



Preliminary Findings about Waivers CEP Survey of State Education Agency Officials October-November 2011

In the fall of 2011, the Center on Education Policy conducted a survey of state education officials to learn more about the fiscal condition of the states, their efforts to meet the assurances under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and the progress of states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards in transitioning to the new standards. Included in this survey were a few questions about U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan's new flexibility in the form of waivers that was announced in late September 2011. A total of 36 states and the District of Columbia participated in our survey. Below are the results from the questions about these waivers. The other survey topics will be covered in later CEP reports.

Need for Waivers

We asked all states that responded to our survey about the need for waivers that would offer them relief from some of the key requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, since it does not appear that legislation to amend NCLB will be enacted any time soon. Of the 34 states that answered this question, 26 responded that the waivers were greatly needed, while 7 said that the waivers were somewhat needed. No state participating in our survey responded that the waivers were somewhat or greatly unnecessary, but two states did not know if the waivers were needed.

Survey question: Recently, President Obama and Education Secretary Duncan unveiled a framework for granting state waivers of significant provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. To what degree do you believe the Obama's Administration's waiver initiative was necessary to provide states some relief from the requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act due to the lack of a reauthorized ESEA?

	Number of states
Greatly needed	26
Somewhat needed	7
Somewhat unnecessary	0
Greatly unnecessary	0
I don't know	2

Of the 26 states that indicated the waivers were *greatly* needed, 22 also said that they planned to apply for a waiver, which is not surprising. Three of the 26 states that saw a great need for waivers did not know at the time of our survey whether they would apply, while one said it would *not* apply.

Of the 7 states that said the waivers were *somewhat* needed, 3 indicated they would apply for waivers, while the remaining 4 did not know whether they would apply. The two states that said they did not know if the waivers were needed also did not know if they would apply.

States' Plans to Apply for Waivers and Current Status

Twenty-six states indicated in their survey responses that they planned to apply for a waiver. Since that time, 25 of the 26 have actually applied or have officially indicated to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that they will apply by the February 2012 deadline. The remaining state that reported on our survey that it would apply for a waiver has not yet applied or officially indicated to ED that it will apply.

Nine states responded in our survey that they did not know whether they would apply for a waiver, but since that time, 5 have officially indicated to ED that they will apply by the February deadline. Interestingly, one of the two states that said in our survey that they would *not* apply has since officially indicated that it will submit a waiver application by the deadline.

	Planned to apply at time of survey	Current status
Yes	26	25 applied or officially indicated intent to apply 1 no action
No	2	1 officially indicated intent to apply; 1 no action
Did not know	9	5 officially indicated intent to apply; 4 no action

Progress on Addressing the Four Principles

In order to receive a waiver, states must commit to addressing four principles outlined by Secretary Duncan that are intended to improve achievement and instruction. We asked the 26 states that indicated in our survey that they will apply for a waiver about state action on the four principles. Nine states (or fewer for some of the principles) reported that activities are in the planning stages. Larger numbers of states, from 11 to 17, said that activities to address the principles are underway. Relatively few states, however, have completed their activities on any of the four principles.

Survey question: To be eligible to receive a waiver a state must address each of the four principles listed below. Indicate the current status of your state's efforts to address each of the principles.

Principles for improving student academic achievement and increasing the quality of instruction	Number of states		
	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Underway</i>	<i>Completed</i>
Adoption of college- and career-ready standards in reading/language arts for all students and developing and administering high-quality assessments that measure student growth aligned with those standards	0	17	7
Development and adoption of a system of differentiated recognition, accountability and support for all districts in your state and for all Title I schools in those districts	9	14	1
Development and adoption of teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that include the six components specified by the Department	7	16	1
Provide assurance that the SEA will evaluate and revise administrative requirement to reduce duplication and burden on districts and schools	9	11	4

Note: Not all states that indicated they will apply for waivers answered this question.

Expected Impact of Four Principles on Improving Student Learning

Nearly all of the states that indicated they planned to apply for a waiver agreed that addressing the four principles is key to improving student learning in their state.

Survey question: Do leaders and staff in your agency generally agree that addressing the four principles is key to improving student learning in your state?

	Number of states
Yes	23
No	1
I don't know	1

Note: Not all states that indicated they will apply for waivers answered this question.

This report was written by Diane Stark Rentner, CEP's director of national programs, and Nancy Kober, a CEP consultant. Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO, provided advice on the report. Bruce Haslam and Beth Sinclair of Policy Studies Associates worked with CEP to develop and administer the survey and analyze survey data.

We would like to thank the school district staff who took time from their busy schedules to complete this survey.

Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in January 1995 by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. We do not represent any special interests. Instead, we help citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create the conditions that will lead to better public schools.

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