

Mass. Among States Looking to Develop Assessment/Accountability Systems to Boost Education

Posted At : December 21, 2011 2:02 PM | Posted By : Brian Coyle

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Earlier this year, the Obama Administration began an effort to offer more flexibility from federal education mandates in exchange for a commitment from various states to adopt reforms that would boost their overall student achievement.

After the announcement, 11 states formally submitted requests to the U.S. Department of Education for waivers from key provisions related to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), with numerous other states indicating they plan to apply for waivers at a later time next year. The 11 states which applied for waivers are Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

In exchange for receiving waivers, these states must detail plans for meeting several goals, including developing academic standards that prepare students for college or a trade; creating statewide measures of student performance and plans for reforming schools that don't meet requirements; and developing teacher and administrator evaluation systems tied to student performance.

Over the past weeks, Deltek has focused on a few of the states which have submitted initial NCLB waiver requests, and this week turns the spotlight on the state of Massachusetts. In its request, Massachusetts indicated the waiver opportunity will provide educators with flexibility regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction.

As part of its waiver request, Massachusetts disclosed two IT-specific initiatives, including a plan to **1) Develop and Administer Annual Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments** that measure student growth (IT project A), and **2) Provide a State-developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support System** (IT Project B).

In the request, Massachusetts said it may join a consortium of states in developing a **Comprehensive Assessment** system (see IT project A above – there is no Deltek tracked opportunity which is related) which will measure student knowledge and skills against a common set of college- and career-ready standards, and provide an accurate measure of student achievement across the full performance continuum. It will also measure student growth over a full academic year or course, among other things.

In assessing its students, Massachusetts may also utilize the **Galileo Instructional Data System**. This assessment and data analysis system enhances the ability of teachers, school and district leaders, parents, and students to identify trends in student learning, improve classroom instruction, and ultimately raise student academic achievement.

Elsewhere, Massachusetts may also seek to develop and implement a state-based system of **Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support** (see IT project B above – there is no Deltek tracked opportunity which is related). The goal of this enhanced system is to improve student achievement and school performance; close achievement gaps; and increase the quality of instruction for students. This system is expected to be implemented no later than the 2012-2013 school year.

While Massachusetts seeks to develop and improve its overall systems of Assessments and Accountability, the state currently has 5 Deltek tracked opportunities dealing with primary/secondary education. At this point, none of the above-listed IT projects are listed among Massachusetts' Deltek tracked education opportunities.