

A return to honesty in school assessments?

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An education analyst says states requesting waivers from No Child Left Behind may represent a return to honesty in school assessments.

The 11 states that have applied for the waivers say the emphasis on at-risk, minority and special-needs students needs to be scaled back. Neal McCluskey of the [Cato Institute](#) says schools want to avoid the penalties incurred if any one of these subgroups does not make sufficient progress.

"You know at least you're getting maybe back in these waivers to a little more honesty -- we're not even going to pretend that everyone's going to be proficient by 2014," McCluskey says.

He says the reality of the clamor for waivers from the proficiency standards deadline set for 2014 is that the federal government cannot make schools better.

"Doesn't mean that the motivation isn't to make schools better or to have them continue to focus on groups that have typically done worse than the average, but the federal government cannot make schools better," the spokesman says.

McCluskey says because of the flexibility that the waivers will provide, it becomes difficult to track educational proficiency of students from one state to the next.