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State Superintendent of Schools

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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools
DATE: December 10-11, 2009
SUBJECT: Proposed Changes in Maryland's NCLB Accountability Plan

PURPOSE:

To authorize submission of Maryland's annual request to United States Department of Education for modifications to its federally required *Consolidated State Accountability Plan* under No Child Left Behind.

BACKGROUND:

Maryland's *Consolidated State Accountability Plan* outlines the assessments and the technical aspects of the State's accountability system that fulfill the federal requirements for No Child Left Behind. Annually, states are permitted to request adjustments to their *Consolidated State Accountability Plans* as they revise policies and procedures to comply with changing regulations issued by the United States Department of Education (USDE). Final approval from USDE is required before state modifications can be instituted. The changes for 2010 (outlined below) focus mainly on changes in Graduation Rate and the calculation of the Graduation Rate for the purposes of determining and reporting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). These changes are necessary to allow Maryland to maintain its fully approved status with the U.S. Department of Education.

Maryland's request includes:

- Changes that will be effective for the 2010 results
- Plans for those changes that will be applied for the 2011 results as we transition to the four-year Graduation Rate using the longitudinal data system, and
- The plan that will be implemented for 2012 and subsequent years.

The requested changes in Maryland's *Consolidated State Accountability Plan*, when approved by USDE, will help us gauge the progress of our schools and school systems and be compliant with the non-regulatory guidance issued by USDE in December 2008.

Specifically, the requests are as follows:

2010 Graduation Rate Results

The Graduation Rate for 2010 will continue to be calculated using the same National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) formula we have used since NCLB requirements were first implemented. This rate is also known as the Leaver Rate. The 2010 Annual Measurable

Objective (AMO) target for student graduation will remain at 85.50%, the same graduation rate target used in 2008 and 2009, per federal rules in place at the time. Federal non-regulatory guidance issued in 2008 requires states to meet new growth target beginning with the 2010 results. The growth target provides a way for schools, LEA's and the State to achieve annual requirements for Graduation Rate based on improvement from the prior year. These growth targets will be set annually. Federal regulations require that growth targets "reflect continuous and substantial improvement from the prior year toward meeting or exceeding the State's Graduation Rate goal." We will replace our previous single growth target with new 2010 growth targets based on the distance between the school's or school system's 2009 Graduation Rate and the 2014 goal of 90%.

The determination whether a school or school system achieves the annual target will be made based on the following three questions:

1. **Did the school achieve the annual target?**
 - a. If the school makes the annual graduation target in 2010 (85.5%), then it is determined that the graduation requirement is met for the year.
 - b. If the school falls short of the annual target (85.5%) in 2010, then we go to the second question.

2. **Did the average of the graduation rates for 2008, 2009, and 2010 equal or exceed the 2010 graduation rate target?**
 - a. If the average meets the annual target (85.5%), then it is determined that the graduation requirement is met for the year.
 - b. If the three-year average graduation rate falls short of the annual target (85.5%), then we go to the third question. *(This second step has been inserted in the determination because federal rules recognize that variations in graduation rate can occur across years, with a desire to "smooth" those variations from year to year.)*

3. **Did the school's graduation rate improve from 2009 to 2010 at a rate that puts it on the right a trajectory to achieve the 2014 goal of 90% graduation rate?**
 - a. If the school is determined to be on course to meet the 90% goal, then it is determined that the graduation requirement is met for the year. *(The trajectory is determined mathematically according to the distance the 2010 graduation rate is from the 2014 goal divided by the number of years left to achieve the goal (four years). Schools are categorized into four groups according to the gap to the goal to simplify calculations.)*
 - b. If the school falls short of the 2010 expected growth trajectory, then it is determined that it does not meet the graduation requirement for that year.

The Graduation Rate growth rate targets for 2010 will be transitional as we move toward 2011 when we will have the ability, (with four years of data), to produce a cohort Graduation Rate using the longitudinal data system.

2011 Graduation Rate Results

For 2011, MSDE expects that the Graduation Rate will include 2011 four-year graduates and three-year graduates from 2010 who entered grade nine in the 2007-08 school year, the same cohort. In addition, we will report and use a combined and weighted four-year/five-year Graduation Rate for accountability which will include students who graduated in five years.

Since data from 2010 will not be comparable, we will not be able to calculate a one-year gain for growth.

Following the release of the 2011 data, a review and articulation process will be used to set standards—the Graduation Rate goal – for schools, LEA’s, and the State. We will establish 2012 growth targets for subgroups based on the 2011 results, enabling subgroups to meet AYP for Graduation Rate, beginning in 2012, by demonstrating at least a specified level of improvement over the previous year. We will continue to calculate and publish results using the Leaver Rate as well because of the historical trend data it will provide. It is likely that USDE will provide some additional guidance prior to 2011 that will necessitate updating State plans for AYP determinations prior to that point.

2012 Graduation Rate Results

For results in 2012 and subsequent years for accountability, we expect to use a weighted Graduation Rate that will include the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma at the end of four years, three-year graduates who were part of the same cohort entering grade nine, and five-year graduates. We may also be required to use disaggregated Graduation Rates in the calculation of AYP for schools, LEA’s, and the State. We are awaiting final guidance from USDE on this issue. Growth targets for subgroups based on the 2011 results, if required, will enable subgroups to meet AYP for Graduation Rate by demonstrating at least a specified level of improvement over the previous year. We will report the Leaver Rate, the Four-Year Rate, and the Extended Five-Year Rate, all in aggregated and disaggregated form. MSDE is prepared to make technical adjustments to the 2012 plan for submission to USDE for approval in advance of the summer of 2012.

ACTION:

I am requesting State Board authorization to submit the proposed 2010 revisions to Maryland’s *Consolidated State Accountability Plan* to the U.S. Department of Education for approval along with the tentative plans for 2011 and 2012 graduation rate AYP determinations.

NSG:sks