

CORE WAIVER FAQs

Below is a set of FAQs related to the CORE Waiver. The document may be updated periodically to reflect new questions or new information, so please check the header to see when the document was updated.

BACKGROUND ON CORE

Q: What is the NCLB CORE Waiver—what are we getting a waiver *from*?

A: The US Department of Education created an opportunity for states to apply for a waiver of certain aspects (i.e. section 1116) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, formerly NCLB). Overall, NCLB is the law that regulates how federal funds, such as Title I are used, and the law that holds districts accountable through Program Improvement. This law also demanded that all schools reach 100% proficiency by 2014, with significant consequences. California Department of Education decided not to apply as a state, and in response, a consortium of California school districts (CORE) worked together to create an application.

While the waiver grants some flexibility, it comes with the promise and accountability that we will gear up for Common Core, develop an accountability system in lieu of Program Improvement, and develop strong teacher and leader support and evaluation systems. This is work that aligns with current LAUSD initiatives and it reflects our beliefs about improving education for our students.

Q: What is CORE, and how does LAUSD relate to CORE?

A: CORE stands for “California Office to Reform Education”. It is a consortium of 10 districts who have been working together to support school reform. Eight of the CORE Districts collaborated to create an NCLB CORE Waiver Application to the US Department of Education. The eight districts include: Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, San Francisco and Santa Ana.

CORE is a non-profit organization, and its Board of Directors is comprised of the Superintendents of each of the 10 districts. CORE is the organization that will support the implementation of the CORE Waiver work, and will communicate with the US Department of Education. LAUSD receives guidance from CORE to ensure we are implementing the CORE waiver with fidelity.

Q: Where can I find out more about CORE?

A: The website for California Office to Reform Education (CORE) is www.coredistricts.org.

HOW THE WAIVER SUPPORTS LAUSD

Q: Why did LAUSD leadership decide to apply for the waiver alongside CORE?

A: There are four main reasons why LAUSD applied alongside CORE for the waiver:

- 1) the waiver **supports our ongoing work** through promoting collaboration across teachers, schools and districts *and* aligning with our current strategic initiatives to roll-out Common Core and the Educator Growth and Development Cycles

2) we believe, and research support the idea that we need **better metrics** to which schools will be held accountable, and the CORE waiver establishes new metrics to take into account school climate and social/emotional factors.

3) the waiver allows **flexibility in the use of certain Title I funds**, which will be allocated to support our neediest schools, and

4) by applying for and receiving the waiver, CORE districts (including LAUSD) **avoided significant penalties and sanctions** for underperformance, which would have kicked in in 2014 due to not achieving 100% proficiency. If we did not apply for the waiver, more than 530 schools would have been in Program Improvement and would be subject to significant sanctions.

Q: In what ways does the waiver support LAUSD schools and students?

A: The waiver will support schools and students in many ways:

- Some of **our most vulnerable students will be better served** as a result of this waiver. In our previous system, a sub-group was actionable if there were 100 students in the category (or 50 or more students who make up at least 15% of the total population). Because of the waiver, if there are 20 or more students in a sub-group, then the subgroup is actionable, and the school will need to strategize and support those students.
- **Targeted resources will assist CORE Waiver schools.**
- Schools will be held accountable to a **better set of metrics that are not only about test scores**, but that take into account social/emotional factors and school climate factors. This means that schools will be acknowledged for improvements along a more robust set of metrics
- We are able to **impact the accountability system and implementation of the principles** as they roll out.

NCLB: WHAT IS WAIVED AND WHAT ISN'T
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Q: What aspects of ESEA (formerly NCLB) are waived?

A: The waiver **only addresses** ESEA section 1116- Program Improvement and the associated sanctions. This includes: school improvement, corrective action, restructuring, supplemental educational service, public school choice and set-asides required to implement these mandates. The District has chosen to continue to cover the costs of PSC transportation for students already participating in the program through the highest grade level of their current school.

Q: Why did the District decide to end the Supplemental Education Services free tutoring program?

A: LAUSD believes that there are more effective ways to support our students with the funds that have been previously mandated to support Supplemental Education Services (SES). In the past, since LAUSD was a Program Improvement district, it needed to hire outside organizations to provide SES programs. There is little evidence that these programs were improving student achievement, and most eligible students did not receive services because the program was oversubscribed. LAUSD plans to use these funds instead to support supplemental learning at CORE Waiver schools (including elementary, middle and high school levels), and will likely serve more students than the SES programs would have served.

Overall, we believe we can serve more students more effectively through the reallocation of these funds.

Q: Now that we are not in Program Improvement (PI), do we need to follow mandates related to Single School Plans (SPSA), School Site Councils (SSCs) etc.?

A: Yes, the SPSA and the SSC requirements are based on California Education Code and have not been waived. In fact, the CORE waiver references the SSC as a vehicle for communicating with stakeholders about the school's progress with the waiver requirements and implementation. In addition, the waiver also references the SPSA as the tool for developing the mandated improvement plans. As such, all District schools must continue to form SSCs, and annually evaluate and update the SPSA.

Q: Does the waiver impact our requirements for Highly-Qualified teaching under NCLB?

A: No- we are still required to have highly-qualified teachers in all schools. Highly-qualified teaching is not one of the waived components of NCLB.

Q: What is happening with NCLB-PSC Transportation?

A: LAUSD is committed to providing continued transportation to all students who are currently enrolled in PSC transportation through the end of the highest grade level of their current school. We will not, however, be accepting new applications for transportation through this NCLB-PSC transportation process. While the e-choices brochure was printed prior to the passage of the waiver and it includes the option, the online application has been amended.

FUNDING/RESOURCES

Q: How is the CORE Waiver funding waiver going to be used?

A:

- Per Dr. Deasy's comments regarding the use of funding that had been previously mandated as a reservation, all Title I schools are receiving an additional allocation from the approximately \$30 million dollars that had been set-aside due to our status as an "LEA in Program Improvement". These funds are particularly welcome because of the rapidly declining Federal entitlement.
- Dr. Deasy committed to continuing the NCLB Public School Choice transportation funding for families who had previously enrolled. That funding commitment (approximately \$1 million dollars) will remain in place until the child completes the highest educational level at the receiving school he/she is currently attending.
- All 208 schools identified in the waiver (i.e., Priority, Focus, Support, Reward, Collaborative Partner) will have supplemental learning opportunities. The approximate cost for this will be \$34 million dollars.
- Schools identified in the waiver for intervention (i.e., Priority, Focus, and Support) will have after-school intervention beginning in Spring 2014. The approximate cost for this will be \$5 million dollars.
- Educational Service Centers have received funds to support professional development for Priority, Focus and Support Schools. The approximate cost for this will be \$11 million dollars.

- Funds have been set-aside to absorb the costs associated with the collaborative work (partnering, communities of practice, and professional development for participating schools) and on-going design and meeting work with CORE. The approximate cost for this will be \$7 million dollars.

The New Accountability System: School Quality Improvement System (SQIS)

REWARD SCHOOLS

Q: What are the criteria for becoming a Reward School?

A: There are two categories within Reward School status: High-Performing and High-Progress.

- *High Performing:*
 - Top 30% of schools based on average ELA and Math performance of the all students group (percent proficient and above) in each of the years 2010 through 2012 and on 2012 graduation rates (for schools with graduation rate data); **AND**
 - Within-school achievement gap (as defined in focus schools section) in the lowest 30% across all participating schools for 2012; **OR**
 - The lowest performing subgroup in each school has improved from 2010 to 2012 (i.e. change is >0);
- *High-Progress:*
 - Top 10% most improved academic performance from 2010 to 2012 across average ELA and Math in all grades in the “all students” group (percent proficient and above) and
 - Top 50% most improved graduation rate from 2010 to 2012; **AND**
 - The lowest performing subgroup in each school has improved by at least 5% from 2010 to 2012

Q: Will I definitely be paired with a Priority or Focus School if I am a Reward School?

A: No, there will be some Reward Schools that are not asked to participate in pairings. Those who are paired, however, must participate in the pairing activities.

Q: If I am paired, what if we do not feel that the pairing is effective?

A: There will be an annual survey about the pairing process. In addition, as CORE continues to hire additional staff, paired schools will have support from CORE coordinators. Please work with the coordinator to ensure that the work is meaningful and supportive of your and your partner’s schools.

FOCUS SCHOOLS

Q: Is Focus status under the waiver different from Focus Schools under LAUSD’s School Performance Framework?

A: Yes- “Focus” in the context of the waiver is different from “Focus” in the context of the School Performance Framework. In the waiver, a school is identified as “Focus” if there is an achievement gap, or if a sub-group performs at particularly low levels. In the waiver context, “Focus” is not the lowest tier: Priority is the lowest tier. In LAUSD’s School Performance Framework, “Focus” is the lowest tier, and is the result of multiple measures.

Q: What are the criteria for becoming a Focus School?

A: A school can become a Focus School in two ways: having a low-performing subgroup, or a within-school achievement gap. More specifically, the identification is based on the following:

- Within-School Achievement Gap: includes Title I schools in the lowest 5% of based upon their achievement gap (lowest 5% for 2012, 2011, and 2010)
 - Achievement gap determined by subtracting the minimum subgroup performance from the maximum subgroup performance
 - Subgroup performance defined as the average ELA and Math percent proficient or above in each year
 - Includes all subgroups with performance information in the AYP datasets
- Low-Achieving Subgroup: includes Title I schools with subgroups with less than 20% average proficiency on Math and ELA assessments in 2012 and less than 5 percentage points of improvement from 2010-2012
 - Includes all subgroups with performance information in the AYP datasets

Q: What am I required to do as a Focus School?

A: The work of Focus Schools is outlined in the waiver on pages 133-141 (see waiver [here](#)). Those pages describe the need to undergo a school review process, write a two-year plan, as well as participation in Community of Practice, which will be led by CORE.

Q: What are the exit criteria for Focus Schools?

A: Exit criteria for Focus Schools are described on page 139 of the waiver (see waiver [here](#)). The table below describes the exit criteria:

Requirements to Exit:	Focus Schools
Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School has <u>reduced the number of non-proficient students by 25% in the focus subgroup(s)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Baseline is calculated using the year of data during which a school is designated – This target will be recalibrated when SBAC/PARCC assessments are introduced in 2014-15 SY to ensure that exit criteria is ambitious but achievable under the new standards
+ Graduation	<p>For high schools identified as Focus Schools with a persistent graduation rate of <60% (none currently and n/a given CORE's definition of Priority)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Graduation rate must reach at least 60% OR</u> • <u>Graduation rate must grow by 10 percentage points</u> • <u>Schools will be held to the goal that requires the greatest amount of growth in graduation rate</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Baseline is calculated using the year of data during which a school is designated – The 10 percentage point mark represents the growth in graduation rates that are one half of a standard deviation above the participating schools annual average increase between 2010 and 2012 – We believe that this is an ambitious but achievable goal since 6 of the 13 schools identified as having a whole school graduation rate less than 60% in 2010, are on track to achieve this growth by 2013
+ AMOs	<p>AND (Beginning in 2014-15, the first year of SBAC and baseline year for School Quality Improvement Goal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools must meet their School Quality Improvement Goal of improving 2 points in 2 years, and if time of exit is at or after year 4, met their School Quality Improvement Goal of improving 4 points in 4 years or reaching 90 points on their School Quality Improvement Index

PRIORITY SCHOOLS

Q: What are the criteria for becoming a Priority School?

A: There are three ways a school can be identified as a priority school:

- *Includes Tier I or Tier II SIG schools (includes 4 non-Title I)*
- *Includes Title I schools in the lowest 5% of proficiency based upon average ELA and Math proficiency rates (proficient and above) of the “all students” group (Lowest 5% for 2012, 2011; lowest 10% for 2010)*
- *Includes Title I schools with graduation rate of <60% for each of the last 3 years*

Q: What am I required to do as a Priority School?

A: The work of Priority Schools is outlined in the waiver on pages 116-133 (see waiver [here](#)). Those pages describe the need to partner with a Reward School, and write a three-year plan that addresses the seven turnaround principles. SIG schools should continue with the implementation of their SIG plans.

Q: What are the exit criteria for Priority Schools?

A: Exit criteria for Priority Schools are described on page 131 of the waiver (see waiver [here](#)). The table below describes the exit criteria:

Requirements to Exit:	Priority Schools
Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School has <u>reduced the number of non- proficient students by 25% in the “all students” group</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Baseline is calculated using the year of data during which a school is designated – This target will be recalibrated when SBAC/PARCC assessments are introduced in 2014-15 SY to ensure that exit criteria is ambitious but achievable under the new standards
+ Graduation	<p>AND for high schools identified as Priority Schools with a persistent graduation rate of <60%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Graduation rate must reach at least 60% OR</u> • <u>Graduation rate must grow by 10 percentage points</u> • <u>Schools will be held to the goal that requires the greatest amount of growth in graduation rate</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Baseline is calculated using the year of data during which a school is designated – The 10 percentage point mark represents the growth in graduation rates that are one half of a standard deviation above the participating schools annual average increase between 2010 and 2012 – We believe that this is an ambitious but achievable goal since 6 of the 13 schools identified as having a whole school graduation rate less than 60% in 2010, are on track to achieve this growth by 2013
+ AMOs	<p>AND (Beginning in 2014-15, the first year of SBAC and baseline year for School Quality Improvement Goal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools must meet their School Quality Improvement Goal of improving 2 points in 2 years, and if time of exit is at or after year 4, met their School Quality Improvement Goal of improving 4 points in 4 years or reaching 90 points on their School Quality Improvement Index

SUPPORT SCHOOLS

Q: What are the criteria for becoming a Support School?

A: The criteria to be identified as a Support School include:

- Did not meet their annual CA API growth target in 2012 OR
- Did not meet their CA graduation rate target in 2012 AND
- Are in the bottom 30% of the CA API scores for 2012 among participating schools in CORE waiver districts

Q: What am I required to do as a Support School?

A: The work of Support Schools is outlined in the waiver on pages 152-155 (see waiver [here](#)). Those pages describe the need to do similar activities to Focus Schools, which include undergoing a school review process, writing a two-year plan, as well as participation in Community of Practice, which will be led by CORE. Please note that the waiver does not refer to any schools as “Support” Schools, but rather it refers to schools as “Other Title I Schools” that did not meet their AMOs.

Q: What are the criteria for becoming a Collaborative Partner School?

A: Below are the criteria that were applied to identify Collaborative Partner Schools:

Highest-performing:

- Includes the top 40% of schools based on average ELA and Math performance of the all students group (percent proficient and above) in 2011 and 2012 and on 2012 graduation rates (for schools with graduation rate data); **AND**
- Within-school achievement gap (as defined in focus schools section) in the lowest 30% across all participating schools for 2012; **OR**
- The lowest performing subgroup in each school has improved from 2010 to 2012 (i.e. change is >0); **AND**
- Met CA AYP in 2012, defined as the following, per AYP guidelines:
 - Met proficiency rates for all students and all subgroups; **AND**
 - Reached 740 API or grew by at least 1 point; **AND**
 - Met the graduation rate requirement (or the growth target)

OR

High-progress:

- Includes the top 20% most improved academic performance from 2010 to 2012 across average ELA and Math in all grades in the “all students” group (percent proficient and above) **AND**
- Top 50% most improved graduation rate from 2010 to 2012; **AND**
- The lowest performing subgroup in each school has improved by at least 5% from 2010 to 2012
 - Schools cannot be designated high-progress if they have a stagnant or worsening achievement gap. By showing significant improved performance for a school’s lowest performing subgroup, CORE’s methodology meets USED’s requirement that a High-Progress school must not have significant achievement gaps that are not closing.

AND

- Was identified by CORE as a partner to a CORE district priority school

Q: If I work at a Title I schools that is not identified in the waiver (i.e. not Priority, Reward, Support, or Collaborative Partner) how do I fit into the new accountability system?

A: While there are not specific activities mandated by the waiver for those Title I schools that were not identified by the waiver this year, all schools will be measured annually, and may be identified by the School Quality Improvement Index in future years.

Q: Why isn’t 2013 data included in this year’s classifications?

A: At the time the waiver was written, the 2013 CSTs were not available.

Q: Will the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) continue in its current format? Will the new system require an additional plan? How will they relate?

A: LAUSD has incorporated the CORE WAIVER principles into the SPSA. The revised template will meet the planning requirements of the waiver, and no additional plan will be required.