



To: Interested California LEAs
From: Rick Miller, CORE Executive Director
Date: May 3, 2013
Re: CORE ESEA Waiver Update

The California Office to Reform Education (CORE) submitted an ESEA [Waiver plan](#) to the U.S. Department of Education (US ED) on February 28, 2013. The initial nine CORE districts participating in the Waiver are Clovis, Fresno, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Sacramento, Oakland, Sanger, Santa Ana, and San Francisco Unified school districts. This is the first and only district-level ESEA Waiver accepted by US ED for review.

Following US ED's normal process for reviewing waiver requests, CORE's Waiver plan underwent peer review to advise the US ED on issues that need to be addressed or clarified in the waiver plan. Unlike applying for a federal grant, the NCLB waiver process is intended to be iterative. Based on the previous approval of many states, the process typically takes several months and includes multiple iterations of proposals before final approval. CORE has just completed the first phase of this process, including review by US ED and peer reviewers, and we have been provided specific and detailed feedback on several areas which need to be addressed before the US ED can approve the CORE Waiver.

CORE has reviewed this feedback and is currently working to update and expand our Waiver to address these concerns. We remain optimistic that US ED will ultimately approve our application in order to provide participating districts with needed flexibility going into the 2013-14 school year.

Since the beginning of this process, CORE has made clear that we intend to allow any LEA in California that is willing to agree to fulfill all the commitments in the CORE Waiver to participate. LEAs interested in joining the CORE Waiver this year will need to review, understand, and be prepared to request specific waivers from the US ED (page 12 of the CORE ESEA Waiver Application); agree to the US ED assurances (page 13 of the CORE ESEA Waiver Application); and be prepared to sign an MOU with CORE (Appendix A. page 86 of the CORE ESEA Waiver Application.) However, since this is an iterative process it is possible that the MOU or other areas of the application may change. Until we complete this process, LEAs should use those documents as guideposts for the final approved application and MOU.

In addition, in order for an LEA to receive a waiver from the US DOE, they will need to document outreach around the waiver plan. So any LEA interested in approval this year needs to immediately begin communicating with teachers, administrators, bargaining units, and other key stakeholders about the CORE Waiver requirements, and importantly, document that engagement effort. A sample format for documenting such engagement can be found [here](#).

Outlined below is a summary of major issues highlighted by US ED that CORE is working on in the three principle areas required by the federal waiver guidelines. Before resubmission at the end of May, CORE will address US ED's outstanding questions in the following areas:

Principle One – College and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students:

- CORE will include additional detail regarding each participating LEA's plan to implement the CCSS, including proposed activities, timelines, plans to expand access to college-level courses through CCSS, as well as assurance that the CCSS will address specific subgroups, such as English Learners and students with disabilities.
- Participating LEAs' plans will be documented with regard to assessing some students with disabilities using an alternate assessment to the State's high quality assessments.

Principle Two – Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support:

- Changes will be made with regard to CORE's proposed system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support:
 - Results of annual assessments in grades 3 through 8 and high school will be included, rather than only at the highest grade level of students in a school.
 - More specific details will be provided regarding the indicators that CORE will include in the accountability system, including the plan for finalizing selection, weighting, and specific targets, for each of the following schools years: 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 and beyond.
- Additional detail will be provided with regard to how CORE will establish the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) it will use for accountability purposes. Further detail will also be provided regarding how CORE will demonstrate that the AMOs are educationally sound, and how the AMOs will require LEAs, schools, and subgroups that are further behind to make greater rates of annual progress.
- CORE will provide a greater level of documentation with regard to identifying reward, priority, and focus schools, establishing partnerships among these schools, and detailing the consequences for priority and focus schools that do not make progress after implementation of interventions.

Principle Three – Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership:

- CORE will include a high-quality plan specifying how guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems will be developed and adopted with the involvement of teachers and principals.
 - CORE will describe in more detail how student academic growth data will be included as a significant factor in teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.
- CORE will include a high-quality plan to ensure that participating LEA's develop, adopt, pilot, and implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that are consistent with CORE guidelines.

Additional Considerations:

- CORE will be collecting information from each participating LEA on the steps that the LEA has taken and plans to take to engage teachers, their representatives, and other diverse stakeholder organizations as it continues to develop and implement its plan regarding the waiver.
- CORE will clarify how LEAs can participate in the CORE Waiver, including the process for annual inclusion and, as necessary, how LEAs will be excluded if they fail to meet the commitments they agreed to in the Waiver. CORE will explain how it will ensure transparency and communicate the operation of multiple accountability systems, including Federal-, State-, and CORE-level accountability requirements.

We will continue to provide updates about the development CORE Waiver plan and status of US Ed approval on our website: <http://COREdistricts.org>.