

The Future of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

On February 9 2012, President Obama freed ten states from NCLB laws. NCLB, passed by President George Bush in 2001 had a lofty goal: Get all students proficient in math and reading by 2014. But, the nation is not getting there in part because of flaws in the law (such as, no exemptions for the special education population – all students proficient by 2014 means ALL students).

President Obama is allowing states to commit to their own, federally approved education plans that also allow states to judge students with methods other than test scores. They will also be able to factor in subjects other than just math and reading, which are the only two areas considered under NCLB. He stated that he was allowing these actions because Congress has failed to update the law since its passage despite widespread agreement that it needed to be fixed.

The ten states that are now excused from following the NCLB law have to put forward plans showing they will prepare students for college and careers, set new targets for improving achievement, reward best performing schools, and focus on ones doing the worst. Twenty-eight other states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have indicated that they plan to create their own plans and flee the law. (Pennsylvania is NOT one of the states.)

Pennsylvania Department of Education is continuing to review the requirements and criteria of the waiver program to determine if it would be in the best interest of the state. Pennsylvania officials say they are hesitant to seek the waivers because they believe the federal government is trying to tell them how to replace the mandates. Pennsylvania continues to monitor student progress through standardized tests, which show whether school and districts are achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).