

**PEER REVIEW GUIDANCE FOR THE
NCLB Growth Model Pilot Applications**

U. S. Department of Education
January 25, 2006

ALASKA RESPONSE
February 15, 2006

Guidance on Seven Core Principles

Core Principle 1: 100% Proficiency by 2014 and Incorporating Decisions about Student Growth into School¹ Accountability

“The accountability model must ensure that all students are proficient by 2013-14 and set annual goals to ensure that the achievement gap is closing for all groups of students.” (Secretary Spellings’ letter, 11/21/05)

Introductory note: The purpose of the growth model pilot is to explore alternative approaches that meet the accountability goals of NCLB. The intention is not to lower the expectations for student performance. Hence, a State’s accountability model incorporating student growth must ensure that all students are proficient by 2013-14, consistent with the NCLB statute and regulations. Annual measurable objectives for school performance on student growth measures must also ensure that the achievement gap is closing for all groups of students.

1.1 How does the State accountability model hold schools accountable for universal proficiency by 2013-14?

1.1 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>1.1.1 Does the State use growth alone to hold schools accountable for 100% proficiency by 2013-14? If not, does the State propose a sound method of incorporating its growth model into an overall accountability model that gets students to 100% proficiency by 2013-14? What combination of status, safe harbor, and growth is proposed?</p> <p>Indicate which of the four options listed below is proposed to determine whether a school makes adequate yearly progress (AYP) and for identifying schools that are in need of improvement, and explain how they are combined to determine AYP:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growth alone 2. Status and growth 3. Status, safe harbor, and growth 4. Safe harbor and growth <p>The Department is planning to evaluate the use of growth models.</p>	<p>1.1.1</p> <p>The state will determine which students are on track to be proficient within four years for those in grade 4-9, and within three years in grade 10, and combine that population with the status proficient group to measure relative to the Annual Measurable objective. The Alaska growth model proposal maintains the current AMO and the intervals for reaching 100% proficiency by 2014; therefore Alaska will continue to hold schools and districts accountable for 100 % proficient by 2013-14.</p> <p>This year Alaska identified 41.2% of schools as not meeting the required AMO. Alaska currently requires 71.48% of students to be proficient in language arts and 57.61% in mathematics.</p> <p>The growth determination is made when status is being determined; therefore, Alaska will use status with growth, and continue to use improvement within safe harbor if a school does not meet the status component. The students on track to be proficient students are included in the group counted toward meeting the AMO, and therefore those will</p>

¹ The State may propose to apply the use of student growth measures to determine AYP for LEAs. If it does so, the same provisions for evidence shall apply to LEAs as apply to schools, unless specifically mentioned otherwise and peer reviewers should evaluate the soundness of the proposal for LEAs as well as schools.

Once implemented, States participating in the growth model pilot project will be expected to provide data showing how the model compares to the current AYP status and safe harbor approaches.

- What are the grade levels and content areas for which the State proposes to measure growth (e.g., from 2004-05 to 2005-06 in reading and mathematics for grade levels 3-8)?
- If the State does not propose to implement its Growth model in all grade levels 3-8 and high school and for both subjects, where are the gaps in Growth Model decisions and what are the implications of those gaps for school accountability?

be part of the safe harbor calculation as well.

The Alaska proposal counts toward the AMO those students who are proficient and those who are on track to be proficient within four years in grades 4-9 and three years for students in grade 10. To determine if a student is on track to be proficient, the student's test results for grades 4-10 will be compared to the results of that same student when he/she was in grades 3-9. Alaska tests students in all grade levels between 3rd and 10th grade, allowing this model to work for all grade level schools that are currently assessed under NCLB for adequate yearly progress. The content area assessments used for this evaluation will be those currently used for adequate yearly progress determinations: mathematics and reading/writing (language arts). Students in grades 4-9 who are on track to be proficient within four years will be considered proficient. Grade 10 students will have to be on track to be proficient within three years (three years from the 9th grade as a result of the growth measured from 9th to 10th grade). As a result, all schools will be measured based on 100% meeting the AMO by 2014.

A student is on track if (1) he/she is not already proficient, and (2) his/her score in the second year is at least as high as the score the previous year plus one-fourth of the gap (one-third for 10th grade students) between the score the previous year and 300 (proficient). Therefore, the State of Alaska indicates students who are not proficient as proficient if they have made more than a year's growth demonstrating the student will be proficient within no more than four years for grades 4-9 and no more than three years in grade 10 (growth from 9th grade to 10th and within two additional years to be proficient by the end of 12th grade).

Alaska uses a 100-600 scale for all content areas and all grade levels, with 300 being proficient in all cases, and a standard deviation of 75 points. An example of a student considered to be on track to become proficient follows:

- A student last year in 4th grade had a score of 260.
- $(300-260)/4=10$
- At the end of 5th grade if a student has 270 he/she is on track to become proficient.

Evidence: AMO Trajectory

1.2 Has the State proposed technically and educationally sound criteria for “growth targets”² for schools and subgroups?

1.2 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>1.2.1 What are the State’s “growth targets” relative to the goal of 100% of students proficient by 2013-14? Examine carefully what the growth targets are and what the implications are for school accountability and student achievement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The State should note if its definition of proficiency includes “on track to be proficient” or a related growth concept. For example, a State may propose that a student who is not proficient in the current grade must be on track to proficiency within three years or by the end of the grade span (e.g., elementary). ➤ A growth model that only expects “one year of progress for one year of instruction” will not suffice, as it would not be rigorous enough to close the achievement gap as the law requires. <p>1.2.2 Has the State adequately described the rules and procedures for establishing and calculating “growth targets”?</p>	<p>1.2.1 and 1.2.2</p> <p>The growth target under this proposal for meeting the Annual Measurable Objective relative to the goal of 100% of students proficient by 2013-14 does not change. The Alaska proposal includes those students who are on track to become proficient with those students who are proficient when measuring the school results relative to the AMO.</p> <p>This proposal raises the expectations within the school system. Schools that are not meeting adequate yearly progress will find it challenging to identify interventions that allow students to demonstrate they are on track to become proficient. Schools will rise to the challenge and support students who are not proficient in more aggressive manners than they are encouraged to do under the current status-only model. Measuring student growth is a valid methodology to measure if we are closing the achievement gap between subgroups by measuring the gains taking place. A status-only method does not recognize schools in which the gap is closing – a very important issue to Alaska policymakers.</p>

1.3 Has the State proposed a technically and educationally sound method of making annual judgments about school performance using growth?

1.3 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>1.3.1 Has the State adequately described how annual accountability determinations will incorporate student growth?</p> <p>A. Has the State adequately described and provided a rationale for how Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) or other</p>	<p>1.3.1 A.</p> <p>Alaska is incorporating a growth model within adequate yearly progress, providing accountability for schools and LEAs based on status and growth of individual student performance relative to previous-year</p>

² “Growth target” denotes the level of performance required in order to meet AYP. The State may propose different “growth targets” for reading/language arts and mathematics, different grade spans, etc. This document uses the term “growth target” to try to minimize confusion with “expected growth,” “projected growth,” “growth expectations,” and other terms used in value-added and other student longitudinal growth approaches that denote an empirically derived student performance score not necessarily related to the NCLB policy goals of proficiency.

criteria for growth would be determined? Has the State provided a table giving the values for the AMOs from the first year the growth model will be applied (e.g., 2005-06) through 2013-14 that includes rigorous increases in school performance throughout that time? Does the model set reasonable, challenging, and continuously improving annual expectations for student growth?

- “Growth models that rely on substantial increases in the growth rates of students or schools in the last few years are not acceptable, but the Department is open to models that set a point in time as the goal (e.g., end of grade in a particular school; within four years). In setting these standards, the State should demonstrate how accountability is distributed among all the grades and not postponed to this point in time. The Department is concerned that if the State’s Growth Model allows attainment of the proficiency standard by individual students to be delayed or is tied to standards that are not considerably more rigorous with each consecutive grade, then it becomes too easy to minimize or delay the importance of accelerated growth” (Secretary Spellings’ letter, 11/21/05).

performance. Alaska is proposing to USDE to include growth within the performance calculations of adequate yearly progress, and intends to implement this system when making adequate yearly progress calculations this year.

The Alaska proposal will include with the proficient students in the areas of mathematics and reading/writing (language arts) those students who demonstrate growth sufficient to demonstrate to the state that the student is on track to be proficient within no more than four years or no less than three years. Students in grades 4-9 will have to be on track to proficiency within four years, grade 10 within three years, therefore assuring that all students are proficient before they graduate from high school. LEAs in Alaska are K-12 school systems; therefore, under this model the LEA is fully responsible for students even if they move from one building in 5th grade to another in 6th grade. Twenty three percent of schools within the State of Alaska are K-12 schools. The proposed methodology supports two types of effective schools: those that have a large percentage of students proficient; and those that have a large percentage of students on track to becoming proficient in the established time frame. Additionally, this system is inherently fair for all schools, yet holds all schools accountable for student proficiency and moving students toward proficiency.

Alaska will incorporate growth into the current status calculations of the percentage of students proficient, and will continue to use the Annual Measurable Objectives as outlined in the USDE-approved Accountability Workbook and adopted into state regulation.

Evidence: AMO Trajectory

The growth model will be part of the calculation in determining if schools are meeting the AMO. Students who are proficient and on track to be proficient within the required timeframe, are included in the percentage of students to meet the required Annual Measurable Objective. Participation rate and the other indicators will continue to be calculated as described in the USDE-approved Accountability Workbook.

B. For any proposed confidence intervals or other statistical methods to be applied to the decision about meeting the AMO for growth, has the State clearly described the rationale for the use of the specific statistical method (including minimum group size and any multi-year averaging), and the procedures for applying the method?

C. For future evaluation purposes, does the State’s proposal provide evidence of the validity and reliability of the proposed growth model, including impact of use/non-use of the growth model on validity and reliability of overall school accountability judgments?

1.3.1 B

The confidence interval in the USDE-approved Accountability Workbook will continue to be applied. Alaska applies the 99% confidence interval to the performance calculation in all content areas of mathematics and reading/writing (language arts). Alaska is evaluating all schools at the “school as a whole” level regardless of size; therefore, accountability is extended to all schools, and the confidence interval makes the system fair based on the measurement issues inherent in measuring performance in schools with varied sizes.

The approved minimum group size for adequate yearly progress as outlined in the USDE-approved Accountability Workbook does not change as a result of this proposal. Alaska evaluates all schools regardless of size at the school-as-a-whole level, and has a minimum group size of 20 for subgroups and 40 for SWD and LEP.

Currently Alaska is approved to use uniform averaging among years for participation only. This proposal does not introduce any changes to uniform averaging.

1.3.1 C.

Alaska will be able to report and analyze information regarding the number of students within a school who are proficient, on track to become proficient, and below proficient. This information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the growth model and to determine the reliability of the calculations in determining growth toward proficiency over time. While the calculation is based on the current year relative to the previous year, with the implementation of the data warehouse Alaska will increase the capacity to analyze and measure the validity of the growth model system. The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development will present validity and reliability evidence to the State’s National Technical Advisory Committee each year.

1.3.2 Has the State adequately described how it will create a unified AYP judgment considering growth and other measures of school performance at the subgroup, school, LEA, and state level?

A. Has the State proposed a sound method for how the overall AYP judgment (met/not met) for the school will be made, incorporating judgment of student growth?

B. Has the State proposed a sound method for how the overall AYP judgment for the school will incorporate growth in subgroup performance?

➤ Are the method and criteria for determining subgroup performance on growth the same as for students in the school as a whole?

C. Has the State proposed categories for understanding student achievement at the school level and reports for growth performance and AYP judgments that are clear and understandable to the public?

1.3.2

Adequate yearly progress for schools and districts is based on:

- Calculate if the school and each subgroup meet the 95% participation rate, or meet 95% when the current year and the previous one or two consecutive years meet 95%.
- Calculate the number of students proficient and the number on track to become proficient within four years for grades 3-9 and three years for grade 10. Include these two groups together to measure relative to the AMO in reading/writing (language arts) and the AMO in mathematics.
- Calculate if the school meets, or has made progress toward from the previous year, the meeting of the “Other” indicator of graduation rate, or attendance if the school does not have 12th grade.
- Measure if the school or any subgroup meets safe harbor if it did not meet the AMO, but only if the school and subgroups meet participation rate and the “Other” indicator. If a subgroup meets the AMO when using safe harbor then determine if the subgroup meets the “Other” indicator.

Adequate yearly progress is determined for the school as a whole regardless of the size of the school, and the minimum “n” only applies to the subgroups. Alaska uses a 99% confidence interval; however, this allows the state to apply accountability to all schools regardless of size with a level of confidence.

Information about school performance will be essential for school improvement planning purposes. If a school meets adequate yearly progress, the reason for meeting will be made public so that schools can plan, and the public will have knowledge about school performance. Schools that have many students proficient versus schools that have many students on track to become proficient may have different approaches for school improvement planning. The same information regarding proficient versus on track to become proficient will be necessary at the subgroup level to enhance planning and report AYP judgments that are clear and understandable to the public.

1.4 Does the State proposed growth model include a relationship between consequences and rate of student growth consistent with Section 1116 of ESEA?

1.4 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>1.4.1 Has the State clearly described consequences the State/LEA will apply to schools? Do the consequences meaningfully reflect the results of student growth?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The proposed interventions must comply with the Section 1116 requirements for public school choice, supplemental educational services, and so on. ➤ If proposed, the State should explain how it plans to focus its school intervention efforts by incorporating the results from a growth model. For instance, a State should be prepared to explain how a school that does not meet either traditional AYP goals or growth-based accountability goals might be subject to more rigorous intervention efforts than schools not making AYP on only one accountability measure. 	<p>1.4.1</p> <p>Alaska has defined consequences that apply to schools, and these consequences will be more meaningful because student growth results will be provided. The intervention Alaska applies to schools is in compliance with Section 1116 regarding public school choice, supplemental education services, and so on.</p> <p>When schools know the performance of their students based on status and growth, better school interventions can be designed. A school demonstrating significant growth with all or some students will be in a significantly improved position for designing school improvement plans with appropriate interventions for all students. Measuring growth and status is good for students and good for schools that serve those students.</p> <p>The state will have the opportunity to focus school improvement funding with the measures of growth, and add validity to the system when trying to identify schools that are doing a good job with students. To focus funds on schools with low growth and low status will assist students in becoming proficient or moving to be on track to become proficient.</p>

Core Principle 2: Establishing Appropriate Growth Targets at the Student Level

“The accountability model must establish high expectations for low-achieving students, while not setting expectations for annual achievement based upon student demographic characteristics or school characteristics.” (Secretary Spellings’ letter, 11/21/05)

Introductory note: A State may, in its growth model, use student longitudinal data to adjust for the fact that students who score below proficiency may still be making substantial growth from year to year. As part of including student growth in its AYP accountability model, a State must establish how it would determine whether the growth achieved by a student is adequate. Expectations for growth must not be based on student demographics or school characteristics.

2.1 Has the State proposed a technically and educationally sound method of depicting annual student growth in relation to growth targets?

2.1 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>2.1.1 Has the State adequately described a sound method of determining student growth over time?</p> <p>A. Is the State’s proposed method of measuring student growth valid and reliable?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are the “pre-“ and “post-“ test scores appropriately defined and adequately measured? ➤ If the State will not use a single score for pre- and/or post-test scores (e.g., using an aggregation of multiple scores from multiple years), does the State adequately explain and justify how the scores would be combined, what the weights are for each score, and how and whether the scores are/are not comparable across students and across time? ➤ Information about the availability and technical quality of proposed data will be considered in Core Principle 5. The probes associated with Principle 2 are focused on how the change in achievement is measured and valued. <p>B. Has the State established sound criteria for growth targets at the student level, and provided an adequate rationale?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If the State is assigning a value determination at the student level annually with regard to each student’s growth, has it used a sound process and assigned specific 	<p>2.1.1</p> <p>Validity exists when the right schools are being identified for school improvement and as making adequate yearly progress, and wrong schools are not being identified. Schools where students are demonstrating proficiency or growth toward proficiency within a reasonable timeframe should be considered good schools. Good schools that are doing what is necessary to increase student achievement should be identified as meeting adequate yearly progress. The Alaska growth model being proposed will create a system with greater validity for measuring school performance.</p> <p>The Alaska proposal has greater validity than the current methods for determining adequate yearly progress, and therefore will have great credibility within the state. This information will be valuable in school and LEA improvement planning, as appropriate consequences can be developed when schools know if they have students on track to proficiency or not on track to proficiency.</p> <p>The achievement levels for the Alaska Standards Based Assessments were designed in a manner that provides coherence from grade 3 through grade 10, based on vertically aligned content standards. The achievement standards were established through a process called standards validation that linked performance from the old assessment program to the new</p>

values for those growth targets? For example, if a State has four performance categories, would movement between each category be weighted equally or would some categories be weighted more heavily than others?

- If the State would only calculate “difference” or “change” scores for each student, and then aggregating to the subgroup and/or school levels, then the State should clearly give its rationale in this section.

- Would the model ensure that student growth expectations are not set or moderated based on student demographics or school characteristics? The model must have the same proficiency expectations for all students, while setting individual growth expectations for students to enable them to meet grade level standards.
 - If the State proposes a regression or multivariate/multi-level model, the independent variables may not include race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, school AYP status, or any other non-academic covariate.
 - Does the model establish growth targets in relation to achievement standards and not in relation to “typical” growth patterns or previous improvement, unless there is evidence and a clear rationale that those factors are related to the overall goal of achieving proficiency for all students?
 - Would gains of high performing students compensate for lack of growth among other students?

- Does the State have a plan for periodically evaluating the appropriateness of the student-level growth targets criteria?

program, and provided for measurement across grades to be coherent. The technical report for the Standards Based Assessment is provided as evidence and includes the agenda for the committee meeting where the standards were established, and the results of the work the committee did that was adopted into state regulation.

Evidence: Appendix 21 and Appendix 22. The full report can be seen at: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/techreports.html>

Alaska’s proposal is based on movement that shows students will be on track to become proficient within four years. The performance of students who are on track to become proficient within four years will fall in a proficiency level below proficient (below proficient), with an associated proficiency level descriptor that describes the content the student knows and needs to know to become proficient. This information, along with what is available in any descriptor about what a proficient student knows, provides instructional information to support the required annual growth necessary to be considered on track.

The Alaska proposal is not based on student demographics or school characteristics. The expectation for proficiency and growth toward proficiency is the same for all students. Growth is based on performance on the academic achievement standards in one year relative to the previous school year.

The growth model proposed by Alaska does not assign school or LEA credit for students scoring above proficient. This model involves the performance of three groups of students: those that are proficient, those that are on track to become proficient and those not proficient who are not on track to become proficient. The proficient students and the students on track to become proficient are included in the percentage of students measured against the AMO. Under the Alaska proposal gains of high-performing students will not compensate for lack of growth among other students.

The state will conduct ongoing analysis of the adequate yearly progress calculations, and track students over time to evaluate if students meet the proficiency level within the predicted timeframe. If students are meeting

	proficiency within a shorter or longer timeframe further analysis may be necessary. Alaska will work with the State's National Technical Advisory Committee to evaluate the appropriateness of the growth model.
--	--

Core Principle 3: Accountability for Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics Separately

“The accountability model must produce separate accountability decisions about student achievement in reading/language arts and in mathematics.”
(Secretary Spellings’ letter, 11/21/05)

Introductory note: The NCLB statute specifies that a State’s accountability system must produce separate accountability decisions about student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics. This must also be true for school accountability decisions based on measures of student growth.

3.1 Has the State proposed a technically and educationally sound method of holding schools accountable for student growth separately in reading/language arts and mathematics?

3.1 Peer Reviewer Probe Questions	State Response
<p>3.1.1 Are there any considerations in addition to the evidence presented for Core Principle 1?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The growth model proposal must include separate decisions for reading/language arts and mathematics, and maintain validity and reliability, minimize measurement error, and support empirical integrity in the accountability system. How does the model achieve these specifications, especially in small schools or schools with high mobility?➤ Does the model include assessments for other content areas (e.g., covariance matrices to estimate student performance or projected performance in a content area)? If so, the State should demonstrate that achievement on those other assessments does not compensate for failure to achieve proficiency in reading/language arts or mathematics.	<p>3.1.1 The Alaska proposal will measure student performance in reading/writing (language arts) and mathematics separately for both status and growth.</p> <p>This system provides a level playing field for all students and schools. Typically a school that has a greater percentage of students proficient will have fewer on track to be proficient, while a school with fewer students proficient will have a greater number of students on track to become proficient. Further, this makes clear that schools where students are not proficient and not on track to become proficient are different and should be designated differently within adequate yearly progress. The utilization of growth in adequate yearly progress designations increases validity, and will create over time reliable decisions based on status and growth of student achievement.</p>

Core Principle 4: Inclusion of All Students

“The accountability model must ensure that all students in the tested grades are included in the assessment and accountability system. Schools and LEAs must be held accountable for the performance of student subgroups. The accountability model, applied statewide, must include all schools and LEAs.” (Secretary Spellings’ letter, 11/21/05)

Introductory note: The State’s growth model should hold schools accountable for their students by including all students, consistent with NCLB requirements (e.g., “full academic year” (FAY), and minimum group size requirements). In addition, the State’s model must include all schools and LEAs.

4.1 Does the State’s growth model proposal address the inclusion of all students, subgroups and schools appropriately?

4.1 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>4.1.1 Does the State’s growth model address the inclusion of all students appropriately?</p> <p>A. Ideally, every student will have a pre- and a post-score, and a school will be clearly accountable for all students’ achievement even when applying the “full academic year” parameters. However, there will be situations in which this is not the case. Are the State’s proposed rules for determining how to include student achievement results (when data are missing) in the growth model technically and educationally sound?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ For example, if a State proposes to “impute” missing data, it should provide a rationale and evidence that its proposed imputation procedures are valid. A State proposing such a growth model must address how many students would be excluded from its calculations of growth because they lack a score, and provide an acceptable explanation of how these exclusions would not yield invalid or misleading judgments about school performance.➤ Does the State have an appropriate proposal for including students who participate with alternate assessments and/or alternate/modified achievement standards (in one or more years for calculating growth)?	<p>4.1.1</p> <p>All students in grades 3-10 at all schools are held accountable in Alaska when adequate yearly progress is determined under the USDE Accountability Workbook. The Alaska proposal for growth does not change this. Additionally, Alaska implemented a new criterion-referenced assessment system in 2005; therefore, in 2006 Alaska will have the two years of necessary data to demonstrate growth.</p> <p>Students who do not have a test record from the previous year as a result of attending school in another state, a private school, or another situation, will be evaluated based on status only. Missing data from the previous year may also occur when a student is retained or is in a situation within his/her grade level progress that causes the student to not have a test record from the prior grade level the previous year, in which case the student will be evaluated based only on his/her status score. No invalid or misleading judgments would occur, as the status results of those students will be evaluated for making adequate yearly progress designations.</p> <p>Under this proposal the alternate will continue to be calculated into adequate yearly progress using the current methodology of proficient or not proficient determinations, but at a future date when we have completed the redesign of the Alaska alternate the state may propose to include growth calculations of the alternate.</p>

- Does the State’s definition of FAY include students appropriately when applied in the growth model context? For example, a State that defines FAY as “participating in the assessment in the same school the previous year” will need to modify that definition for its growth proposal to include students who cross school boundaries over time.
- What does the State propose to do to measure academic growth for students in grade three or the initial grade tested?
- How does the State propose to distinguish between growth for a student who moves from one grade level to another and growth for a student who is retained in a grade level for two years or is promoted at mid-year?

B. What other strategies will the State use to include, in its NCLB accountability system, students who might be excluded from the growth model calculations?

4.1.2 Does the State’s growth model address the inclusion of all subgroups appropriately?

- A. States must ensure that student subgroups are neither systematically or inadvertently excluded from participation in the growth model; the model cannot eliminate or minimize the contribution of each subgroup. Are the State’s proposed rules for determining how to include subgroup accountability in the growth model technically and educationally sound?
- Has the State adequately addressed implications of its proposed growth model for subgroup inclusion in addition to that in Core Principle 1? (For example, has it addressed “minimum group-size” requirements for subgroups?)
 - Does the State have an appropriate proposal for including students who change subgroup classification over the time period when growth is calculated (e.g., LEP to non-LEP)?
 - If applicable, how does the State proposal address the

Full academic year will continue to be applied as outlined in the USDE approved Accountability Workbook. Students are considered full academic year if they have attended the same school from October 1 to the first day of testing, which takes place the first week in April.

Students in 3rd grade will not be measured based on growth. However, they will continue to be measured based on performance as is currently done in the accountability system.

4.1.2

The Alaska proposal to include growth does not change how subgroups are included. Subgroup performance is important in Alaska, and recognizing differences in performance and working to close the achievement gap are a priority. Minimum group sizes do not change under this proposal from the current USDE-approved Accountability Workbook. If students change subgroups it has no effect under this proposal as they are included in all subgroups they belong to on the date of the first day of testing, as is the current system outlined in the USDE-approved Accountability Workbook and adopted into state regulation.

needs of students displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita? For example, how does the proposal interact with State plans, if any, to develop a separate subgroup of displaced students, consistent with the Secretary's guidance of Sept. 29, 2005.

4.1.3 Does the State's growth model address the inclusion of all schools appropriately?

- A. Does the State provide an adequate plan and rationale for how the system will be applied to all schools consistently across the State to yield an AYP determination each year? Has the State adequately described and provided a rationale for any proposed exceptions?
- The State may propose to apply the growth model only to schools with adequate assessment data. If that is the case, it should propose how other schools, such as K-2 schools, single-grade schools, and high schools, will be held accountable (e.g., through continuing its approved statutory AYP/safe harbor accountability system for those schools).
 - The State should propose how it will deal with common conditions that would preclude the calculation of a growth score (e.g., school boundary changes, school closings, new schools, grade reconfiguration).
 - How would the model ensure that all schools are accountable for student achievement, even when the number of tested students in the school is small or constantly changing?

4.1.3

All schools will be included in the adequate yearly progress designations as outlined in the USDE-approved Accountability Workbook. Schools that do not have students in a tested grade are currently given a designation based on what school the students attend when they advance to a tested grade, and this will continue under the Alaska proposal. Because Alaska tests students in grades 3-10, sufficient assessment data is available to incorporate high schools into the growth model for determining adequate yearly progress.

School configuration changes will continue to be handled as they are in the current system of adequate yearly progress designations. If the school's population changes, but the students were tested within the state the previous year and have a test record, and the student is not proficient, then growth for full academic year students will be calculated. If the student does not have a test record from the previous year then status only will be calculated.

Core Principle 5: State Assessment System and Methodology

“The State's NCLB assessment system, the basis for the accountability model, must include annual assessments in each of grades three through eight and high school in both reading/language arts and mathematics, must have been operational for more than one year, and must receive approval through the NCLB peer review process for the 2005-06 school year. The assessment system must also produce comparable results from grade to grade and year to year.” (Secretary Spellings’ letter, 11/21/05)

Introductory note: NCLB requires a student assessment system that produces timely and accurate information. Under the statutory scheme, decisions about AYP are based on the “academic status” of students compared to a target—the State’s annual measurable objectives – or the change in the percentage of students who are not proficient. All States have submitted accountability plans that fit within this structure. Measuring student depends upon the quality of the State’s assessment system. An assessment system that is adequate for the “status” or “safe harbor” model might not be adequate for a growth model.

5.1 Has the State designed and implemented a Statewide assessment system that measures all students annually in grades 3-8 and one high school grade in reading/language arts and mathematics in accordance with NCLB requirements for 2005-06, and have the annual assessments been in place since the 2004-05 school year?

5.1 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>5.1.1 Provide a summary description of the Statewide assessment system with regard to the above criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ For both 2004-05 and 2005-06, did the State implement an assessment system that measures State adopted content standards in reading/language arts and mathematics?➤ Did the State produce individual student, school, and LEA test results for both years?	<p>5.1.1</p> <p>During the past three years Alaska has designed a system of standards and assessments that serves as a foundation and an accountability system that includes individual student growth calculations. The Alaska Grade Level Expectations, with vertical coherence from grade to grade, were adopted into state regulation. The Alaska Grade Level Expectations created coherence between grades 3-10 for reading/writing (language arts) and mathematics. In 2005, Alaska implemented the new Standards Based Assessments and adopted academic achievement standards with coherence from grade to grade as outlined in the technical report that was submitted to USDE for peer review of the Alaska assessment system. Alaska intentionally built the foundations of a growth model into the statewide assessment system that was peer reviewed under NCLB, and is prepared to implement this model. The fact that Alaska meets the principles required is not coincidental. We have intentionally worked to build a growth model for many years.</p> <p>Alaska will have two years of individual student, school, and LEA results to make decisions about growth of individual student learning this year.</p>

- 5.1.2 Has the State submitted its Statewide assessment system for NCLB Peer Review and, if so, was it approved for 2005-06?
- If it was not fully approved, what are the deficiencies and to what extent will they affect the State’s ability to measure growth in each subject?
 - If the State has not yet received approval of its assessment system, when does the State plan to submit evidence of compliance with the NCLB standards and assessment requirements?

Alaska implemented the new Standards Based Assessments in grades 3-9 in April 2005, while continuing to use the previous assessment in grade 10. In April 2006 Alaska will administer the new assessment in grades 3-10, allowing growth calculations to be made in all the affected grades of 4-10 in reading, writing and mathematics.

5.1.2 Evidence provided for the NCLB assessment peer review regarding the standards was found acceptable by reviewers who indicated “Alaska has done a good job with their content standards. The standards appear rigorous.” Alaska designed the standards by looking at the vertical achievement expectations over time between grades 3-10, building an assessment system to support increasing achievement over time within the same constructs. The academic achievement standards were established in a vertically moderated methodology, outlined in the technical report (attached evidence). The Alaska system clearly provides comparable results from year to year and grade to grade.

The Alaska assessment system was peer reviewed in November 2005. The United States Department of Education notified Alaska on January 25, 2006, that the state is found to be in substantial compliance with ESEA. Alaska will be required to address three areas as a result of the peer review:

- Element 2.0: The issues raised are not significant to using a growth model, and regardless of significance to the growth model most or all issues will be resolved in a timely manner. The issues related to advanced are irrelevant to this proposal as we do not provide any additional credit for advanced levels of performance, and other issues have been resolved in discussions with USDE, and documentation for peer reviewers will follow.
- Element 4.0: The issues raised in this element relate to the alternate assessment, which is being redesigned, and the technical report for the new 10th-grade assessment. The alternate is irrelevant to the adoption of a growth model as Alaska will continue to evaluate students on the alternate using status only until the assessment is redesigned. The technical report for the 10th-grade assessment will be completed after the standards are established in May 2006 and adopted by the state board in July 2006, and will follow the technical

<p>5.2 How will the State report individual student growth to parents?</p> <p>5.2 Peer Review Probe Questions</p> <p>5.2.1 How will an individual student’s academic status be reported to his or her parents in any given year? What information will be provided about academic growth to parents? Will the student’s status compared to the State’s academic achievement standards also be reported?</p> <p>5.3 Does the Statewide assessment system produce comparable information on each student as he/she moves from one grade level to the next?</p> <p>5.3 Peer Review Probe Questions</p> <p>The State assessment system – that is the achievement levels and content expectations – needs to make sense from one grade to the next, and even within achievement levels for it to support a growth model. These probes</p>	<p>report format of the 3-9 assessment technical report, which was peer reviewed and seen as acceptable. Additionally, the state has asked the assessment contractor to make recommended, yet not required, adjustments to improve the quality of the technical report in all grades.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Element 5.0: This element addresses the alignment study regarding the new 10th-grade assessment, which has been completed, and the new assessment has been adjusted to meet the alignment recommendations. <p>Alaska has demonstrated significant commitment in meeting the requirements of ESEA as amended by NCLB 2001. Therefore, we received deferred approval, with a list of issues to address that are very achievable, but yet not consequential to the approval of the use of our proposed growth model.</p> <p><i>Evidence: Henry L Johnson Ltr., 012506</i></p> <p>5.2 and 5.2.1 Individual student reports based on status will continue to be provided to parents. The growth determination is one that is simple, and school teachers and principals will be able to explain it to parents. However, the results of growth do not change individual student reports. The results of growth change school accountability and the results of school accountability will continue to be accessible to the public.</p> <p>5.3 and 5.3.1 Alaska is able to use the assessments results, which were vertically aligned, to measure student performance in the current year relative to the previous year. Because of the individual student identification system, and the ability to measure improvement using a scale that was established to determine individual student growth in one year relative to the previous year, Alaska will be able to produce comparable information on each student as he/she moves from one grade level to the next.</p>
--	---

<p>will help the peers understand the assessment system’s capability for use in growth models.</p>	
<p>5.3.1 Does the State provide evidence that the achievement score scales have been equated appropriately to represent growth accurately between grades 3-8 and high school? If appropriate, how does the State adjust scaling to compensate for any grades that might be omitted in the testing sequence (e.g., grade 9)?</p>	
<p>Did the State provide technical and statistical information to document the procedures and results? Is this information current?</p>	
<p>5.3.2 If the State uses a variety of end-of-course tests to count as the high school level NCLB test, how would the State ensure that comparable results are obtained across tests? [Note: This question is only relevant for States proposing a growth model for high schools and that use different end-of-course tests for AYP.]</p>	<p>Alaska implemented in April 2005 a new Standards Based Assessment system based on vertically coherent grade level expectations (academic content standards) that assesses similar, but progressively more complex, content each year. This assessment system, designed over the last three years to meet No Child Left Behind and build a foundation for a growth model, was peer reviewed for NCLB assessment in November 2005. In the peer review, the reviews of the standards indicated, “Alaska has done a good job with their content standards. The standards appear rigorous, including DOK analyses.” The achievement standards and cut scores were established through a technically and legally sound process that created the necessary vertical alignment between grade levels in terms of reporting strands and achievement expectations as documented in the technical report, which was peer reviewed in November 2005. The technical report can be viewed at: http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/techreports.html</p>
<p>5.3.3 How has the State determined that the cut-scores that define the various achievement levels have been aligned across the grade levels? What procedures were used and what were the results?</p>	<p>5.3.2 Not Applicable</p>
<p>5.3.4 Has the State used any “smoothing techniques” to make the achievement levels comparable and, if so, what were the procedures?</p>	<p>5.3.3 and 5.3.4 Included in this submission is the agenda and appendix 21, which outline the process for setting the achievement standards. This process clearly included vertical considerations regarding the cut score for proficiency. That process of establishing the achievement standards involved educators making judgments about what students should know and do at different grade levels, but within the same content reporting strands for each grade level. The committees worked across grade levels, and were provided opportunities to revisit grade levels in the process. In some cases the assessment is more difficult to pass as the grades progress, but in those cases educators felt the content was essential for a proficient student, and schools needed to become more effective teaching the content assessed within those items. The state used this process as a methodology, along with application of a smoothing technique, to make sure achievement levels were comparable, yet defined various achievement levels across the grade levels in an educationally appropriate manner. The process for setting the standards is described on pages 55-57 of the Standards Based Assessment technical report.</p>

<p>5.4 Is the Statewide assessment system stable in its design?</p> <p>5.4 Peer Review Probe Questions</p> <p>5.4.1 To what extent has the Statewide assessment system been stable in its overall design during at least the 2004-05 and 2005-06 academic terms with regard to grades assessed, content assessed, assessment instruments, and scoring procedures?</p> <p>5.4.2 What changes in the Statewide assessment system’s overall design does the State anticipate for the next two academic years with regard to grades assessed, content assessed, assessment instruments, scoring procedures, and achievement level cut-scores?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What impact will these changes have on the State’s proposed growth model? How does the State plan to address the assessment design changes and maintain the consistency of the proposed growth model? 	<p><i>Evidence: Appendix 21 and TechReport 55-57 of Technical Report</i></p> <p>5.4 and 5.4.1 The assessment program was implemented in 2005 and will be given again in 2006 providing two years of stable data with regard to grades assessed, content areas assessed, the assessment design and tool and the scoring procedures, which are outlined in the full technical report for the Standards Based Assessment.</p> <p>5.4.2 Alaska does not anticipate any changes within the assessment system in the next two academic years, other than the addition of science at grades 4th, 8th and 11th. Science will not be used within the growth calculation of adequate yearly progress in Alaska. Alaska has a multi-year contract with Data Recognition Corporation to design and score the assessment using standard accepted scoring procedures. Alaska is in the third year of a six-year contract with Data Recognition Corporation.</p>
---	--

Core Principle 6: Tracking Student Progress

“The accountability model and related State data system must track student progress.” (Secretary Spellings’ letter, 11/21/05)

Introductory note: NCLB established the goal of having all students reach “proficiency” in reading/language arts and mathematics by 2013-14. To reach this goal, it is necessary to monitor students’ progress as they move from grade level to grade level. Status models take a snapshot of a school’s or subgroup’s level of achievement to see if the school or subgroup has met the established proficiency target. Implicit in any system of growth measurement is the necessity of being able to track individual students over time. This section facilitates Peer Reviewers’ efforts to review a State proposal with regard to the State’s data system and the proposed methods for tracking student progress.

6.1 Has the State designed and implemented a technically and educationally sound system for accurately matching student data from one year to the next?

6.1 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
6.1.1 Does the State utilize a student identification number system or does it use an alternative method for matching student assessment information across two or more years? If a numeric system is not used, what is the process for matching students?	6.1.1 – 6.1.6 Alaska has a unique ten-digit student identification system that was first used in 2001, and required for all students in the state in 2002. The identifier is used for multiple purposes, including tracking assessment data and to receive state foundation funding aid for each LEA. The state reconciles the data regularly to assure students do not have duplicate identification numbers within the system, and has a staff member who has as part of his/her responsibility the reconciling of the student identification system. The technical requirements and documentation of the system can be viewed on the states web site at: http://www.eed.state.ak.us/oasis/home.html Once an LEA has a student ID for a student, it uses that ID for all student-level files submitted to the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. Alaska collects a detailed Participation File containing information regarding students who participate in the assessments. This information includes all the necessary demographic data to track students, and can be linked to previous data collections. The Participation File is used by our assessment contractor to match to assessment data and populate the data warehouse used by LEAs for analysis of results. Because the system has been required for use by all LEAs since 2002, the data collection is very detailed and provides an excellent mechanism for tracking students. LEAs regularly submit files
6.1.2 Is the system proposed by the State capable of keeping track of students as they move between schools or school LEAs over time? What evidence will the State provide to ensure that match rates are sufficiently high and also not significantly different by subgroup?	
6.1.3 What quality assurance procedures are used to maintain accuracy of the student matching system?	
6.1.4 What studies have been conducted to demonstrate the percentage of students who can be “matched” between two academic years? Three years or more years?	
6.1.5 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)?	

6.1.6 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, LEA, or the State before completing the testing sequence?

of students who they suspect may have dropped out of school, and the state is able to run those files against the system to determine if they have enrolled in another school within the state. The state currently has the capacity to track individual student progress within a school and throughout the state for multiple years. In addition, the state has the data system capacity to measure individual student growth.

Further, Alaska recently received a longitudinal data system grant from the Institute of Education Sciences to build a system that will be further enhanced and efficient.

Alaska will measure the achievement of students who are included in adequate yearly progress by examining test records in the current year relative to the previous year. Students who tested within the State of Alaska in both years, regardless of where they tested, will be included in the growth calculation. Those students who only have a test record from the current year will be evaluated based on status alone.

6.2 Does the State data infrastructure have the capacity to implement the proposed growth model?

6.2 Peer Review Probe Questions

6.2.1 What is the State’s capability with regard to a data warehouse system for entering, storing, retrieving, and analyzing the large number of records that will be accumulated over time?

6.2.2 What experience does the State have in analyzing longitudinal data on student performance?

6.2.3 How does the proposed growth model take into account or otherwise adjust for decreasing student match rates over three or more years? How will this affect the school accountability criteria?

6.2 – 6.2.3

The individual student identification system provides the state the ability to examine student results this year relative to how students performed in the previous school year, and determine the gap between performance and the universal scale score proficiency level of 300 on the 100-600 scale. All students are assessed on the standards in grades 3-10, allowing the state to determine growth from previous year in grades 4-10. Students in 3rd grade and those who do not have a test record from the previous year for the preceding grade level will be evaluated on status only.

Alaska has the ability to determine growth in student learning this year relative to last year’s performance and will further enhance the efficiency in determining growth as a result of the state’s receipt of a longitudinal data system grant from the Institute of Education Sciences. Alaska’s data warehouse will not only make more efficient the calculations the state conducts to determine adequate yearly progress, but it will extend to each local education agency the ability to frequently and easily use the data warehouse for examining data within its schools.

CORE PRINCIPLE #7: Participation Rates and Additional Academic Indicator

The accountability model must include student participation rates in the State's assessment system and student achievement on an additional academic indicator. (Secretary Spellings' letter, 11/21/05)

Introductory Note: In determining AYP, a State must include, in addition to academic achievement, (1) participation rates on the State's assessment, and (2) "at least one other academic indicator, as determined by the State for all public elementary school students" and graduation rate for public high schools, and may include other academic indicators such as "decreases in grade-to-grade retention rates." For purposes of developing a growth model, these requirements must be addressed in a State's proposal.

7.1 Has the State designed and implemented a Statewide accountability system that incorporates the rate of participation as one of the criteria?

7.1 Peer Review Probe Questions	State Response
<p>7.1.1 How do the participation rates enter into and affect the growth model proposed by the State?</p> <p>7.1.2 Does the calculation of a State's participation rate change as a result of the implementation of a growth model?</p>	<p>7.1.1 – 7.1.2 Participation requirements currently outlined in the USDE approved Accountability Workbook will continue to be used within the Alaska proposal, assuring 95% student participation, or 95% of the average of the current and the previous one or two consecutive years.</p> <p>Alaska tests all students in grades 3-10 in reading, writing and mathematics, and has been testing students in all those grades several years. The state has developed custom criterion-referenced assessments for each grade level and content area. The state reports to the public, and provides to each LEA and school, the performance of students by all required subgroups. The information provided to each LEA is in an electronic format that allows for analysis of subgroup performance by standard, and therefore meets focus on accountability for all students. In the consensus report from the NCLB assessment peer review the reviewers noted that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Alaska has done an excellent job with their reporting. Training is comprehensive for LEA test coordinators and the state’s interpretive guides are thorough.”</p> <p>Alaska has a 97.6% participation rate in the assessments, and the results are reported to the public by all required subgroups. Alaska is on the right path.</p>

<p>7.2 Does the proposed State growth accountability model incorporate the additional academic indicator?</p> <p>7.2 Peer Review Probe Questions</p> <p>7.2.1 What are the “additional academic indicators” used by the State in its accountability model? What are the specific data elements that will be used and for which grade levels will they apply?</p> <p>7.2.2 How are the data from the additional academic indicators incorporated into accountability determinations under the proposed growth model?</p>	<p>7.2 – 7.2.2</p> <p>The additional academic indicator will continue to be implemented as outlined in the USDE-approved Accountability Workbook.</p>
---	---