

1. What does the ESEA Waiver mean for Nevada?

The ESEA Waiver strengthens Nevada's capacity to implement education reform initiatives. Nevada has articulated a clear plan to improve standards-based instruction and to assess student, educator, school, district, and state performance through a next generation accountability system. With the waiver, Nevada is shifting from an accountability system based on federal definitions and sanctions to our own state accountability system, approved by the U.S. Department of Education (USED). The Waiver supports the state, districts, schools, families, and other stakeholders to share a common understanding of district and school performance and to meaningfully distinguish schools that are meeting performance expectations from those that are not, based on our own state-derived values. The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and school districts will be better able to direct resources to those schools that need them the most, and to focus improvement and sustainability efforts on what matters most: ensuring college- and career-readiness for all students.

2. How will the Waiver improve education in Nevada?

The Waiver empowers Nevada to create and implement a next generation accountability system that provokes the right conditions for educational improvement for our students. While No Child Left Behind (NCLB) improved states' foci on student performance outcomes, it also resulted in unintended consequences. For example, under the NCLB accountability system, because of *proficiency results*, some schools were identified as failing when they were actually fostering strong student *growth results*. At the same time, other schools lauded as successful didn't necessarily foster increases in student growth. Through the new accountability system, Nevada will focus on multiple measures, yielding more useful information about student performance in order to increase performance for all students. This system incentivizes the right goals so that school and district supports and incentives are effectively focused on these goals.

3. How does the Waiver impact funding for the State or districts? Does it simply provide relief from some U.S. Department of Education requirements?

No additional funds are provided through the approved Waiver, nor does it remove any existing funds. Some Title I funds allocated to districts may be used with greater flexibility than previously allowed. The focus of some state level Title I funds will shift to support schools through mechanisms identified in the waiver for school and district support.

4. What were some of the opportunities Nevada already had in place and some of the additional work that was needed to gain approval of the Waiver?

Much of the work that had already been accomplished in the state as an outgrowth of *Nevada's Promise* — the state's Race to the Top application — laid the groundwork for successful approval of the Waiver. For example, legislation was already in place supporting the development and implementation of the Nevada Growth Model, and requiring the development and implementation of a uniform performance evaluation system for teachers and administrators as recommended by the Teachers and Leaders Council. Additional concepts were created and refined across the Waiver development and approval process to assure that Nevada's accountability and support system for schools aligns with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education. This work was accomplished with the input of literally thousands of Nevadans whose input was incorporated into the Waiver to create a cohesive and aligned next generation accountability system.

5. Will the Waiver actually reduce the level of accountability? Will some schools that have been on improvement plans through the NCLB system now merely be able to re-set the clock and "take a pass"?

States were provided the opportunity to apply for the Waiver because the federal system of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) had become outdated. With expectations nearing 100% proficiency, AYP was no longer able to distinguish between schools that were truly struggling and those that while not as high-performing desired, did not truly have whole school failure. Schools received either a pass or a fail determination, and too many schools were being identified as failing. Nevada's new accountability system moves away from labeling those schools as failing when they aren't reaching the proficiency targets. The Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) recognizes that nuances exist in school performance, and that rating every school as passing or failing is not singularly helpful. The NSPF classifies schools within a five-star performance rating system. The system does not give schools a "pass" and it doesn't re-set the clock. The NSPF includes multiple measures of student achievement and growth, and aligns the designations for schools to the delivery of appropriate supports and rewards. Those schools classified as Priority and Focus schools, which are some of our schools with the lowest performance ratings, will be engaged in a carefully prescribed support system, including intensive district and State oversight, and serious consequences for those schools that don't improve with requisite supports.

Additionally, Nevada's system actually holds more schools and students accountable than the AYP system did. For example, by calculating a minority disaggregated group in the Nevada School Performance Framework reports, as opposed to the calculations required for AYP, nearly all minority students in the state are included in accountability determinations. The State's NSPF system accounts for a larger percentage of students in subpopulations than under AYP. Nevada's next generation accountability system is also more comprehensive, moving beyond a focus on proficiency on State assessments and graduation rates. The NSPF incorporates performance on multiple measures of achievement: proficiency, growth and growth to standard, gaps in student group growth and growth to standard, and college- and career-readiness indicators that, in addition to graduation rate, also include dropout rate, score on national college-readiness assessments. This system provides a more complete look at schools' and districts' success in moving students to college and career readiness. Additionally Nevada's unified improvement planning process — SAGE — will ensure that all schools and districts annually participate in a continuous improvement process, using data to reflect on their performance, identifying performance challenges and root causes, and creating plans for improvement. Schools with 1, 2, or 3 star ratings will be required to annually submit SAGE improvement plans to the NDE and they will be posted for public review. While we know even our high-performing schools can find ways to do even better, they will be allowed greater autonomy in improvement planning. The Waiver and the support it enable Nevada to leverage, will provide greater improvements and focus on school, district, and state performance. It is a step forward for meaningful, student-centered accountability.

6. How does the granting of a waiver change what schools and districts now do?

Accountability designations under Title IA of NCLB through Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) will be replaced by the State accountability designations within the Star rating system, with additional classifications as Reward, Priority, or Focus for some schools, in accordance with prescribed federal criteria. Certain sanctions under Title IA of NCLB will no longer be mandated. Schools and districts will instead focus on the results of the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) reports and the improvement planning processes that follow. This paradigm targets attention on student growth, supporting educators to focus their attention on their efforts to move students towards achievement of meaningful college- and career-readiness. Removing AYP has the added benefit of reducing the amount of time and effort Nevada's school districts and NDE staff spend on AYP calculations and appeals at a time when resources are needed elsewhere.

7. How do Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) fit within the new Nevada School Performance Framework?

One USED condition for approval of an ESEA Waiver required states to develop rigorous yet achievable AMOs for reading, mathematics, and the high school graduation rates. Nevada will monitor and publicly report whether the traditional subgroups met the AMOs; however, unlike the requirements under NCLB, the reading and mathematics AMOs do not factor directly into the Nevada School Performance Framework, which encompasses the AMOs within a more broadly defined outcome indicator.

8. Will AYP still be calculated and reported?

The 2012-13 school year is a transition year. AYP will be calculated and reported for schools in the fall of 2012, using data from the 2011-2012 school year. Traditional consequences and supports will be in place for schools that are designated as In Need of Improvement in this last round of AYP analysis. In early 2013, the first Nevada School Performance Framework reports will be made public. Some components of AYP calculations, like participation rates and graduation rates, will still be reported publicly because they are included as a part of the state's next generation accountability system.

9. How soon will the waiver be applied in Nevada's schools and districts?

Work on implementation planning has already begun. Rollout of the Common Core State Standards is in place, as are other elements to support college and career readiness as described in Principle 1 of the Waiver application. Early 2013 will be the first big public launch of the new Nevada School Performance Framework at which time all schools will receive a 1-5 star rating. Also, a noticeable shift will be obvious in August 2013 when AYP results are not calculated and consequences are no longer based on those results.

10. Will waiver status improve NV's chances for other opportunities such as grants or relief from other laws?

The Waiver status indicates that Nevada has taken an aggressive and forward-looking stance regarding accountability, standards and assessments, and educator effectiveness. As much as other grants or future waiver possibilities are based on those conditions, we have documented that our State has strong, effective policies and practices in these areas.