be deferred if Priority Schools are not supported.
 - Schools must develop and implement an improvement plan and set aside 20 percent of Title I funds for state-approved turnaround activities, including teacher evaluation, professional learning communities, student support systems, extended learning time, data analysis, and family and community engagement. Principals must use teacher evaluation results to make staffing decisions.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - Criteria for exiting Priority status: Perform above the bottom 25 percent of Title I schools on the MMR for two consecutive years or achieve Reward School status.

- Schools re-identified as Priority after the first three-year period undergo restructuring similar to existing NCLB options.

What happens to Focus Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - The state will work with schools and districts to provide tailored supports and interventions, including conducting a needs assessment, providing targeted professional development, analyzing data, providing math and reading specialists, and working with advocacy organizations, parents, and community members.
 - Districts must do a needs assessment and support improvement plan implementation. Title I funds could be deferred if Focus Schools are not supported.
 - School must develop and implement an improvement plan and set aside 20 percent of Title I funds for state-approved improvement activities.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - Criteria for exiting Focus status: Perform above the bottom 25 percent of Title I schools on the Focus Rating for two consecutive years or, for schools identified for their graduation rate, achieve a graduation rate of greater than 60 percent for two consecutive years and improve the graduation rate by five percentage points in each of those two years.
 - There are no clear consequences for Focus Schools that do not improve.

What happens to schools that are not Priority or Focus? Does underperformance against goals trigger action?

- All schools that don't meet achievement index goals, overall or for any student group, for two consecutive years must write a school improvement plan and have access to support and technical assistance from the state.
- Schools in the 60th-84th percentile on the MMR can apply to be Celebration Schools. Among Title I schools, 10 percent will be selected, but it's not clear what this means.
- Title I schools with an MMR in the bottom 25 percent are identified as Continuous Improvement (CI) schools. CI schools that are not already Priority or Focus must work with the district to perform a needs assessment and complete a school improvement plan. The district must provide oversight, monitoring, support, and resources to implement the plan. Districts that don't effectively implement improvement plans for CI schools may have Title I funds deferred or, if the district is persistently low performing, will be required to put in place mandatory set-asides for state-approved, district improvement activities.

Will the state continue to offer public school choice?

- Choice is not mentioned in the plan. However, Minnesota has a statewide open enrollment policy.

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

- The state identifies the 15 percent of Title I schools with the highest MMR as Reward Schools.
- Reward Schools are identified on a proportional basis by grade span.
- Reward Schools receive public recognition. If funds become available, Reward Schools will receive financial support to partner with Priority or Focus Schools to share best practices