



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

**JUN 10 2008**

The Honorable Veronica C. Garcia  
Secretary of Education  
State of New Mexico Public Education Department  
300 Don Gaspar  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Secretary Garcia:

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, provide a fair, reliable, and innovative mechanism for holding schools accountable for ensuring that all students reach grade-level standards in reading and mathematics by 2013–14.

As you know, a panel of peer experts reviewed New Mexico's growth model on April 24-25, 2008. During this review, the peers raised a number of substantive concerns with the structure of New Mexico's model. The peers identified several strengths in New Mexico's proposal, noting, for example, that the proposed approach would clearly focus on the lower-performing schools and on reducing achievement gaps for non-proficient students. Your plan also includes students with disabilities who take an alternate assessment. Further, the peers appreciated the unique and innovative nature of the proposal as well as the evaluation plan. However, the peers had concerns with several fundamental components of New Mexico's proposed model. Specifically, the peers were concerned about the lack of detail regarding the creation of the growth intervals for individual students and the lack of reporting results to parents and the public. The peers also noted a lack of detail regarding the link between the growth rate and the annual measurable objectives. Of particular concern, the proposed model does not disaggregate by the required student groups and no evidence was submitted to ensure that the gains of some students would not compensate for a lack of growth among other students. Finally, the peers were concerned about whether New Mexico's data infrastructure would be sufficient to track individual students over time and across schools. I am enclosing a copy of the peer report for your consideration.

Based on the significance of the peers' concerns, the Department has decided not to approve New Mexico's proposal for implementation in the 2007–08 school year. I anticipate, however, that there will be other opportunities for New Mexico to implement a growth model in the future. The Department's recently released notice of proposed regulations would codify the existing growth model pilot in regulations. Moreover, the Department is planning to convene another peer review of state growth model proposals this fall and I invite New Mexico to consider the peer reviewers' feedback and submit a revised proposal for that review. If New Mexico's subsequent proposal is successful, New Mexico's growth model could be approved for

400 MARYLAND AVE. S.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20202  
[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

implementation for the 2008–09 AYP determinations. More information about this next round of review will be forthcoming. I urge you to consider carefully the peer reviewers' feedback as you work to refine your growth model for the future. My staff and I are available to discuss the peers' concerns with you to help refine and improve your model.

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 'K. Briggs', written over a horizontal line.

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

Enclosure

cc: Governor Bill Richardson  
Carlos Martinez