



Q&A About the CORE Waiver

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Waiver Expectations and Benefits

Q. What does the Waiver mean for CORE districts, and is that different than what will be required of non-CORE districts?

A. The implications of the Waiver are the same for all participating LEAs, whether CORE or non-CORE. The main difference is the participating CORE districts are automatically committed once the Waiver gets approved. Furthermore, the CORE districts are already engaged in a community of practice (and have been for 2 years), in which they collaborate to build capacity for the work, and solve common problems together. CORE districts, like other participating LEAs are NOT committed to implementing the same specific strategies, and are empowered to address the requirements of the waiver as autonomous entities. The spirit of the Waiver is to minimize the number of mandates for common practice in favor of district autonomy and inter-district collaboration.

Q. What kinds of ongoing collaboration and transparency would be required of districts that opt into the waiver?

A. By signing the MOU, districts are agreeing to some non-negotiable commitments, and will be given the opportunity to engage in some additional optional opportunities:

Non-negotiable commitments:

- Participate in an accountability and data system that measures the academic, social/emotional, and school/district climate and culture measures described under Principle 2, on page 38 of the waiver
- Provide a third-party aggregator access to performance data and share that data transparently across participating LEAs
- Develop and implement teacher and administrator evaluation systems that meet the minimum common criteria outlined under Principle 3, on page 77 of the waiver (and possibly other agreed-upon criteria as the work evolves)
- Participate actively in the system of interventions and supports (locally driven by the district), including making high-performing school staff available for peer coaching, and engaging low performing schools in interventions through performance improvement partnerships..

Optional opportunity

- Schools not identified as Priority Schools or Focus Schools can participate in a cross-district community of practice of participating LEAs through in-person and virtual collaboration.



Q. What benefits can participating LEAs expect as a result of signing on the Waiver?

A. The most immediate benefit of signing on the waiver is the ability to transition from the NCLB system of accountability (based largely on external mandates and punitive sanctions) to a new system that leverages intrinsic motivation, collaboration, and supportive intervention to achieve improved student outcomes. The CORE Waiver accountability system accounts for a more robust and multi-faceted set of measures that combined, provides a better reflection of students' college and career readiness and paints a clearer, more accurate picture of the schools and district progress. . Another significant benefit to participating LEAs is the opportunity to engage in a cross-district community of practice that supports improvement through collaboration and builds districts' collective capacity to improve outcomes for students.

Q. Would districts granted the waiver NOT have to participate in the STAR/CST assessments in the coming school year?

A. This is incorrect. Participating districts would still use CSTs until the Common Core State Standards aligned SBAC assessments come online. However, once the CORE Waiver is approved, participating districts would participate in the new Waiver accountability system.

Q. Will there be a difference in accountability sanctions if the CORE Waiver is approved?

A. The CORE Waiver plan is a different approach to oversight and intervention. Rather than a compliance-based sanction system, we are using the expertise that exists in successful schools throughout California to provide true assistance in order to improve outcomes. When a school struggles they will receive support and assistance, not punitive sanctions. The proposed interventions and supports are outlined under Principle 2, on page 65 of the Waiver.

Q. If our District signs the MOU to participate in the CORE Waiver does it obligate our Independent Charter High School to participate in the waver as well, or do they have the ability to stay with the current NCLB accountability model?

A. Independent charter schools are not automatically opted into the Waiver if their authorizing district signs the MOU. They have the option to remain in the NCLB system or submit their own MOU to opt into the Waiver themselves.

Q. Can a group of districts apply as a "consortium"? Would COEs be allowed to take the lead to assist small districts to form a consortium for the purpose of filing a waiver?

A. Districts will not be able to opt in as a consortium. Each individual district will have to submit its own MOU, and agree to the US Department of Education assurances on pages 12, 13, and 86 of the Waiver application. However, districts are absolutely welcome to operate as a consortium once they have opted in, and pool their resources to create resources and make collective decisions. Furthermore, California Education Partners (www.caedpartners.org) is looking into the possibility of convening one or more additional CORE-like consortia to support inter-district



collaboration and capacity-building around waiver requirements. Districts opting in to the Waiver will be kept apprised of opportunities to join such a consortium as they emerge.

Q. Principle 3 discusses the creation of "common indicators" of teacher and administrator effectiveness. Has CORE already agreed to some common indicators? What are they, and how prescriptive will they be?

A. Districts participating in the CORE waiver will work together to identify a set of high-level common educator effectiveness elements that all agree are useful in supporting effective teaching. These will not be prescriptive at the level of detail of the CSTPs or Danielson framework, but they will include the following:

- a. Include student learning as a significant component (this may need to be bargained);
- b. Be aligned to the pedagogical shifts required by CCSS;
- c. Ensure data collection with sufficient frequency to provide a basis for evaluation;
- d. Employ ratings that meaningfully differentiate among teaching effectiveness using at least four categories.

Within these parameters, each district will develop or use an existing teacher evaluation process that makes sense in their local community context. The goal of each district's evaluation system will be to help teachers succeed in their mission to prepare all students for college and career.

Q. If the CORE Waiver is approved by the U.S. Department of Education, what is required for other districts be able to participate?

A. Once the Waiver is approved, other school districts, charters and charter management organizations in California will be eligible to participate in the waiver provided they are willing to similarly reorient their work around preparing all students for college and careers, including by implementing college- and career-ready standards and assessments, participating in the new accountability system, committing to sharing data, and developing and implementing educator effectiveness and evaluation systems. To opt in, districts will need to:

1. Officially request the waiver from the US DOE (page 12 of the CORE ESEA Waiver Application*)
2. Agree to the US DoE assurances (page 13 of the Application)
3. Sign MOU with CORE (Appendix A. page 86 of the Application)

Q. Is there money available for implementation?

A. While no supplemental funding is available for implementation of the Waiver, participating districts that were in Program Improvement under the existing NCLB rules will no longer be required to set aside 20 percent of federal funding for SES and transportation.



Q. If the CORE waiver is granted, how does this affect district's Title I funding?

A. Millions of dollars in Title I set asides (over a \$100 million with the CORE districts alone) will be returned to districts and allowed to be spent in better and more effective ways to improve student achievement.

Q. How does the CORE Waiver align with Governor Brown's proposed Local Control Funding Formula and the principle of Subsidiarity?

A. Implementation of the CORE Waiver plan is aligned with this philosophy and the Local Control Funding concept. CORE districts want the flexibility to use resources in ways that most effectively help prepare all students for college and career. In exchange, participating districts are assuming unprecedented accountability to meet the needs of our students and prepare them for successful futures.

Implication for State and local accountability systems

Q. If the CORE Waiver is approved, how would it impact district's status under the state accountability system? Will CDE still calculate an API score?

A. Yes, approval of the CORE Waiver does not change the state accountability system. CDE may also still calculate AYP, but participating districts would not be accountable to that accountability system.

Q. If a waiver is granted to CORE districts, the state would still be operating without a waiver. So, would the state still have to identify so-called "failing" schools even for districts that have the waiver?

A. The state would still identify schools in participating CORE districts under the old model, but there would no consequences to that identification.

Q. If the CORE Waiver request is approved, does it reset school or district status in Program Improvement?

A. No, NCLB Program Improvement status will not be reset. However, all schools and districts in Program Improvement that are participating in the CORE Waiver will be waived from NCLB consequences and sanctions as exist today. All participating LEAs' Title I schools will be held accountable for meeting the new CORE AMOs and may be identified as Reward (Schools of Distinction), Priority, or Focus schools as defined in the CORE Waiver application beginning in the 2013-14 school year.

Q. What method will be used to identify the bottom 5% focus schools in CA?

A. The proposed methodology is to identify the lowest 5% of districts is included in the Waiver. This calculation will be based on agreed-upon accountability measures, still to be finalized, and the data will be aggregated and run by a third-party partner, who will generate a list of the bottom 5%. A scenario list of CORE schools based on 12-13 data is listed in Attachment 9, page 109 of the Waiver.

Q. What kind of data would be used for measuring persistence?

A. Persistence will largely be measured based on drop out rate. Our expectation is that by sharing and integrating data systems within and across LEAs, we will be able to use SSIDs to track students as they move between schools/grade spans, in order to identify, catch, and ideally reintegrate drop outs.

Q: Who designed the assessments that will be used for accountability purposes, and which subjects/grades would be using the assessments? When will the assessments be available for my district if we choose to apply for the waiver?

A: The assessments used for accountability will continue to be the California Standards Tests until the Common Core State Standards-aligned assessments developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium are brought online, anticipated to be in the 13-14 school year.

Transition to the Common Core

Q. What are districts doing about interim performance assessments?

A. Many CORE districts are currently running parallel systems that align to SBAC and will transition next year. They are also including SBAC-aligned performance tasks into interim assessments. Some districts are fully transitioning in 2013-14. Those on the more aggressive transition timeline have been using modules developed by over 200 CORE teachers last summer. The modules were piloted this year, and are being researched and validated. Once the modules are finalized, they will be made publicly available online, hopefully by this summer.

Timeline

Q. What is the timeline for state and federal review of the CORE Waiver?

A. The Waiver has already gone through a round of CDE feedback, and emerged with broad support from the SBE. (Listen to the March State Board hearing [here](#).) The Waiver is currently in the USDE peer review process. Once feedback emerges from that process, CORE will work with USDE staff to iterate on the application and make revisions. We hope that USDE will complete federal review and grant approval by late spring / early summer.

Q. If a district does not sign on in 12-13, could they do so in 13-14?



A. We expect that yes, but districts could only be added at the start of an academic year, not mid-year.

More Information

Q. I have read the Waiver and supporting materials available at www.coredistricts.org/waive, and still have questions and would like to discuss the contents with someone from CORE. How can I do that?

A. Please check at <http://coredistricts.org/core-esea-waiver/> for updates and contact information.