NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Growth Models: Flexibility <u>And</u> Accountability

"A growth model is a way for states that are already raising achievement and following the bright line principles of the law to strengthen accountability. We're open to new ideas, but we're not taking our eye off the ball."
-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

In April, Secretary Spellings announced a New Path for *No Child Left Behind* – a set of common-sense principles to guide States in meeting the law's goals.
- This New Path "equation" includes the primary elements of the law, such as annual testing and reporting of subgroup data, plus increasing student achievement and a narrowing of the achievement gap, plus overall sound state education policies that ensure that progress is being made.
- States that show results and follow the requirements of NCLB are eligible for new tools to help them meet the law's goals of getting every child to grade level by 2014.

One of the approaches States have requested is the use of growth-based accountability models. They show promise as fair, reliable and innovative methods to measure school and student improvement.
- Growth models give schools credit for student improvement over time by tracking individual student achievement year to year.
- The Department convened a group of experts and policymakers to examine and compare various models to determine how growth models could meet the goals of NCLB.
- A pilot program gives the Department the ability to rigorously evaluate growth models and their alignment with NCLB, and to share results with other states.

As part of this new pilot program, States may propose a growth-based accountability model for use in AYP purposes, as long as they meet certain principles. The Department will approve no more than 10 high-quality growth models in this pilot program for 2005-06. The models must:
1. Ensure that all students are proficient by 2014 and set annual goals to ensure that the achievement gap is closing for all groups of students;
2. Set expectations for annual achievement based upon meeting grade-level proficiency, not based on student background or school characteristics;
3. Hold schools accountable for student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics;
4. Ensure that all students in tested grades are included in the assessment and accountability system, hold schools and districts accountable for the performance of each student subgroup, and include all schools and districts;
5. Include 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.
6. Track student progress as part of the State data system; and
7. Include student participation rates and student achievement on a separate academic indicator in the state accountability system.

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The Department will rigorously monitor and evaluate States that receive approval under the pilot this year.
- Outside peer reviewers with technical expertise will evaluate proposals.
- States that receive approval must provide data to the Department on how the growth model works compared to the current AYP model. This information will be useful to the Department and policymakers and will help inform future actions.
- States that wish to apply and meet the core requirements should submit their proposals to the Department by February 17, 2006, to allow sufficient time for review.

Some States do not have the assessment systems or data capabilities to use a growth model according to the principles above. But under *No Child Left Behind*, States currently have the flexibility to use an index model.
- For States that cannot track individual student progress, an index model provides an alternative that gives schools credit for moving students from "below basic" to "basic" even if they are not yet proficient. The end target of having students proficient in reading and math by 2014 still remains, however.
- Currently, nine states (Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Vermont) use index models to determine AYP.

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