

Wisconsin may gain waiver from federal education mandates

By [Erin Richards](#) of the Journal Sentinel

Sept. 24, 2011 | [\(38\) Comments](#)

Wisconsin may be released from meeting key requirements of a federal education law - including a 2014 deadline to have 100% of students proficient in reading and math - if it continues to develop and implement education-reform efforts outlined by the Obama administration.

States would have to establish college- and career-ready academic standards, implement new systems to hold schools accountable for their performance, target their lowest-performing 15% of schools and provide them with remedies.

In addition, they would need to develop educator and principal evaluation systems based in part on student performance if they wish to get a waiver from requirements under the No Child Left Behind law.

President Barack Obama announced the news Friday in a speech at the White House. He said that because Congress had not acted to rewrite the 10-year-old George W. Bush-era education law, his administration was stepping in to offer states flexibility in exchange for setting high standards and proving they're serious about meeting them.

Wisconsin appears poised to take advantage of that flexibility.

Gov. Scott Walker and Tony Evers, state superintendent of public instruction, are working on a new system for assessing the quality of all traditional public, public charter and private voucher schools. Evers is leading a team that's developing a statewide educator and principal evaluation system that will consider the use of student progress data.

Evers said Friday he welcomed the federal administration's offer of waivers from "broken federal accountability requirements."

He added that Wisconsin has also adopted the Common Core State Standards and is working to develop a more comprehensive student assessment system.

Joe Quick, a lobbyist with the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, said the state is in a "pretty good position" because Evers and Walker are looking at teacher effectiveness and school accountability, both requirements for the waiver.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, requires states to set proficiency targets in math and reading on annual state achievement tests for students in third through eighth and 10th grade.

Proficiency targets were required to increase until all students were categorized as proficient or better on the tests by the 2013-'14 school year.

Many educators and experts believe that the 100% proficiency target is unrealistic.

Obama spoke of other flaws with the law Friday, including the pressure on teachers to teach to the test to raise scores for schools, and the pressure to focus less on subjects such as history and science.

"In order to avoid having their schools labeled as failures, some states, perversely, have actually had to lower their standards," Obama said. "They don't want to get penalized? Let's make sure that the standards are so low that we're not going to be seen failing to meet them. That makes no sense."

Christina Brey, a spokeswoman for the Wisconsin Education Association Council, the largest teachers union, didn't think any of the requirements were unreasonable.

"It definitely looks like (the federal administration) is supporting schools and educators and districts and trying to get relief to them as quickly as possible from NCLB rules," she said.

Find this article at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/130486678.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.