

Nearly two years ago, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) approved Minnesota's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver giving the state flexibility to implement a stronger accountability system based on rigorous standards and effective teacher and school supports.

USDE has now set forth a process for states to apply for extensions to continue implementing the education reforms outlined in their approved waivers. After consultation with experts and feedback from stakeholders, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is proposing to make minor technical changes to the state's Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR) as part of the state's waiver extension.

The changes strengthen the system by stabilizing MMR results from year to year, ensuring all four areas of the MMR count equally in a school's overall results and increasing the number of schools receiving a graduation rate measurement in the MMR.

MDE's three requests for technical MMR improvements are below. It is important to note that these are minor tweaks to refine the system, but MDE is not requesting to make large scale changes to the MMR at this time.

1. Elimination of the percentile ranking methods for calculating points, and use improved methods for assigning points within each of the four MMR domains.
 - a. For the Proficiency and Graduation Rate domains, the calculation will maintain the weighted percentage of cells reaching targets. To calculate the points earned in the Proficiency and Graduation Rate domains, the weighted percentage is multiplied by 25. Schools that make targets in all groups will receive 25 points, while others will receive a proportion of the 25 possible points based on the percent of subgroups meeting targets.
 - b. For the Growth and Achievement Gap Reduction domains, the calculation will maintain the current use of the average schoolwide z-score and achievement gap reduction score. To calculate the points earned in the Growth and Achievement Gap Reduction domains, the recommendation is to use Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) that are calculated by school type.
 - c. The suggested new calculations for assigning points will help to minimize observed swings and reduce volatility in points earned from year-to-year as well as to better balance the weight given within all four MMR domains.
2. Ensure schools have assessment participation rates over 95% to be eligible for the Reward or Celebration Eligible designation.
3. Lower the graduation rate minimum n-size from 40 to 20 to increase the number of schools receiving a graduation rate for students overall and for each subgroup.

Please refer comments on this request to Stephanie Graff, ESEA Flexibility Coordinator, at stephanie.graff@state.mn.us by February 10, 2014.