

Getting the Nod

The U.S. Department of Education approved 8 states for waivers under the No Child Left Behind Act through the 2013-14 school year, but not before requiring changes to their original proposals. In addition, three states were awarded conditional waivers that will expire at the end of the 2012-13 school year if certain requirements aren't met.

STATE	HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM	CHANGES FROM APPLICATION
COLORADO FULL WAIVER	Based on growth and proficiency; requires all schools and districts to complete improvement plans; factors in writing and science in addition to reading and math; retains tutoring and choice for lowest-performing schools.	Added more detail to its plan to incorporate students with disabilities and English-language learners into more rigorous common-standards coursework; school improvement strategies must be based on research; schools with lagging subgroups (minorities, ELLs, students with disabilities) must focus on students furthest behind; state will identify targeted supports for schools with subgroups that miss achievement targets.
FLORIDA CONDITIONAL WAIVER	Uses an A-F grading system; factors in writing and science in addition to reading and math; emphasizes bottom 25 percent of students in one "super-subgroup."	Interventions will be required even in A, B, or C schools with low graduation rates; state must target interventions for any school—even if it's not a low-performing "focus" or "priority" school—in which a subgroup misses achievement targets two years in a row.
GEORGIA CONDITIONAL WAIVER	Uses a performance index based on growth, achievement, and gap closing; issues red and yellow flags for poor subgroup performance; factors in science, social studies and writing in addition to reading and math; requires small percentage of Title I funds to be set aside for extended learning time in lowest-performing schools.	Identified additional Title I schools with low subgroup performance or graduation rates, or in a particular content area, as "alert" schools that will require targeted school improvement plans; state will conduct performance reviews in bottom 5 percent of its districts.
INDIANA FULL WAIVER	Uses an A-F grading system based on growth and achievement; emphasizes bottom 25 percent of students in super-subgroup.	Added more detail to its plan to incorporate students with disabilities and ELLs into more rigorous common-standards coursework; will keep traditional NCLB subgroups as well as super-subgroups in its accountability system; will require schools to implement interventions for struggling subgroups; toughened the criteria for schools to exit priority and focus school status.
KENTUCKY FULL WAIVER	Uses a rating system based on achievement, gap closing, and program reviews in nontested subjects, with plans to incorporate a school's percentage of effective teachers and principals in later years; factors in science, social studies, and writing in addition to reading and math; emphasizes larger "student gap" subgroup.	Added more detail to its plan to incorporate students with disabilities and ELLs into more rigorous common-standards coursework; will require all high schools to meet graduation rate targets; strengthened exit criteria for focus schools that are identified because of subgroup performance.
MASSACHUSETTS FULL WAIVER	Uses five-level grading scale based on gap closing and achievement; factors in science in addition to reading and math; creates new super-subgroup of ELLs, students with disabilities, and low-income students.	Lowered the number of students necessary to be included in subgroup performance (called "n size") to 30 from 40; will require performance targets and interventions for individual subgroups.
MINNESOTA FULL WAIVER	Uses rating system based on student growth, gap closing, and achievement; sets 85 percent graduation-rate target for all high schools.	Added more detail to its plan to incorporate students with disabilities and ELLs into more rigorous common-standards coursework; strengthened accountability for graduation rates; schools can no longer make adequate yearly progress using "safe harbor" provision under NCLB law; revised achievement targets so students are on track to proficiency within four years.
NEW JERSEY FULL WAIVER	Uses school report cards with metrics on student growth, gaps, and achievement; relies on seven new regional achievement centers to create customized interventions for schools.	Added more detail to its plan to incorporate students with disabilities and ELLs into more-rigorous common-standards coursework; will identify schools and require improvement plans if subgroups fail to meet targets; will report graduation rates for each subgroup; will develop guidelines for teacher and principal evaluations and implement the system in fall 2012.
NEW MEXICO FULL WAIVER	Uses an A-F grading system based primarily on achievement, student and school growth, and in small part on attendance and a school's "opportunity to learn" survey on teaching; emphasizes bottom 25 percent of students in one super-subgroup.	Strengthened subgroup accountability by using its authority to review district budgets and programs to ensure resources and strategies are directed to struggling students; will identify a new group of "strategic" schools, which are schools with the largest gaps between school's bottom quartile and the top three quartiles statewide; will not rely on student demographic data as part of its student-growth model.
OKLAHOMA CONDITIONAL WAIVER	Uses an A-F grading scale based on achievement and gap closing; uses a report card to highlight performance of subgroups; factors in science in addition to math and reading.	Added more detail to its plan to incorporate students with disabilities and ELLs into more rigorous common standards coursework; included tentative timeline for piloting teacher and principal evaluation system during the 2012-13 school year; created differentiated and specific interventions for all schools in bottom 25 percent.
TENNESSEE FULL WAIVER	Uses A-F grades based on achievement and gap closing; uses a report card to highlight performance of subgroups; factors in science as well as math and reading.	Added more detail to its plan to incorporate ELLs into more rigorous common-standards coursework; will require schools to take more-aggressive action for poor subgroup performance; added graduation targets for subgroups.