



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

OCT 29 2008

The Honorable Alice Seagren
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, Minnesota 55113

Dear Commissioner Seagren:

Thank you for submitting a proposal for consideration to participate in the Secretary's growth model pilot, which would allow Minnesota to use a growth based accountability model in school year 2008–09 to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (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.

An initial review of Minnesota's proposal indicates that some 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 references in parentheses are to that particular element in the guidance document.

Principle 1. Universal proficiency

- Has the state proposed a technically and educationally sound method of making annual judgments about school performance using growth? (Principle 1.3)
 - Has the state adequately described how annual accountability determinations will incorporate student growth? (Principle 1.3.1)
 - Please provide additional information on the evaluation and analysis of the interaction and overlap of the proposed growth model and existing performance index.

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 growth targets? (Principle 2.1)
 - Has the state adequately described a sound method of determining student growth over time? (Principle 2.1.1)
 - Please provide a rationale for the value table points assigned to movement between various performance levels. Please include a rationale for how the model ensures students are expected to attain

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more than one year's growth when the model allocates 50 points to students maintaining performance at the partially proficient level.

- Please provide the distribution of students at each performance level across the state.

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 provide additional information on how Minnesota will plan to include the results of students taking the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards, given the changes to the assessment during the 2007–08 school year.

Principle 5. State assessment system and methodology

- How will the state report individual student growth to parents? (Principle 5.2)
 - 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? (Principle 5.2.1)
 - Please clarify how the results of the growth model will be reported to parents and the public at large.
- Does the statewide assessment system produce comparable information on each student as he/she moves from one grade level to the next? (Principle 5.3)
 - 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? (Principle 5.3.3)
 - Please provide the conditional standard errors of measurement for each performance level in reading/language arts and mathematics for grades 3-8 and high school.

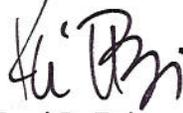
Principle 6. Tracking student progress

- 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)
 - What studies have been conducted to demonstrate the percentage of students who can be "matched" between two academic years? Three years or more? (Principle 6.1.4)
 - Please provide additional information, if possible, on Minnesota's match rates over the last three years.

I hope you will provide the requested information and clarifications. This information will be considered an addendum to Minnesota'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 address above or by calling (202) 205-8831.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerri L. Briggs". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

cc: Governor Tim Pawlenty
Christy Hovanetz-Lassila
Tom Boatman