



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

OCT 29 2008

The Honorable Deborah A. Gist
State Superintendent for Education
District of Columbia Public Schools
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Superintendent Gist:

Thank you for submitting a proposal for consideration to participate in the Secretary's growth model pilot, which would allow states to use a growth based accountability model in the 2008–09 school year 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 the District of Columbia's proposal indicates additional information is needed to determine how it meets the seven core principles. 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 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)
 - What are the state's growth targets relative to the goal of 100 percent of students proficient by 2013–14? (Principle 1.2.1)
 - Please provide additional information or examples regarding how growth would be attributed for students who transition between schools (i.e., how scores of elementary students projected to be proficient in middle school would be included).
 - Please provide additional examples of how AYP will be calculated for 2-3 schools with the addition of the growth model. Specifically, include information regarding how the probabilities of individual students becoming proficient are aggregated and the impact of the school-level random effect.

Principle 2. Establishing appropriate growth targets at the student level

- Has the state proposed a technically and educationally sound method of depicting annual student growth in relation to the growth targets? (Principle 2.1)
 - Has the state adequately described a sound method of determining growth over time? (Principle 2.1.1)

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

- How will the District of Columbia handle students who are currently proficient but may fall below the proficient cut point in the following year?

Principle 4. Inclusion of all students

- Does the state’s growth model 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)
 - Please clarify how the growth model will factor in students who are new, have missing data, or are unmatched.
 - Please provide further data regarding the impact of low school-level match rates on the school-level random effects.
 - Please clarify whether the growth model will be applied to all students in the every school in the state.
 - Please clarify whether the growth model applies to students taking the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards.
 - Does the state’s growth model address the inclusion of all schools appropriately? (Principle 4.1.3)
 - Please clarify how all schools (including charter schools) in the District of Columbia will be included in the growth model.

Principle 6. Tracking student progress

- 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)
 - Please provide additional information on the match rates of students by all subgroups included in AYP determinations including economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students.
 - Please clarify the universe for the match rates reported on pages 13-17.
 - What quality assurance procedures are used to maintain accuracy of the student matching system? (Principle 6.1.3)
 - Please provide additional information on how the current tracking system is accurate in matching student information across multiple years.
 - What studies have been conducted to demonstrate the percentage of students who can be “matched” between two academic years? Three years or more years? (Principle 6.1.4)
 - Please provide additional information on the match rates of proficient versus non-proficient students.
 - Does the state student data system include information indicating demographic characteristics (e.g., ethnic/race category), disability status, and socio-economic status (e.g., participation in free/reduced price lunch)? (Principle 6.1.5)

- Please provide additional information regarding how the current data system collects information on student demographic characteristics, disability status, and socio-economic status and how this information will be used in reporting academic growth.
- How does the proposed state growth accountability model adjust for student data that are missing because of the inability to match a student across time or because a student moves out of a school, district, or the state before completing the testing sequence? (Principle 6.1.6)
 - Please clarify how scores will be tracked across schools and whether and how the growth trajectory follows students across schools and LEAs.

I hope you will consider the suggestions provided in this letter and submit a revised proposal for technical review by the peers. The additional information will be considered as an addendum to the District of Columbia's October 15 submission and will be included in the review process for this pilot. The information should be submitted no later than November 12, 2008. Please provide the information to Patrick Rooney (Patrick.Rooney@ed.gov).

I appreciate your interest in the growth model pilot. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Patrick Rooney at the email above or by calling (202) 205-8831.

Sincerely,



Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

cc: Mayor Adrian Fenty
Bill Caritj