



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JUL 2008

The Honorable Wayne G. Sanstead
State Superintendent
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismark, ND 58505-0440

Dear Superintendent Sanstead:

Thank you for submitting a proposal for the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) differentiated accountability pilot. I appreciate the work you and your staff have done to try to develop a more nuanced way of distinguishing between schools and districts in need of intensive intervention and those that are closer to reaching their goals.

As you know, the Department forwarded North Dakota's differentiated accountability proposal to a group of outside peer reviewers who evaluated each proposal to determine whether it was technically sound and consistent with the core principles of the pilot. The peers identified several strengths in North Dakota's proposal, including the state's attempt to alleviate capacity issues and the clear timeline in the proposal for implementing interventions. However, the peers also raised significant specific concerns regarding North Dakota's proposal: in particular, limited state-directed and substantive interventions, no expansion of public school choice or supplemental educational services, and a lack of innovation in the method of differentiation or commitment to stronger more focused intervention. Based on the peers' concerns and the Department's own analysis of North Dakota's proposal, the Department is not approving North Dakota to participate in the differentiated accountability pilot at this time.

In the fall, the Department will once again invite any interested state to submit a proposal to participate in the differentiated accountability pilot for 2009–10 based on assessments administered in 2008–09. Details about the timing of this review are forthcoming. I encourage North Dakota to submit a revised proposal so that it may be considered for participation in the pilot in 2009–10. To aid you in this effort, I am enclosing a copy of the peer report regarding North Dakota's proposal as well as a memorandum prepared by the peer reviewers that discusses some of the overarching issues the peers identified during their review of all of the proposals that were submitted for the pilot. Additionally, the Department will be hosting a roundtable later this summer to discuss methods of differentiation and evaluation, and I encourage you to participate in that discussion. Please note that the Department intends to continue to limit participation in the pilot to ten states. Accordingly, I encourage you to review the peers' report and memorandum carefully, and to contact my staff so that we may discuss ways you may be able to refine North Dakota's proposal.

400 MARYLAND AVE. S.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20202
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.

Again, I appreciate your interest in the differentiated accountability pilot and your continued efforts to ensure quality education for all children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kerri Briggs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "B".

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

Enclosures

cc: Governor John Hoeven