



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JAN 08 2009

The Honorable D. Kent King
Commissioner of Education
Missouri Department of Elementary
& Secondary Education
205 Jefferson Street, 6th Floor
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Dear Commissioner King:

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 Missouri. 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 Missouri's standards and assessment system meeting all statutory and regulatory provisions required for reading/language arts and mathematics as of 2007-08. Information regarding both the reading/language arts and mathematics assessment system used in determining adequate yearly progress for schools and districts in your state as well as details of the 2007-08 administration of science assessments are attached.
- 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 Missouri'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 recently arrived limited English proficient students, 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 Missouri is participating in several of these endeavors.
 - Growth Model Pilot: The Department approved Missouri to use its growth model in making AYP determinations for the 2007-08 school year and on December 22, 2008 granted a four year extension for use of the growth model through 2011-12.

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

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 Missouri. 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 Matt Blunt
Becky Odneal
Michael Muenks
Susan Newbold

Assessment System

Your assessment system is currently *Fully Approved*. This means that Missouri's assessment system includes assessments in grades 3-8 and high school in reading/language arts and mathematics. As you incorporate new assessments I encourage you to consider whether there are any areas in which the Department can provide or facilitate technical assistance to Missouri in meeting the statutory or regulatory requirements.

- Missouri's science assessments are not yet fully compliant.
 - In 2007–08, the Department required that the state meet four minimal criteria related to the content area of science: have science content standards; have a general and alternate science assessment; include all students in one of the science assessments (i.e., either the general or alternate); and report the results of the science assessments. Missouri met these requirements. Following the May 2008 technical review, please see the outstanding evidence listed in an attachment to my letter of September 23, 2008 and enclosed. Because Missouri did not submit evidence of its science assessments for the October 2008 peer review, it must submit evidence for the March 23–27, 2009 peer review. Evidence for this review is due three weeks prior to the review. Beginning with the 2008–09 school year, science assessments will be included in the states' assessment status. 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): Missouri'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: Missouri's goal for this year is 59 percent of students scoring proficient in reading/language arts and 54 percent in mathematics.
 - AMO type: Missouri set its AMOs consistent with the statutory requirements, using a mixed method. This means that the AMOs went up by one percentage point each year from 2001–04 and then went up in equal increments towards 100 percent in 2013–14.
- Confidence interval: The state applies a confidence interval of 99 percent.
- Full academic year definition (for purposes of determining whether a student's score must be included in AYP determinations): In Missouri, a student must be enrolled on the last Wednesday in September to the first day of the testing window in order to be included in AYP determinations.
- Graduation rate:
 - Currently, Missouri is using a graduation rate that can be described as a completer rate, which can be described as the number of graduates divided by the number of graduates plus the number of dropouts at each of the high school grade levels.
 - 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 Missouri requires for the district or school to make AYP is annual improvement until they reach 85 percent, at which point it must be maintained.
 - According to the National Governor's Association 2008 report *Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date, 2008*, Missouri will report the compact rate in 2011.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE THAT MISSOURI MUST SUBMIT TO MEET ESEA REQUIREMENTS FOR MISSOURI'S SCIENCE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

2.0 – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

1. Evidence of approved science academic achievement standards for science that show alignment to the state's grade level content standards and evidence of diverse stakeholder participation in the standard-setting process. .
2. Evidence of approved academic achievement standards that show alignment to the State's grade-level content standards Approved alternate academic achievement standards for science that are appropriately linked to Missouri's Show-Me Standards through alternate grade-level expectations and evidence of diverse stakeholder participation in the standard-setting process.
3. Data, reported separately for 2007-08, the number and percent of students with disabilities assessed against alternate academic achievement standards in science, and those included in the regular assessment (including those administered with appropriate accommodations).

4.0 – TECHNICAL QUALITY

1. The 2008 technical report for MAP and MAP-A, including analysis of science test validity, reliability, generalizability, scoring quality, and equating MAP science test forms from year to year.
2. The 2008 standards-setting reports for MAP and MAP-A.
3. Results of the accommodations study by CTB/McGraw-Hill.

5.0 – ALIGNMENT

1. A plan and timeline for addressing alignment issues that emerged from the science MAP alignment study.
2. Documentation that demonstrates science MAP-A alignment to Missouri's alternate achievement standards linked to science Grade Level Expectations.

6.0 – INCLUSION

1. Science assessment data report confirming that all students in the grades tested are included in the science assessments.

7.0 – REPORTING

1. Report for MAP and MAP-A science on participation and assessment results for all students and for each of the required subgroups at the school, district, and state levels.