UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

NOV 25 2008

The Honorable Gerald L. Zahorchak
Secretary of Education
Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126

Dear Secretary Zahorchak:

Thank you for submitting a growth-based accountability proposal to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). Growth models show promise as fair, reliable, and innovative methods to measure student improvement and to hold schools accountable for academic achievement, and the Department welcomes thoughtful proposals from all states.

The Department has reviewed Pennsylvania's growth model proposal and has decided to forward it for peer review. Accordingly, I want to provide you with additional information about how we will handle the next steps in the review and approval process. The peers will independently review each state's proposal. Simultaneously, we will post the submissions on our website at http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/growthmodel/index.html.
This step will help ensure the process is open and transparent to all those concerned. As the peers review each proposal, they may seek clarifications. Consequently, to the extent necessary, we may facilitate a conference call between your staff and the peer review team prior to or during the peer review.

The peer reviewers will meet in Washington, DC on December 2-3 to discuss each proposal. Following their review, the peers will make recommendations to the Secretary. The Department expects to make final decisions by the end of the year.

Again, I appreciate your work on the proposal and your continued efforts to ensure quality education for all children.

Sincerely,

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

cc: Governor Edward Rendell
Shula Nedley