



News for Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania's No Child Left Behind Waiver Request Approved by U.S. Department of Education

Adequate Yearly Progress eliminated, improved indicator of academic progress put in place

Harrisburg – Governor Tom Corbett today announced that the U.S. Department of Education has approved the state's No Child Left Behind waiver request that will help make our Pennsylvania's public schools better for our children and their families.

"This is welcome news for students, parents, taxpayers, educators and public schools across the state," Corbett said. "This waiver allows Pennsylvania to focus on improving schools by directing resources to areas that help students academically succeed. We now have a better way of guiding improvement efforts in schools by establishing ambitious, yet attainable, goals."

The approved waiver is designed to improve Pennsylvania education in three areas: making sure all our students are ready for careers or college; developing recognition and accountability standards by the state for all public schools; improving and supporting effective teachers and principals in all our classrooms.

Pennsylvania's students need to be graduating from high school with high-quality academic credentials regardless of their career path. The state has developed high-quality assessments to make sure students achieve those academic standards.

Recognizing academic achievement and holding public schools accountable are essential to ensuring that taxpayer dollars are being invested in education programs that benefit students. Beginning in the fall, students, parents, taxpayers and educators will have access to user-friendly information that shows academic progress of all public school buildings across the state.

Through the use of the recently developed School Performance Profile, which will provide a comprehensive overview of multiple measures of student achievement, Pennsylvania citizens will be able to determine the quality of the educational programs in their schools and how students are performing.

The new educator evaluation system, signed into law last year by Corbett, will assess educators on multiple measures of student achievement, will provide schools with access to comprehensive resources to improve classroom instruction and provide professional development to teachers, principals and superintendents.

The new evaluation system will be in place for classroom teachers beginning with the 2013-14 school year and for principals and specialists in the 2014-15 school year.

The waiver also abolishes the adequate yearly progress designation for each school building and school district. In its place will be the School Performance Profile that will be used to measure the academic progress of all public schools.

Title I schools, those with a high percentage of low-income students, will receive a federal designation of "Priority," "Focus" or "Reward" based on four annual measurable objectives:

- Student participation on the math and reading Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams and the algebra I, biology and literature Keystone Exams;
- Student graduation or attendance rate;
- Closing the achievement gap of all students – reducing the number of students who score below proficient on the PSSA, Keystone Exams and the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) by 50 percent over a six-year period; and
- Closing the achievement gap of historically underperforming students – reducing the number of students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged and English language learners who score below proficient on the PSSA, Keystone Exams and the PASA by 50 percent over a six-year period.

Schools designated as "Priority" or "Focus" will have access to intervention and support services from the state Department of Education to assist them in improving student achievement.

Schools that do not fall into a Title I category will receive a School Performance Profiles score rather than a federal designation, but will also have access to all the interventions and supports available.

For all public school buildings across the state, the School Performance Profile will provide a building-level academic score, which will be based on multiple indicators of academic achievement, including student performance on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment and Keystone Exams; closing the achievement gap; graduation rate; promotion rate; and attendance rate.

"The U.S. Department of Education has recognized Pennsylvania's student-centered waiver request that will improve public education across the state," said acting Secretary of Education William E. Harner. "Under the state's approved waiver, Pennsylvania citizens will have access to quality information about the performance of our public schools and students will be provided with high-quality educational programs."

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