

## **NCLB WAIVER SUMMARY: ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **PROMISING ASPECTS OF PLAN:**

- New Mexico has established a clear role for districts in improving underperforming schools. For example, the state requires targeted interventions across districts where low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, or English-language learners (ELLs) repeatedly miss performance targets. The state also mandates interventions for districts where these student groups disproportionately are retained in grades K–3, are promoted to ninth grade without meeting standards, or are failing to graduate from high school on time. Underperforming groups in these districts will receive supports and resources aimed at raising their academic performance, even if they do not attend Priority or Focus Schools.

### **AREAS OF CONCERN:**

- The performance of specific student groups — such as low-income students, students of color, English-language learners, and students with disabilities — does not factor into school grades. The state has set separate goals for these groups, but the district (not the school) is largely responsible for directing resources and interventions to schools that do not meet these goals. Although Priority, Focus, and Strategic Schools must select interventions based on the performance of student groups, identification of these schools is based on other factors.
- The state has set higher expectations for the growth of a school's lowest performing students than for the growth of its higher performing students. However, the student growth measure does not indicate whether students are gaining enough to actually meet standards.
- The state does not appear to require action to ensure that Priority Schools are staffed with the effective teachers and leaders that are essential for serious improvement.

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### **What indicators are used to measure school performance?**

- Proficiency in reading and math, for students overall and for student groups
  - The groups include whites, African Americans, American Indians, Asians, Latinos, low-income students, English-language learners, students with disabilities, the lowest performers (bottom 25 percent of students in a school), and higher performers (top 75 percent of students in a school).
- School-wide “conditional status” in reading and math for students overall
  - This is the difference between estimated and observed proficiency rates. Estimated proficiency is determined based on a value-added model that controls for students' prior performance, whether students were enrolled for a full academic year, school size, and the grade in which the assessment was taken.
- For elementary and middle schools, individual student growth over the past three years in reading and math for the lowest performers (the bottom 25 percent of students in a school) and higher performers (the top 75 percent of students in a school)

- Growth is defined as the average change in an individual student's performance over three years.
- For elementary and middle schools, school-wide growth in reading and math for students overall
  - This is defined as the change in performance for successive cohorts of students over three years — for instance, the performance of this year's fourth-graders compared with previous years' fourth-graders — as determined through the state's value-added model.
- For high schools, school-wide growth in reading and math for the lowest performers and higher performers
  - This is defined as the change in performance for successive cohorts of students over the past three years — for example, this year's 11th-graders compared with the prior year's 11th-graders — as determined by the state's value-added model.
  - Individual student growth in reading and math for students overall in high schools will be introduced in subsequent years.
- For high schools, four-year and five-year graduation rates, the growth in the graduation rate, and college and career readiness for students overall
  - Growth in the graduation rate is defined as the difference between the expected and observed graduation rates, as determined through the state's value-added model.
  - College and career readiness is the percent of the graduating student cohort participating in, and the percent of participants successfully completing, the ACT, the PSAT, AP exams, dual-credit coursework, or coursework leading to vocational certification
  - Six-year graduation rates will eventually factor into the grading system.
- Attendance rate for students overall
- Overall results from the student "opportunity to learn" survey
- Demonstrated opportunities for student and parent engagement
  - This includes factors such as whether the school offers sports, fine arts, and leadership opportunities for students, and mentoring and tutoring for parents.

**What are the expectations for performance on these indicators?**

- For reading and math proficiency, the expectation is 100 percent proficiency.
- For graduation and attendance rates, the expectation is 95 percent.
- For conditional status, school-wide growth, college and career readiness, and opportunity to learn results, school performance is measured relative to other schools.
- For growth of higher performing students, schools get credit based on how far they are from the standard of a year's worth of growth (according to New Mexico, this is equivalent to the state average).
- For growth of the lowest performing students, schools get credit based on how far they are from a state-set "catch up" growth rate, which is equivalent to the state average for the growth of the lowest performing students but greater than the state average for the growth of students overall.
- Expectations for student and parent engagement are unclear.
- The state has also set annual school growth targets (SGTs) for reading and math proficiency, reading and math growth, and graduation rates that aim to raise all schools' performance within 10 years to that of the 90th-percentile school in the baseline year. These SGTs will be publicly reported, but they do not factor into school grades.

### **How are student groups included?**

- SGTs for reading and math proficiency, graduation rates, growth for the lowest performers, and growth for higher performers apply to each student group.
  - The groups include students overall, whites, African Americans, American Indians, Asians, Latinos, low-income students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities.
- The components making up school grades will be disaggregated by student group.
  - The groups include whites, African Americans, American Indians, Asians, Latinos, low-income students, ELLs, male and female students, and students with disabilities.
- Only the school's lowest performers and higher performers overall will factor into the school's overall grade.

### **How are overarching school determinations made?**

- For reading and math proficiency, graduation rate, and attendance rate, schools are awarded a percentage of possible points based on how their performance compares to expectations.
- For school-wide growth, conditional status, growth of lowest performing students, growth of higher performing students, college and career readiness, and opportunity to learn results, schools earn the percentage of points equivalent to their position in the statewide distribution of all schools — for instance, a school at the 90th percentile for an indicator would earn 90 percent of possible points.
- Points earned for each metric are weighted and combined into one index
- Based on total points, grades are assigned so that the 50th-percentile school receives a C and the 90th-percentile school receives an A. Based on the base-year distribution, this means the following:
  - For elementary and middle schools, 0.0-37.4 points = F, 37.5-49.9 points = D, 50.0-59.9 points = C, 60.0-74.9 points = B, and 75.0-100.0 points = A.
  - For high schools, 0.0-34.9 points = F, 35.0-49.9 points = D, 50.0-64.9 points = C, 65.0-74.9 points = B, 75.0-100.0 points = A.
  - The thresholds for each grade level will remain the same for several years, but may change if there is a “dramatic change” in either performance or assessments.<sup>1</sup>

### **How are Priority Schools identified?**

- Tier I School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools
- Title I schools with an F grade and a graduation rate below 60 percent
- The lowest ranking Title I Schools with a grade of F, so that the number of Priority Schools identified equals 5 percent of Title I schools across all three categories

### **How are Focus Schools identified?**

- Title I schools with a D grade and a graduation rate below 60 percent
- All other Title I high schools with a graduation rate below 60 percent

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<sup>1</sup> Based on information from “A-B-C-D-F School Grading 2011, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs),” New Mexico Public Education Department, [http://webapp2.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolData/docs/1011/SchoolGrading/FAQ\\_School\\_Grading\\_FAQ\\_V1.2.pdf](http://webapp2.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolData/docs/1011/SchoolGrading/FAQ_School_Grading_FAQ_V1.2.pdf)

- Title I Schools that received a grade of D or F for the growth of their lowest performing students and also have the largest gaps between the school's lowest performing students and the state's higher performing students

### **What happens to Priority Schools?**

- Supports and Interventions:
  - In its review of each district's budget, the state will ensure that funds in Priority Schools are targeted towards proven programs. The Priority Schools Bureau will conduct on-site visits to monitor and support Priority Schools.
  - The state and district will examine systems put in place by the school and the effectiveness of instruction for all students using an Instructional Audit and a Core, Supplemental, and Intensive (CSI) mapping review. The state and district, in conjunction with the school, then develop an intervention plan focusing on each of the seven turnaround principles.
  - Priority Schools receive state support to conduct a self-evaluation to determine whether programs are being implemented with fidelity. They also receive training and technical assistance on reading and math best practices and on turnaround principles. The same flexibility granted to principals in SIG schools will be granted to Principals in Priority Schools.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
  - Criteria for exiting Priority Status: Earn an overall grade of C for two consecutive years and a growth rate for the lowest performers equal to a grade of B or above. Schools with low graduation rates need to earn a C for two consecutive years and demonstrate annual graduation rate growth of at least five percent.
  - If a school does not demonstrate "consistent and sustainable growth" after four years, the state may close, reconstitute, or appoint an external management provider to the school.

### **What happens to Focus Schools?**

- Supports and Interventions:
  - In its review of each district's budget, the state will ensure that funds in Focus Schools are targeted towards proven programs. The Priority Schools Bureau will conduct on-site visits to monitor and support Focus Schools.
  - The state and district will conduct an Instructional Audit and CSI mapping review to examine systems put in place by the school and the effectiveness of instruction for all students. Focus Schools will undergo self-evaluation to determine which student groups have particularly low performance and whether programs are being implemented with fidelity.
  - Based on the results of the state, district, and school reviews, Focus Schools will select interventions aligned with four of the seven turnaround principles with assistance from the district and state. They also will receive training and technical assistance. Principals in Focus Schools will receive the same flexibility granted to principals in SIG schools.
  - The district must approve the turnaround principles that Focus Schools select.
- Exit Criteria and Consequences:
  - Criteria for exiting Focus Status: Schools with low graduation rates and a grade of C or above must maintain their overall grade, have a graduation rate of at least 60 percent, and have growth in graduation rates of at least three percent each year for at least two years. Low-graduation rate schools that received a D must earn an overall grade of C for two consecutive years, have a graduation rate of at

least 60 percent each year, and have growth in graduation rates of at least three percent per year. Schools identified because of large gaps must raise the grades of their lowest performers' growth to at least a B and narrow the gap between the school's lowest performers and the state's higher performers by at least six scale-score points (equivalent to a 1.5 standard deviation cut in the gap).

- 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?**

- Strategic Schools are those that have an overall grade of C or lower, as well as a gap between the school's lowest performers and the state's higher performers that is among the 25 percent largest in the state.
  - Strategic Schools must use group performance on SGTs to drive intervention plans and activities. This includes setting specific, measurable goals for subgroup performance in their school improvement plans. Principals in Strategic Schools will receive the same flexibility granted to principals in SIG schools.
  - Strategic Schools and their districts may conduct a needs assessment to determine appropriate interventions and supports, but this is not required.
  - Districts provide support to Strategic Schools as they select and implement interventions.
  - In its review of each district's budget, the state will ensure that funds in Strategic Schools are targeted towards proven strategies.
- Districts will direct supports and resources to schools that are not Priority, Focus, or Strategic Schools but are missing SGTs for student groups or have significant achievement gaps.
  - The student groups include whites, African Americans, American Indians, Asians, Latinos, low-income students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities.

### **Will the state continue to require public school choice?**

- The plan does not mention school choice. However, state law says that the parent of a student enrolled in a public school that received an F for any two of the last four years has the right to transfer to any public school in the state not rated F, or to participate in a local or state cyber academy.

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

- Reward Schools are Title I Schools that have one of the following outcomes:
  - An overall grade of A, a growth grade of at least a B for the lowest performing students, and a growth grade of at least a C for higher performing students
  - An overall grade of A, a growth grade of at least a C for the lowest performing students, and a growth grade of at least a B for higher performing students
  - An overall grade of A and a graduation rate of 85 percent or higher
  - An overall grade of at least a C and annual graduation rate growth of at least 10 percent
  - An overall grade of at least a C and growth grades of A for both the lowest performing students and higher performing students
- Reward Schools may receive a letter of recognition, public mention in a press release, their school profile on the website of the New Mexico Public Education Department, and visits from senior state officials. Reward School leaders will receive stipends, and they will also be asked to mentor leaders in lower achieving schools. High-performing and

high-progress schools will receive monetary rewards. Reward Schools may be exempt from some school improvement planning and other requirements.

**Is there a system of district accountability?**

- In districts where at least half of student groups miss school growth targets for two consecutive years, the state will examine the district budget to ensure that it contains plans for interventions specific to those groups.
  - The groups include whites, African Americans, American Indians, Asians, Latinos, low-income students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities.
- The state will determine whether a district has a disproportionate percentage of students in a student group who are retained in a grade between kindergarten and third grade, are promoted to ninth grade without being proficient, or fail to graduate from high school on time. These districts will be required to align funding with district-wide interventions that target the performance of these student groups.
  - The groups include whites, African Americans, American Indians, Asians, Latinos, low-income students, ELLs, and students with disabilities.