

New Mexico Granted NCLB Waiver Request; Seeks Accountability and Evaluation Systems

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A few weeks ago, President Barack Obama freed 10 states from some requirements of No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) toughest requirements. After committing to their own, federally-approved plans, these states will now be allowed to pursue alternate means of measuring student progress and achievement.

The first 10 states to obtain a waiver from the education law were Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Tennessee. The only state that applied for the flexibility and was denied - New Mexico - was recently granted approval by the administration.

After initially having its request denied, New Mexico is now free from the unpopular federal system of rating public schools, and has the flexibility to implement its own school grading program rather than following the mandates of the NCLB.

In order to receive approval, New Mexico had to show the federal government how the state would work with school districts to narrow the "achievement gap" between various groups of students. In New Mexico, test results have long showed a big disparity in student achievement among ethnic and racial groups.

With New Mexico getting its waiver request, Deltek would like to highlight the state and discuss its plans to prepare children for college and careers, set new targets for improving achievement for all students, and reward and help top-performing and underperforming schools.

As part of its plan, New Mexico has disclosed two IT-specific initiatives, including a plan to

1. **Develop and Implement a State-Based System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support**, and
2. **Develop and Adopt Guidelines for Local Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support Systems**.

Among New Mexico's top priorities is to **Develop and Implement a State-Based System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support**. This system will be designed to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students. The state said it plans to implement the system no later than the 2012-2013 school year.

Elsewhere, New Mexico is also seeking to **Develop and Adopt Guidelines for Local Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support Systems**. As part of this, New Mexico proposed in August 2011 to overhaul its evaluation system for teachers and school leaders; a measure to implement this plan is currently pending in the legislature. If the bill doesn't pass, New Mexico will have to consider whether a new evaluation system can be done through regulations.

Overall, New Mexico has called for establishing an evaluation system that utilizes student achievement as a critical component of the process, reformulating the compensation system to reflect the evaluation process, and enhancing the recruitment and retention of teachers and school leaders through enhanced professional development. It would also like to add incentivized pay for teachers and school leaders to serve in high-need, low income schools.

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