

Facts about Connecticut's NCLB Waiver:

- The first eleven state waivers were granted in February 2012.
- Connecticut, along with 25 other states, took part in the second round of NCLB waiver applications. Deadline for submissions was February 28, 2012.
- Connecticut sought the flexibility to design a new and improved system of accountability, support, and interventions in schools and districts, and to target federal funds to meet student needs more effectively.

Connecticut's waiver application was built around four key principles:

Principle One: College- and Career-Ready Expectations

- In July 2010, Connecticut adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a set of rigorous learning standards for reading and math. Implementation of the CCSS in every classroom will transform teaching and learning and provide all students the opportunity to understand content and develop higher-order thinking skills.
- Connecticut will develop and administer new assessments aligned with the CCSS via participation in the SMARTER Balanced Consortium, of which Connecticut is a governing member.
- The SDE will support districts, schools, and educators as they transition to the CCSS through the creation and dissemination of instructional materials including curriculum crosswalks, unit planning templates, and pacing guides; professional development; assessment transitions; and communication and public outreach.

Principle Two: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support

The new system features four significant shifts from NCLB accountability: (1) measurement, (2) classification, (3) intervention, and (4) recognition.

- **Measurement:** A new set of school performance measures will set the bar higher for Connecticut students by requiring that schools make progress toward achieving the Goal level of performance – a higher level of performance than NCLB's "Proficient" standard – on state standardized tests. The new system holds schools accountable for performance in math, reading, writing, and science instead of only math and reading under NCLB. The primary performance metric of the new system – called the School Performance Index – also captures increases in student performance at all levels instead of focusing only on Proficiency (see attached figure). Connecticut's new system will also hold high schools accountable for increasing graduation rates.
- **Classification:** A new system of school classification which will categorize all Connecticut schools as Excelling, Progressing, Transition, Review, or Turnaround based on the following factors: student achievement, progress in increasing student achievement across all levels of performance, subgroup performance and gaps in achievement, and graduation and drop-out rates for high schools.

- Intervention: A new CSDE Turnaround Team will intervene directly in 25 of Connecticut's lowest performing schools through the Commissioner's Network, which will provide new operational flexibility and increased resources to increase student achievement. The Turnaround Team will also support Alliance Districts as they intervene in other low performing schools. These 30 districts will receive \$39.5 million in additional funding, conditional upon – among other requirements – the development of differentiated, tiered support and interventions for schools, with the most intensive interventions in the lowest performing schools.
- Recognition: The SDE will recognize "Schools of Distinction" – schools that defy expectations by achieving the highest levels of performance for traditionally underperforming subgroups of students, or for all students, or by substantially increasing the performance of students.

Principle Three: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

- Connecticut's new teacher and principal support and evaluation framework was proposed by a consensus of the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), adopted by the State Board of Education, and affirmed upon passage of Senate Bill 458.
- PEAC recommended and the State Board of Education (SBE) approved a process in which districts can develop their own evaluation systems, consistent with state guidelines and approved by the SDE, or can adopt the state model evaluation system. District evaluation systems will have four components: multiple indicators of student learning (45 percent); teacher observation and professional practice (40 percent); feedback from peers and parents (10 percent), and indicators of school-wide student learning or student feedback (5 percent).
- S.B. 458 links evaluation outcomes to tenure and dismissal by ensuring that: (1) tenure is earned by effective teachers, (2) ineffectiveness – not merely incompetence – is the standard of dismissal, and (3) that dismissal proceedings will be fair, speedy, and manageable. Specifically, tenure will be awarded on the basis of effective practice as informed by the new system of evaluation, and ineffective teachers may be terminated. Termination hearings will focus on whether the evaluation ratings are in accordance with the new evaluation program and are reasonable, and the hearings must occur within tighter timeframes. Teacher improvement and remediation plans will be prepared when teachers are struggling and validation procedures will ensure that the system's outcomes are fair and accurate.

Principle Four: Reducing Duplication and Unnecessary Burden

- The SDE, using its administrative authority, will free school districts from excessive paperwork by reducing by 1/3 the number of mandated data reporting requirements during this academic year.
- Governor Malloy will convene a Red Tape Review and Removal Taskforce to examine comprehensive solutions to fixing unnecessarily burdensome state regulations and mandates. Announcement of the Taskforce membership will be made soon.