



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

MAR 17 2006

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Dr. T. Kenneth James  
Commissioner  
Arkansas Department of Education  
Four State Capitol Mall, Room 304 A  
Little Rock, AR 72201-1071

Dear Dr. James:

Thank you for submitting a proposal for consideration to participate in the Secretary's growth model pilot, which will allow selected States to use a growth-based accountability model to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Each proposal is being reviewed internally to determine how well it meets the seven core principles laid out in the Secretary's November 21, 2005 letter, making it eligible to advance to peer review.

The initial review of Arkansas's proposal indicates additional information is needed to determine how it meets the seven core principles. I remind you that an expected result from the pilot project is the ability to analyze how growth serves as a measure of accountability in comparison to the current status model. In accordance with Principle 4, such a comparison is only possible when a growth model and its growth targets are applied to all students and not only to students who missed the proficiency target. As we discussed in our March 9, 2006 phone call, please provide information to answer the following questions found in the Department's peer review guidance (please see [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/growthmodelguidance.doc](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/growthmodelguidance.doc) for that information). The reference in parenthesis is to that particular element in the guidance document:

Principle 1. Universal proficiency

- Has the State proposed technically and educationally sound criteria for growth targets for schools and subgroups? (Principle 1.2)
  - Has the State adequately described the rules and procedures for establishing and calculating growth targets? (Principle 1.2.2)
    - In annually revising the growth targets for individual students, will the expected year of proficiency always remain four years after the growth targets were initially calculated?
    - What portion of a student's annual growth would be obtained by default due to the nature of the model and scale scores?
    - How is Arkansas defining a year's progress in this growth model? Is this definition based on curriculum expectations or derived from statistical/measurement expectations related to the development of your scaled scores?

Principle 4. Inclusion of all students

- Does the State’s growth model proposal address the inclusion of all students, subgroups and schools appropriately? (Principle 4.1)
  - Does the State’s growth model address the inclusion of all students appropriately? (Principle 4.1.1)
    - How are all students included in the growth model? How are schools and local education agencies held accountable for the growth of all students?
    - The proposal discusses a need to “impute values” for missing data. Explain what you mean by this and what the rules are for determining when it would and would not be appropriate to impute values.
  - Does the State’s growth model address the inclusion of all students appropriately? (Principle 4.1.2)
    - How will limited English proficient (LEP) students who take the grade-level portfolio LEP assessment and students with disabilities who take the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards be included in the growth model? Please provide how these assessments are scaled for use in the growth model.

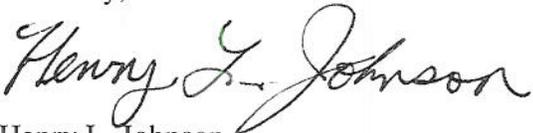
Principle 6: State Data Tracking System

- Has the State designed and implemented a technically and educationally sound system for accurately matching student data from one year to the next? (Principle 6.1)
  - Is the system proposed by the State capable of keeping track of students as they move between schools or school districts over time? What evidence will the State provide to ensure that match rates are sufficiently high and also not significantly different by subgroup? (Principle 6.1.2)
    - The Arkansas proposal states that only 2 percent of student files remain unmatched. Additionally, please provide information and evidence of the match rate at the subgroup level.

As we discussed in our March 9, 2006 call, we will be further examining how the State has resolved monitoring findings regarding the Title I reporting requirements for highly qualified teachers. The additional information you provide will be considered an addendum to Arkansas’s original application and will be included in the review process for the pilot. **The information should be submitted no later than March 17, 2006.** Please provide the information to Dr. Catherine Freeman at [catherine.freeman@ed.gov](mailto:catherine.freeman@ed.gov).

I appreciate your interest in the growth model pilot. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Dr. Freeman at the email address above or by calling (202) 401-0113. I thank you in advance for your response.

Sincerely,



Henry L. Johnson