



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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February 5, 2008

The Honorable Margaret Spellings  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings:

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is pleased to submit an application for the NCLB Growth Model Pilot. *Pennsylvania's Proposal for Inclusion of a Growth Model for AYP* presents the foundational reasons that Pennsylvania is poised to be one of the states to implement a growth model with high integrity for AYP determination.


In 2006-07, the peer reviewers deferred the growth model pilot proposal submitted by Pennsylvania on the following reasons: (1) A student identifier system had not been in place for more than one year, and (2) An additional year of PSSA data was needed for all students. However, the peer reviewers did state that the methodology proposed by Pennsylvania was of quality and not in question. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is delighted to be resubmitting a proposal that has a solid growth model methodology (same approach as used in the approved states of Tennessee and Ohio), and with multiple years of data and PAsecureID entirely implemented, Pennsylvania is confident that our proposal has all the required elements for approval.

The essence of this proposal is that by using the projection metric of the Pennsylvania Value-Added System (PVAAS), Pennsylvania is able to assess the trajectory toward proficiency for each student. This results in a recalculation of proficiency for all students at the district, school and subgroups levels. Pennsylvania's proposed growth metric keeps Pennsylvania on the trajectory for the NCLB target, unlike other growth models that may not emphasize movement toward the critical 2013-2014 goal. Additionally, the proposed amendment to the Pennsylvania Accountability Workbook fits the description of a pilot program precisely. Since 2002, Pennsylvania has gained the experience and necessary infrastructure for implementing growth model methodologies for school improvement and for projections to proficiency on future assessments.

The collective use of "status," "improvement" and "growth" measures yields a comprehensive and complete picture of achievement in today's schools for community members, districts, the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the United States Department of Education. The Pennsylvania Department of Education believes that its' strong history of commitment, both fiscally and philosophically, to the use of a growth model as a tool for school improvement establishes Pennsylvania as a leading candidate for participation in the USDOE pilot program of growth models for AYP.

Thank you for your kind consideration of Pennsylvania's proposal. If you should have any questions, please contact Dr. Shula Nedley, Director, Bureau of Assessment and Accountability, e-mail: [snedley@state.pa.us](mailto:snedley@state.pa.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerald L. Zahorchak". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Gerald L. Zahorchak, D.Ed.