



# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JAN 08 2009

The Honorable Suellen K. Reed  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Indiana Department of Education  
State House, Room 229  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798

Dear Superintendent Reed:

As we approach our seventh year of implementing the accountability provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, I want to take a moment to thank you and your colleagues for all your hard work to help realize the goals of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), which has led to real and meaningful improvements in student achievement. These outcomes are due, in no small part, to the efforts of the dedicated educators in your state. We have seen an increased attention on high expectations for every child, an improvement in student performance across the board and a decrease in achievement gaps.

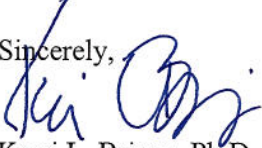
As Secretary Spellings is fond of saying, "what gets measured, gets done." With that in mind, I want to take this opportunity to update you on the status of some NCLB cornerstones with respect to Indiana. Detailed information on specific components of your state's assessment and accountability system is contained in an attachment to this letter.

- Assessment system: An assessment system that produces valid and reliable results is fundamental to an accountability system that holds schools and districts accountable for educating all students. Please accept my congratulations on Indiana's standards and assessment system meeting all statutory and regulatory provisions required for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science as of 2007-08.
- Accountability components: The Department's new Title I regulations provide for greater scrutiny to states' accountability systems, including establishing a uniform and more accurate measure of calculating high school graduation rates that is comparable across states and requiring that states ensure that statistical measures maximize the inclusion of students and student subgroups in accountability determinations. Hence, the regulations also require that all states submit portions of their Accountability Workbook for peer review. In the attachment to this letter you will find information on Indiana's minimum group size, annual measurable objectives, confidence interval, full academic year definition, and graduation rate.
- Departmental flexibilities: Over the past several years, the Secretary has offered several flexibilities to states, such as growth model and differentiated accountability pilots, assessing students with disabilities, and discretionary grant programs, such as the Teacher Incentive Fund, Enhanced Assessment Grants, and State Longitudinal Data System Grants. I am pleased to note that Indiana is participating in several of these endeavors.
  - Two percent transition flexibility: Indiana was approved in 2007-08 to include a proxy calculation for any school or district that did not make AYP due to the students with disabilities subgroup in grades 3-8. Indiana is eligible for this flexibility because the SEA is developing an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards for students with certain disabilities.
  - Differentiated Accountability: The Department approved Indiana in August 2008 to include its differentiated accountability model as part of its system of interventions beginning in the 2008—

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- 09 school year through the 2011–12 school year. Through this pilot, Indiana has also been approved to flip the order of services that schools in their first year of improvement are required to offer students, providing supplemental educational services before public school choice.
- Statewide Longitudinal Data System Grant: \$5,188,260.
  - Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to note that Indiana is currently in the process of moving its testing window from fall to spring, as well as shifting to end-of-course assessments in high school. Please do not hesitate to let us know if we can be of assistance in this process.

In addition, for your information, I am enclosing a file that provides information across all states on the current assessment status, participation in flexibilities offered by the Department, AYP information, and discretionary grants. I wish you continued success in raising the achievement in Indiana. NCLB has focused our attention on closing achievement gaps and increasing the awareness of those students who have often been left behind: economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, and students with disabilities. I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with you and all your colleagues across the country on such important issues.

Sincerely,  
  
Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

Enclosures

cc: Governor Mitch Daniels  
Wes Bruce  
Jeff Zaring



## Assessment System

Your assessment system met the requirements to be considered *Fully Approved with Recommendations*. This means that Indiana's assessment system includes assessments in grades 3-8 and high school in reading/language arts and mathematics and assessments in three grade spans (grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12) in science. I encourage you to consider whether there are any areas in which the Department can provide or facilitate technical assistance to Indiana as you implement the changes to your current assessment system. For additional detail, please see the enclosed fact sheet.

## Accountability System

- Minimum group size (the state-defined minimum number of students necessary to have valid and reliable AYP determinations): Indiana's minimum group size is 30. (The average across all states is approximately 30 students.)
- Annual measurable objectives (AMO) (the yearly target for the percentage of students required to be proficient or above for a school to make AYP):
  - 2008–09: Indiana's goal for this year is 73 percent of students scoring proficient in reading/language arts and 71 percent in mathematics.
  - AMO type: Indiana set its AMOs consistent with the statutory requirements, using a mixed method. This means that Indiana's AMOs first increased after three years, then two years, then annually beginning in 2010–2011 through 2013–2014 to reach 100 percent proficient.
- Confidence interval: Indiana uses a confidence interval of 75 percent.
- Full academic year definition (for purposes of determining whether a student's score must be included in AYP determinations): In Indiana, a student must be enrolled after October 1st in order to be included in AYP determinations.
- Graduation rate:
  - Currently, Indiana is using a graduation rate that can be described as a completer rate, which means Indiana divides the number of graduates by the number of graduates plus the dropouts from each of the previous four years.
  - As required by the recently issued Title I regulations, states must report graduation rate data, in the aggregate and disaggregated by subgroup, using the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate beginning with report cards providing assessment results for the 2010-11 school year.
  - The graduation rate target Indiana requires for the district or school to make AYP is 95 percent.
  - According to the National Governor's Association 2008 report *Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date, 2008*, Indiana had the capability of calculating the NGA Compact 4-year graduation rate in 2006.