



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

**JUN 10 2008**

The Honorable Deborah Gist  
State Superintendent for Education  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
Government of the District of Columbia, One Judiciary Square  
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 350 North  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Superintendent Gist:

Thank you for submitting a proposal for the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) growth-based accountability model pilot project. I appreciate the work you and your staff have done to participate in this effort so far. The Department continues to believe that this pilot project can help determine whether growth models will, most importantly, provide a fair, reliable, and innovative mechanism for holding schools accountable for ensuring that all students reach grade-level standards in reading and mathematics by 2013–14.

As you know, a panel of peer experts reviewed the District of Columbia's growth model on April 24-25, 2008. During this review, the peers raised a number of substantive concerns with the structure of the District of Columbia's model. The peers identified several strengths in the District of Columbia proposal, noting, for example, that the approach you proposed would be easily understood by the public and professional educators. However, the peers noted specific concerns with several fundamental components of the District of Columbia's proposed model. Specifically, the peers were concerned about the maturity of the assessment and student tracking system to support the growth model. The peers requested data to confirm that the system can sufficiently track individual students over time and across schools. The peers also believed that additional detail was needed to demonstrate that the scale and standards-setting would support the proposed growth model. Finally, the peers noted that resetting the growth trajectory when students transfer schools (such as from elementary to middle school) is inappropriate. I am enclosing a copy of the peer report for your consideration.

Based on the significance of the peers' concerns, the Department has decided not to approve the District of Columbia's proposal for implementation in the 2007–08 school year. I anticipate, however, that there will be other opportunities for the District of Columbia to implement a growth model in the future. The Department's recently released notice of proposed regulations would codify the existing growth model pilot in regulations. Moreover, the Department is planning to convene another peer review of state growth model proposals this fall and I invite the District of Columbia to consider the peer reviewers' feedback and submit a revised proposal for that review. If the District of Columbia's subsequent proposal is successful, and assuming the District of Columbia's assessment system as administered in 2008–09 meets all requirements, the District of Columbia's growth model could be approved for implementation for the 2008–09

400 MARYLAND AVE. S.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20202  
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AYP determinations. More information about this next round of review will be forthcoming. I urge you to consider carefully the peer reviewers' feedback as you work to refine your growth model for the future. My staff and I are available to discuss the peers' concerns with you to help refine and improve your model.

Again, I appreciate your interest in the growth model pilot project and your continued efforts to ensure quality education for all children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Briggs', written over a horizontal line.

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

Enclosure

cc: Mayor Adrian Fenty  
Bill Caritj