

NCLB WAIVER SUMMARY: ACCOUNTABILITY

PROMISING ASPECTS OF THE PLAN:

- New Jersey aggressively identifies high schools with low graduation rates. Instead of identifying schools with graduation rates below 60 percent as Priority or Focus Schools, which is the minimum waiver requirement, the state includes all high schools with graduation rates below 75 percent.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- While New Jersey has established ambitious, gap-closing achievement goals, it's not clear that, for most schools in the state, not meeting these goals will result in anything more than writing an improvement plan. Progress against gap-closing goals does not factor into the identification of Priority or Focus Schools, and only 5 percent of the "other Title I schools" that miss their goals will receive supports from the state.
 - The state does not appear to guarantee students in its lowest performing (Priority) schools the right to enroll in a higher performing school.
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What indicators are used to measure school performance?

- Proficiency in reading and math, for students overall and student groups
- Growth in reading and math for students overall
 - In elementary and middle schools, growth is defined as median student-growth percentiles (SGP), a measure of how much growth students are making relative to other students with similar academic histories.
 - In high schools, growth is defined as the average yearly increase in the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) passage rate.
- For public-reporting purposes: college and career readiness, graduation and postsecondary enrollment, and within-school gaps in language-arts and math achievement
 - College and career readiness includes SAT participation and performance, AP participation and performance, and the percentage of career and technical education students passing industry exams.
 - Graduation and postsecondary enrollment includes graduation rates, graduation via HSPA, college-remediation rates, the percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary within six months, and the percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary within 18 months.

What are the expectations for performance on these indicators?

- For reading and math achievement, the goal is to reduce by half the difference between current proficiency rates and 100 percent in six years, overall and for student groups. These Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) will be set individually for each school.
- Schools are also considered to be meeting expectations if they have math and reading proficiency rates of at least 90 percent (until 2015) and of at least 95 percent (after 2015) for students overall and for student groups.
- Targets are yet to be finalized for the other publicly reported indicators.

How are student groups included?

- AMOs for reading and math achievement are established for each group.
- The school performance report card will disaggregate some additional indicators, including the graduation rate, and will indicate whether groups have met yet-to-be-established targets for those indicators.
 - For AMOs and report cards, groups include: whites, African Americans, Latinos, Asians/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, students of two or more races, English-language learners, low-income students, and students with disabilities.

How are overarching school determinations made?

- Schools will receive a composite score based on performance against AMOs and on the publicly reported indicators. The scoring system is not yet finalized.

How are Priority Schools identified?

- Tier I and II School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools
- Title I schools with low school-wide proficiency rates that are not demonstrating high growth
 - Elementary and middle schools with a median SGP of 65 or higher cannot be Priority Schools
 - High schools with an average yearly increase in the HSPA passage rate of more than 5 percentage points cannot be Priority Schools.
 - The group of schools with low school-wide proficiency rates is further divided into two categories: high schools with low school-wide proficiency rates and graduation rates below 75 percent; and all other schools with low school-wide proficiency rates.
- Non-Title I schools with performance below that of the highest ranked Title I school that is identified as a Priority School

How are Focus Schools identified?

- All Title I high schools with overall graduation rates of less than 75 percent that are not Priority Schools
- Title I schools with the largest gaps between the highest performing student group and the two lowest performing student groups in the school
- Title I schools with the lowest performance for their two lowest performing student groups
 - Groups for largest gap and lowest performing group identification include: whites, African Americans, Latinos, Asians/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, English-language learners, low-income students, and students with disabilities. The groups must also have a median SGP of less than 65 (for elementary and middle schools)
- Any non-Title I schools ranking below the highest-ranked Title I school that is identified as a Focus school

What happens to Priority Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - Regional Achievement Centers (RAC) conduct a Quality School Review (QSR) of all identified schools. Based on the results, RAC staff work with principals to identify and implement interventions that align with the turnaround principles and to provide professional development. A suggested (though not mandatory) intervention to promote effective instruction involves prohibiting ineffective or partially effective teachers from being assigned to the Priority School.
 - RACs will monitor and evaluate interventions, and be held accountable for ensuring that their work with schools is effective, using appropriate school-level data.
 - These data include student performance on state assessments, student performance on classroom-level assessments, climate data (including survey data, attendance rates, and discipline rates), teacher effectiveness data, and instructional and implementation data (as collected through walkthroughs and observations).
 - Title I districts must incorporate the school's improvement plan into its district-wide plan in order to receive Title I dollars.

- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - Criteria for Exiting Priority Status: school no longer meets the definition of a Priority School for two consecutive years; successfully implements all interventions required by QSR; and reduces the number of students not demonstrating proficiency or not graduating over a three-year period by 25 percent, or demonstrates high growth for two consecutive years
 - In elementary and middle schools, high growth is a median student-growth percentile of 65 or higher. In high schools, high growth is an average annual increase in the HSPA passage rate of at least 5 percentage points.
 - If a school does not implement interventions or demonstrate the required improvement in student academic achievement, it may be closed by the state.

What happens to Focus Schools?

- Supports and Interventions:
 - Schools provide data/reports to RAC on current interventions, attendance, discipline, academics, curricular materials, student schedules, and family-involvement work.
 - RAC reviews these data and conducts a QSR, the results of which must be used in selecting and implementing interventions. RACs also provide professional development to staff in Focus Schools and monitor implementation of selected interventions.
 - Title I districts must incorporate the school's improvement plan into its district-wide plan in order to receive Title I dollars.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
 - Criteria for Exiting Focus Status: no longer meet the definition of a Focus School for two consecutive years; successfully implement all interventions required by QSR; and, based on why the school was identified, meet AMOs for the lowest performing student groups for three years, demonstrate high growth for two consecutive years, or reduce the number of students not graduating over a three-year period by 25 percent.
 - 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 and districts will have access to model curriculum.
- For schools that miss AMOs, districts must develop a school-improvement plan, including information on the alignment of Title I funds to address deficiencies. These schools are also invited to attend regional trainings and professional development sessions around state interventions.
- The state will use report card data to identify schools in which at least one student group misses AMOs for two years. Based on group achievement in those schools, the state will select at least the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools for additional supports and technical assistance.
 - This category may be expanded, especially to include schools that miss AMOs for multiple student groups, or that are in districts with large numbers of Priority or Focus schools.

Will the state continue to require public school choice?

- The plan does not mention public school choice.

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

- Reward-High Progress: all Title I schools with a median SGP of 65 or higher
- Reward-High Performing: all Title I schools that meet AMOs for all students and all student groups, have an overall proficiency rate of at least 90 percent, have a graduation rate of at least 90 percent, and have a proficiency rate in the top 10 percent of performance statewide for each eligible student group
 - Student groups include: whites, African Americans, Latinos, Asians/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, limited-English proficient students, low-income students, and students with disabilities. The groups must also have a median SGP of less than 65.

- Non-Title I schools that meet the same criteria are also classified as Reward Schools.
- Reward Schools receive publicity, including a plaque and recognition in a press release, invitations to a special celebration and rally in the capital, scholarships for teachers to obtain National Board certification, and may be asked to present workshops at the state's Effective Practices Conference.
- Up to 10 Title I schools that are Reward-High Performing and up to 10 that are Reward-High Progress will receive a monetary reward of up to \$100,000 each if they have a poverty rate of at least 35 percent over a three-year period and enroll students without a selective admissions process.