

Elementary & Secondary Education Act

DC Flexibility Waiver

Introduction

In the absence of congressional reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Federal Department of Education is allowing states to apply for and receive a waiver of flexibility from some of the requirements of the current law. The District of Columbia applied for and received waiver at the beginning of SY 2012-2013. Read below for how this waiver changes how schools are held accountable under the law.

Classification of Schools

Schools will be classified into 5 categories: Reward, Rising, Developing, Priority, and Focus.

Accountability

Focus School Accountability: School is identified because of large achievement gaps between highest performing and lowest- performing subgroup(s). Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to -

- Develop an intervention plan that addresses low performance of specified subgroup(s)
- Report on a bi-annual basis on meeting implementation milestones
- If identified by LEA, receive a portion/services from the LEA 20% Title I reservation to carry out interventions

Priority School Accountability: School is identified because of overall low student performance. LEAs are required to -

- Develop an intervention plan that addresses the 7 turnaround principles required by the United States Department of Education (USED) to improve all students
- Report on a bi-annual basis on meeting implementation milestones
- If identified by LEA, receive a portion/services from the LEA 20% Title I reservation to carry out interventions

School Accountability (excluding Focus and Priority schools): Schools that miss the same target(s) for two consecutive years will be required to -

- Implement interventions and supports that address missed targets
- Expand the School Title I plan to include interventions and supports that address all students and/or subgroups
- If identified by LEA, receive a portion/services from the LEA 20% Title I reservation to carry out interventions

Support Systems by OSSE

Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) Supports: The level of support provided to LEAs and schools will be contingent upon the school classifications and needs of the LEA. Statewide initiatives will be based on DC CAS data trends and needs. Services include -

- Professional Development for LEAs, schools, and parents

- On-going guidance and technical assistance
- Quality monitoring to support effective implementation
- Dissemination of data to be used for LEA and school decision making

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Did DCPS get rid of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?

A: NCLB is still in effect and is managed by D.C.'s Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). OSSE serves as the state education agency for DCPS and all public charter schools. It is OSSE, not DCPS, that had the authority to apply for the ESEA waiver which applies to DCPS and all other LEAs in the District of Columbia. The ESEA waiver allows flexibility in modifying the school accountability system. Specifically, OSSE asked for the ability to reward both proficiency and growth. 33 states have now received an NCLB waiver from the federal government to modify their school accountability systems.

Q: How does the system under the ESEA Waiver differ from the old NCLB system?

A: Previously, under NCLB, schools were evaluated only on the percentage of students who reached proficiency. Every year, schools were or were not awarded Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) based on the targeted increase in the percentage of students who reached proficiency. The new system evaluates schools based on both the number of students who reach proficiency and on individual student growth. This new approach will show how students at all levels – from below basic to basic to proficient to advanced – are growing.

Q: When does this new system take effect?

A: The new accountability system was approved at the end of the summer and took effect at the beginning of SY2012-13.

Q: What does this mean for my child? What will my child be tested on?

A: Your child will still be tested on the D.C. Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS). The DC CAS is a series of tests that assesses our students on reading in grades 2-10; math in grades 2-8 and 10; science in grades 5 and 8; biology in high school; and writing in grades 4, 7 and 10.

Starting in the 2014-2015 school year, DCPS will administer the new Common Core State Standards assessment, which is called the PARCC (Partnership of Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers). This assessment will replace the DC CAS. It will mark student progress to make sure students are on track for college and careers as well as provide teachers with timely information so they can improve instruction.

Q: How will student performance be categorized?

A: OSSE will continue to use the DC CAS designations of below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced for the next 2 years until the PARCC is adopted in SY 2014-2015. At that time, the categories and how they are characterized may be revisited.

Q: What does the ESEA waiver mean for my child’s school? How will I know how my school is performing?

A: Under the old system, schools either met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) proficiency target rates or did not. Under the new system, schools are now assessed based on how many students are proficient and how many students showed growth – even those who do not score at proficient levels. Schools are then categorized into five groups that provide a more precise evaluation of how schools are doing:

- *Focus* (schools needing targeted support to address large achievement gaps)
- *Priority* (schools needing intensive support to address low performance)
- *Developing* (moderate performing schools needing support to continue growth)
- *Rising* (higher performing schools needing support to continue growth)
- *Reward* (schools with the highest levels of student performance and growth).

Q: Will my child be penalized for not getting a certain score or showing enough growth?

A: No. The new accountability system under the NCLB waiver focuses on holding schools accountable for student performance and growth on the DC CAS. As was the case under the old NCLB system, there are no penalties for individual students regardless of how they perform.

Q: Will I get an end of year report for my child?

A: Yes, parents will still receive a CAS report annual score reports for their children and should still expect the same high performance they always have. The CAS reports will also show parents how to help their children academically.

Q: How does this new system affect Title I funding?

A: The NCLB waiver did not change the amount of Title I funds that are allocated to a school. The amount of Title I funds received by a school is recalculated each year and depends on the total amount of Title I funds DCPS receives from OSSE and the number of DCPS students who qualify for free and reduced meals (FARM).

Priority schools are required to implement intervention strategies that address seven turn around principles. Focus schools must implement interventions to meet the needs of the students of the subgroup that placed the school in focus status. They must choose from a list of targeted intervention strategies.

The waiver does allow changes to Supplemental Educational Services (SES), which were a mandated intervention under the old NCLB system. With the new NCLB waiver, Priority and Focus schools have the flexibility to use other interventions, such as extended school day, to provide students the extra help they may need to succeed.

Flexibility Waiver Glossary

Classification of LEAs: Although LEAs will have individualized targets, they will not be classified

ESEA: Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal law that provides rules and guidelines for states and local school districts accepting federal funds for education programs.

Flexibility in Use of Title I Funds: LEAs and schools will have flexibility in the types of interventions and supports to meet the needs of students, teachers and schools

Growth for all students: Growth is expected for all students. The new accountability system incentivizes growth by awarding more points for continued growth towards advanced proficiency

Individualized Targets: Each LEA and school will have their own unique targets SY 2010-2011 DC CAS test scores as baseline

LEA: Local Education Agency; District of Columbia Public Schools is classified as an LEA under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

LEA Accountability: LEAs that miss the same target(s) for two consecutive years will be required to

- Expand the LEA Title I plan to include interventions and supports for all students and/or subgroups
- Implement LEA level interventions and supports that address missed targets
- Reserve 20% of Title I funds
- Report on a bi-annual basis on meeting implementation milestones

Multiple Measures to Gauge Achievement: Each LEA and school will be measured based on proficiency, growth, graduation rates, attendance, and participation rates for DC CAS

OSSE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the District of Columbia's "State" Education Agency, responsible for all LEAs within the District of Columbia.

Shared Goal: Reduce by half the number of non-proficient students - 75% proficient in 5 years