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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Alaska Receives No Child Left Behind Waiver

JUNEAU – The U.S. Department of Education has granted Alaska a waiver from major provisions of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as No Child Left Behind. The waiver will take effect next school year.

“I am pleased that we have been able to remove ourselves from an accountability model that has inaccurately labeled Alaskan schools,” said Alaska Education Commissioner Mike Hanley. “In its place we will implement a system that will incorporate data that includes but goes beyond test scores to present a more accurate picture of the health of our schools across the state.”

Alaska is the 37th state (plus Washington, D.C.) to receive a waiver. Under the waiver, states agree to:

- adopt standards in English/language arts and mathematics that prepare students for education and training after high school, often referred to as college-ready and career-ready standards;
- devise their own system for holding schools accountable for students' academic success, including student populations that traditionally underperform; and
- require school districts to evaluate teachers and principals partly on student achievement.

In exchange for meeting these requirements, states are allowed to opt out of NCLB's accountability system known as Adequate Yearly Progress.

NCLB's goal was that all assessed students be proficient in reading and math by spring 2014. Schools and districts were held accountable in up to 32 categories. If schools and districts underperformed in any category to any degree, they were subject to consequences.

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School districts around the nation were concerned they would soon face consequences for not meeting unattainable goals. States were concerned they would have to implement consequences that are expensive, disruptive, and in some cases unjustified.

Alaska was in a position to apply for a waiver because it had been working for two years on new standards and on methods of evaluating educators. The State Board of Education & Early Development adopted Alaska's own college-ready and career-ready standards in June 2012. See <http://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessment/GLEHome.html>.

The State Board adopted new regulations for school districts' evaluations of educators in December 2012. See

http://education.alaska.gov/news/releases/2012/board_actions_dec2012.pdf.

The State Board is scheduled to vote June 6 on proposed regulations to implement Alaska's own accountability system.

Alaska has proposed an accountability system for schools based on data about student achievement and progress in reading, writing and mathematics; attendance; performance on work-ready and college-entrance assessments in high school; and high school graduation. This formula, called the Alaska School Performance Index, will rank schools from one star to five stars.

Additionally, each school and district will have the goal of reducing its percentage of non-proficient students by half over six years, including in each subgroup of students: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and ethnic groups. Districts will be required to implement improvement plans in one-star and two-star schools and in any school with substantial achievement gaps among subgroups of students.

As required by the U.S. Department of Education, the state will recognize high-performing and high-improving schools; require the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools (recipients of federal anti-poverty funds) to implement a significant program of improvement aligned with comprehensive turnaround principles; and require the next 10 percent of low-performing Title I schools to implement appropriate interventions to address specific deficiencies revealed through data analysis.

Parents will continue to receive reports about their children's results on state assessments. Assessment results for schools and districts, broken down by subgroups of students, will continue to be made public.

For more about Alaska's waiver, see <http://education.alaska.gov/nclb/esea.html>

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