

Differentiated Accountability: Targeting Resources to Schools with the Greatest Need

May 2008

“The goal is to help educators act now to help schools in every stage of improvement. We must take dramatic action to improve our lowest-performing schools.”

— U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

In March 2008, Secretary Spellings announced a differentiated accountability pilot to allow states to distinguish between those schools in improvement that are just missing the mark and those that need significant reform. Differentiated accountability will allow participating states to vary the intensity and type of interventions to match the academic reasons that led to a school’s identification for improvement. Differentiated accountability will assist those states by targeting resources and interventions to those schools most in need of intensive interventions and significant reform.

In return for this flexibility, states participating in the pilot must commit to: build their capacity for school reform; take the most significant actions for the lowest-performing schools, including addressing the issue of teacher effectiveness; and use data to determine the method of differentiation and categories of intervention.

State Submissions / Approval Process

- 17 states submitted a differentiated accountability proposal. Fifteen states submitted proposals for implementation in the 2008-09 school year: Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Two states submitted proposals for implementation in the 2009-10 school year: Georgia and Illinois.
- The Department has submitted the proposals of all 17 states to a peer review panel.
- These proposals, additional information about the pilot, and Department letters to these states may be found online at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/differentiatedaccountability/index.html>.
- In mid-June, a panel of outside **nationally recognized experts will review each state’s differentiated accountability proposal** using the Department’s *Peer Review Guidance*, which can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/daguidance.doc>. The experts invited to participate represent a wide range of perspectives from academia to the private sector to state and local organizations.
- After considering the peers’ comments, the Secretary will decide which states to approve for the differentiated accountability pilot. The Secretary will approve up to 10 states to participate in the pilot. Approved states will be notified before the start of the 2008-09 school year so that they may implement their model based on results from tests administered in 2007-08. In deciding which proposals to approve, the Secretary will give priority to states that have the following:
 - Relatively **high percentages of their Title I schools (at least 20 percent) identified for improvement.**
 - Proposals that combine **innovation with a rigorous approach to reform.**
 - Proposals that apply the most **significant and comprehensive interventions** to the lowest-performing schools earlier in the improvement timeline.

The expert review panel includes: **Dr. Margaret (Macke) Raymond (Chair)**, Stanford University; **Dr. Chris Cobitz**, Charlotte Mecklenburg School District; **Sheila Evans-Tranumn**, New York Department of Education; **Dr. Pete Goldschmidt**, California State University, Northridge; **Raul Gonzalez**, National Council of La Raza; **Gary Huggins**, Aspen Institute; **Dr. Deborah Jewell Sherman**, Richmond Public Schools; **Dr. Tom Kane**, Harvard University; **Jim Lanich**, California Business for Education Excellence; **Dr. Maggie McLaughlin**, University of Maryland; **Peter McWalters**, Rhode Island Commissioner of Education; **Jim Peyser**, New Schools Venture Fund; **Dianne Piché**, Citizens Commission on Civil Rights; **John Winn**, former Florida Commissioner of Education; and **Dr. Martin West**, Brown University.

Evaluation

The Department will rigorously monitor and evaluate states that receive approval under this pilot. A pilot on differentiated accountability will provide the Department with an opportunity to evaluate its effectiveness in improving student achievement and, ultimately, will inform NCLB reauthorization and school improvement practices in general.

Each State approved to use a differentiated accountability model must agree to provide data to the Department comparing its model to its existing accountability system, the impact of the interventions applied to schools and districts, and the effects of differentiating accountability on student achievement and school reform.