



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JAN 08 2009

The Honorable Valerie A. Woodruff
Secretary of Education
Department of Education
The Townsend Building
P.O. Box 1402
Dover, Delaware 19903-1402

Dear Secretary Woodruff:

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

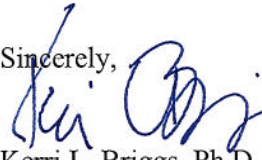
- Assessment system: An assessment system that produces valid and reliable results is fundamental to an accountability system that holds schools and districts accountable for educating all students. Please accept my congratulations on Delaware's standards and assessment system meeting all statutory and regulatory provisions required for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science as of 2006-07.
- 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 Delaware'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'm pleased to note that Delaware is participating in several of these endeavors.
 - Growth Model: The Department approved Delaware 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.
 - In 2005, Delaware received an Enhanced Assessment Grant of \$1,263,909.

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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 Delaware. 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kerri Briggs".

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

Enclosures

cc: Governor Ruth Ann Minner
Robin Taylor

Assessment System

Your assessment system met the requirements to be considered *Fully Approved*. This means that Delaware'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. 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): Delaware'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: Delaware's goal for this year is 73 percent of students scoring proficient in reading/language arts and 58 percent in mathematics.
 - AMO type: Delaware set its AMOs consistent with the statutory requirements, using a mixed method. This means that Delaware'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: Delaware uses a confidence interval of 98 percent.
- Full academic year definition (for purposes of determining whether a student's score must be included in AYP determinations): In Delaware, a student must be enrolled from September 30 to May 31 in order to be included in AYP determinations.
- Graduation rate:
 - Currently, Delaware is using a graduation rate that can be described as a longitudinal cohort rate, which means that North Carolina divides the number of students who graduated with a regular diploma by the number of 1st-time entering 9th graders four years previously, accounting for transfers in and out and deaths.
 - 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 Delaware requires for the district or school to make AYP in 2008-09 is 82.5 percent or some improvement over the previous year. A school also qualifies if it maintains its rate from the previous year.
 - According to the National Governor's Association 2008 report *Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date, 2008*, Delaware had the capability to report the NGA Compact 4-year graduation rate in 2007.