



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

NOV 09 2006

The Honorable Susan Castillo
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street, N.E.
Salem, Oregon 97310-0203

Dear Superintendent Castillo:

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, ensure that all students reach grade-level standards in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014 and also whether these models represent a fair, reliable, and innovative way to hold schools accountable.

As you know, the Department submitted the Oregon proposal to a group of peer reviewers who evaluated Oregon's proposal on October 16, 2006. Based on peer input, we have determined that the Oregon proposal cannot currently be approved without significant revisions. However, with this letter, I am inviting Oregon to consider this feedback and submit a revised proposal by December 1, 2006. This revised proposal will be submitted for peer review, along with other State proposals submitted on November 1, 2006. If successful, Oregon's revised growth model could be approved for implementation for the 2006-07 school year, subject to the limit of 10 approved State growth models. To help you with this effort, I am enclosing the peer report for Oregon. My staff and I are willing to discuss this information with you to help refine the proposal if you choose to do so.

The peers liked Oregon's conceptual approach and identified several strengths of the revised growth model, such as more specifics regarding the growth calculations and the fact that it does not average data in the growth calculations. However, the peers raised a significant concern regarding the Oregon proposal (please refer to the included peer report for more detail). The peers believed that the changes necessary to come into compliance with the Title I standards and assessment requirements under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), such as the resetting of achievement standards, will not support the type of growth model proposed. Specifically, the resetting of achievement standards and statements suggesting anticipated evolution of the testing system in the short run do not support growth calculations across time.

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The Department will rigorously evaluate the approved proposals, review information on how the pilot project is working, and share the results with other States, policymakers, and the public. With the knowledge gained from the approved growth models, the Department will be able to make an informed decision about whether to expand the pilot project in the future. 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 "Henry L. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Henry L. Johnson

Enclosure

cc: Governor Ted Kulongoski
Patrick Burk