



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JAN 8 2009

The Honorable Elizabeth Burmaster  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
P. O. Box 7841  
125 South Webster Street  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Dear Superintendent Burmaster:

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 Wisconsin. Detailed information on specific components of your state's assessment and accountability system is contained in an attachment to this letter.

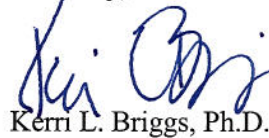
- Assessment system: An assessment system that produces valid and reliable results is fundamental to an accountability system that holds schools and districts accountable for educating all students. Please accept my congratulations on Wisconsin's standards and assessment system meeting all statutory 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 rate 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 Wisconsin'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 (LEP) 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 Wisconsin is participating in several of these endeavors.
  - General Supervision Enhancement Grant:
    - Wisconsin, in partnership with the Regents of the University of Minnesota, Hawaii, South Dakota, and Tennessee, received funds to work toward development of an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards. (Year 1: \$1,431,440; Year 2: \$1,199,967; Year 3: \$1,199,949)

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- Wisconsin, in partnership with the Regents of the University of Minnesota, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, received funds to work toward the development of an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards. (Year 1: \$470,000; Year 2: \$450,000; Year 3: \$450,000)
- Enhanced Assessment Grant: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Enhanced Assessment Instruments for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students. Wisconsin plans to develop, train people to administer, disseminate information on, and research the validity and reliability of content area assessments for LEP students. Amount: \$2,338,169
- Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Longitudinal Data Systems to Support Data-Driven Decision-Making; Amount: \$3,081,000

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 Wisconsin. 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 Jim Doyle  
Lynette Russell

## Assessment System

Your assessment system met the requirements to be considered *Fully Approved*. This means that Wisconsin'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.

- 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): Wisconsin's minimum group size is 40. (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: Wisconsin's goal for this year is 77 percent of students scoring proficient in reading/language arts and 66 percent in mathematics.
  - AMO type: Wisconsin set its AMOs consistent with the statutory requirements, using a mixed method. This means that Wisconsin's AMOs increased first after two years, then after three years, then annually to reach 100 percent by 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 Wisconsin, if, at the time of the test administration, a student has been continuously enrolled since the third Friday of the September enrollment report of the previous academic year, that student will be included in AYP determinations.
- Graduation rate:
  - Currently, Wisconsin is using a graduation rate that can be described as a completer rate, which is the number of graduates divided by the number of graduates plus the number of dropouts in 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 Wisconsin requires for the district or school to make AYP is 81.7 percent which is 90 percent of the statewide average, or improvement from the previous year.
  - According to the National Governor's Association (NGA) 2008 report *Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date, 2008*, Wisconsin "is taking steps to implement the NGA Compact 4-year graduation rate by 2009."
- Wisconsin uses a performance index when calculating AYP, which provides half credit to schools and districts for any student scoring at level 2 (Basic) and full credit for students scoring at Levels 3 and 4. Wisconsin's AMOs were not set based on this performance index.