

CTA Quick Points [SEPT 23, 2011]

The Obama administration's NCLB waiver plan

Background

The White House has outlined how states can get relief from provisions from ESEA (NCLB) in exchange for serious state-led efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability and ensure that all students “are on track to graduate college and career-ready.” As of today, states can request flexibility from specific NCLB mandates that are **stifling reform**, but must meet certain requirements to do so. They must address:

- The transition of students, teachers and schools to a system aligned with college and career ready standards for all students;
- The development of differentiated accountability systems; and
- The development of comprehensive principal and teacher evaluation and support systems.

States can apply by November 14 if their applications are prepared, or they can wait until February for the second wave if they need more time to align/develop plans. President Obama said that the purpose is not to give states and districts a reprieve from accountability, but rather to unleash energy to improve our schools at the local level.

Main Message

Acknowledgment by the Obama administration that public schools and students need quick relief from the burdens caused by No Child Left Behind and its regulations, like labeling students and schools based on one test on one day during the school year, is a welcome recognition of what educators have been saying for years. Unfortunately, the administration's waiver proposal process swaps one federal, top-down mandate for another and continues to hold states and local schools hostage to the same unproven reforms of the Race to the Top competition.

Important Points

- We were encouraged to hear Obama understands our schools need more resources, our students need more educators, and parents must encourage learning in order to make sure American's children are ready for the future.
- The waiver process circumvents the congressional process and bypasses the opportunity for input from parents and teachers about what's wrong with NCLB and what is needed to improve public schools.
- We need thoughtful discussions about what our kids need to succeed. We know that one-size-fits all federal mandates don't work and that parents and educators in local communities must be involved in determining what works best for their students.