

Nevada seeks No Child Left Behind waiver

By Michael Martinez, Reno Gazette-Journal

The state of Nevada is putting the finishing touches on its application for a federal No Child Left Behind waiver, which would allow state educators more flexibility to measure student growth in addition to meeting specific proficiency targets, according to state and local educators.

The application also must demonstrate how teacher evaluations will be tied to student achievement and how the performance gap of student subgroups, such as limited English proficiency and at-risk students, will be narrowed.

The waiver would allow the states and school districts in Nevada to shape an accountability model that addresses the strategy of better measuring student growth and tracking students' path to college and career readiness.

The waiver is meant to help move away from the one-size-fits-all model of the current NCLB law and allow states to sculpt policy based on their unique culture and capacity issues, said Rorie Fitzpatrick, interim deputy superintendent for the state Department of Education, who is overseeing the waiver application.

Paul LaMarca, chief accountability officer for Washoe County schools, said the waiver has to demonstrate that a state is aiming for college and career readiness.

The state must outline how it plans to revise the current adequate yearly progress benchmarks, LaMarca said.

The application must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on or before Feb. 28. Educators, community leaders,

parents and others who have served on a diverse committee that helped shape this redesign of the NCLB accountability model meet today during a webinar to ask final questions and make final tweaks to the proposal.

The Nevada NCLB waiver application has to meet the requirements of three principles to obtain the waiver:

The adoption and implementation of college and career ready standards, which involves looking at what will be taught, how it will be taught and how what students learn will be assessed.

How school performance is classified, based on a formula of student growth and proficiency, among other factors.

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