

Arkansas
 Targeted Monitoring Review of
 School Improvement Grants (SIG) under section 1003(g) of the
 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
 January 28-31, 2013

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG) MONITORING REPORT FOR ARKANSAS

<u>BACKGROUND</u>						
	Cohort I		Cohort II		Cohort III	
Turnaround	0		0		0	
Transformation	7		3		3	
Restart	0		0		0	
Closure	0		0		0	
	Number of SIG- eligible Schools	Number of SIG- funded Schools	Number of SIG-eligible Schools	Number of SIG-funded Schools	Number of SIG-eligible Schools	Number of SIG-funded Schools
Tier I	14	5	9	3	17	3
Tier II	5	2	3	1	5	0
Tier III	254	0	254	0	331	0
<u>MONITORING TRIP INFORMATION</u>						
Staff Interviewed						
LEA Visited	Marvell-Elaine School District #22					
School Visited	Marvell-Elaine High School					
Model Implemented	Transformation					
Funding Awarded	LEA Award (for 1 SIG school): \$4,077,258 Marvell-Elaine High School funding: \$3,873,395					
LEA Visited	Little Rock School District					
School Visited	J.A. Fair High School					
Model Implemented	Transformation					
Funding Awarded	LEA Award (for 4 SIG schools): \$22,003,250 J.A. Fair High School funding: \$5,832,206					
SEA Visited	Arkansas Department of Education					
Total FY 2009 SEA SIG Allocation	\$40,196,637					
Total FY 2010 SEA SIG Allocation	\$5,890,593					
Total FY 2011 SEA SIG Allocation	\$5,795,341					
Total FY 2012 SEA SIG Allocation	\$5,384,347					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Arkansas Department of Education Staff: Bobby Lester, Jayne Green, Rick Green, ➤ Marvell-Elaine School District #22 Staff: Superintendent, Grant Manager ➤ Marvell-Elaine High School Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, 5 Teachers, 7 Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits ➤ Little Rock School District Staff: Superintendent, SIG Coordinator, Associate Superintendent for Instruction, School Improvement Specialist, Chief Financial Officer, Associate Superintendent for High Schools ➤ J.A. Fair High School Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, 5 Teachers, 8 Parents, Students, and 5 Classroom Visits 	
U.S. Department of Education Staff	
Group Leader	Carlas McCauley
Staff Onsite	Christopher Tate and Molly Budman

OVERVIEW OF MONITORING PROCESS

The following report is based on the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) on-site monitoring visit to Arkansas from January 28-31, 2013 and review of documentation provided by the State educational agency (SEA), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools. The report consists of the sections described below.

The observations and descriptions illustrate the implementation of the SIG program by the SEA, LEAs, and schools visited; initial indicators of success; and any outstanding challenges being faced in implementation.

The ***SIG Monitoring Report*** provides feedback to the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) on its progress in implementing effectively, and in a manner that is consistent with the School Improvement Grant (SIG) final requirements of SIG authorized by Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, and as explained further in *Guidance on Fiscal Year 2010 School Improvement Grants Under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 March 2012*. The report consists of the following sections:

- ***Background Information.*** This section highlights significant achievements in the SEA’s implementation of the SIG grant. This section also includes a brief overview of the ADE’s structure and vision for implementation of the SIG program.
- ***Summary of Arkansas Department of Education’s Implementation of SIG Critical Elements.*** This section provides a summary of the SEA’s progress in implementing SIG and is based on evidence gathered during the monitoring visit on January 28-31, 2013 or through written documentation provided to ED.
- ***Technical Assistance Recommendations.*** This section addresses areas where additional technical assistance may be needed to improve the quality of SIG program implementation by the ADE.

- *Monitoring Findings.* This section identifies areas where the SEA is not in compliance with the final requirements of the SIG program and indicates required actions that the SEA must take to resolve the findings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Highlights of ADE's Implementation of SIG

- The ADE has a pre-approved list of external providers for LEAs to utilize. The State has also worked with Little Rock School District (LRSD) to ensure that external provider programs were individualized for schools and did not follow a prescribed plan. The LRSD leadership team, with the ADE's assistance, drafted statements of work that linked provider requirements directly to goals in each school's contract for services.
- Marvell-Elaine High School (Marvell-Elaine), in implementing the SIG program, identified comprehensive intervention strategies that engaged students and parents in both the Marvell and Elaine communities. The strategies implemented by the district included student mentoring opportunities with community partners as well as providing transportation and child care for parent and community forums.

ADE Structure and Vision

The ADE has three full-time staff dedicated to working on SIG implementation in the Federal Programs Unit. The ADE assigns additional staff to support the implementation of SIG at the school level. The role of these additional staff, hired at the direction of the Commissioner, is to provide implementation support and oversight on a daily basis in districts identified as high-risk by the State.

SUMMARY OF THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S IMPLEMENTATION OF SIG CRITICAL ELEMENTS

Application Process

During the first application process the SEA notified tier I and tier II schools of their eligibility and held an informational meeting for all willing applicants to explain the expectations of the grant. According to the ADE, some LEAs did not want to apply because of the increased accountability for school improvement by those schools electing to implement the SIG program. During subsequent years, the ADE re-notified remaining tier I and tier II schools of their eligibility and held application technical assistance sessions as necessary for individual LEAs.

Once LEAs applied, non-SIG ADE staff scored each application based on a rubric that was part of the ADE's approved SIG applications. Part of the ADE's application process required all LEAs to provide detailed needs assessments and to describe the data used to support the selection of each intervention model. The ADE then scored each LEA on its demonstration of capacity to implement the selected model with fidelity in each of the schools for which it was applying.

Awards to LEAs and from LEAs to schools were not made according to the ADE's stated timelines for the Cohort 1 and Cohort 3 competitions. Funds to Cohort 1 LEAs and schools were not awarded from the SEA until October 2010 because of the late approval of the SEA's

application from ED. The timeline for Cohort 3 was slightly delayed due to the fact that SIG awards were not publicly announced until ESEA Flexibility (Flexibility) Priority Schools were designated and made public in June of 2012. The ADE's stated timeline for Cohort 2 was implemented in accordance with the ADE's approved SIG application.

The ADE's application process for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, FY 2010 and FY 2011 met all of the requirements of the SIG program.

Implementation

Marvell-Elaine School District #22; Marvell-Elaine High School

Marvell-Elaine School District (MSD) identified poor school climate, the lack of differentiated instructional practices and weak professional development opportunities as major areas of concern in the Marvell-Elaine's needs assessment.

In its application, Marvell-Elaine indicated that it would address the poor climate of the school by implementing a series of student mentoring programs as well as increasing outreach to parents and the community to encourage active participation in school activities. In interviews, the school leadership team stated that as a result of implementing strategies that engage students and families, discipline referrals are down and student attendance is much improved from the years prior to SIG implementation.

To improve instruction at the school, Marvell-Elaine planned to use external providers to assist with implementing new classroom assessments that captured skill mastery data for the purpose of informing instruction. Teachers expressed, and the documentation provided by the school supports, that the implementation of pre-and post-assessments help in assessing instructional needs to ensure that teachers differentiate their lessons so that students master critical concepts.

Finally, to support teachers in the classroom, the school proposed developing Professional Learning Communities as well as using coaches in the classroom to improve teaching. The coach's role, as stated in the LEA's application, is to support staff through modeling instructional strategies and by working with the leadership team to develop instructional leadership skills. The leadership team reported that the increased focus on developing instructional strategies targeted to the needs of students is improving academic outcomes for students across the school. The intense focus on developing the capacities of the teachers and the leadership team was evident even to parents who felt that the school was centered on student academic achievement.

In addition to addressing the major areas of concern in the needs assessment, Marvell-Elaine hired a new principal for the first year of SIG implementation and implemented a new teacher and principal evaluation system that incorporates data on student growth.

Marvell-Elaine experienced challenges in implementing a system of rewards for staff designed to increase student achievement and with strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff.

Marvell-Elaine did not increase learning time consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program.

Little Rock School District; J.A. Fair High School

The LRSD identified a lack of school leadership to guide reforms within the school as well as a school culture that was not student and instruction focused as major areas of concern in J.A. Fair High School's (Fair High School) needs assessment.

In its application, the LRSD indicated that it would address the lack of leadership in implementing previous reforms at Fair High School by strengthening leadership teams through professional development. In working with external providers, the leadership team would be coached in instructional leadership while also strengthening their abilities to implement interventions meant to curb attendance and discipline issues. In interviews, the staff and leadership team stated that the coaches have had a significant impact on instructional practices in the school. Further, the staff reported that the school leadership team is working hard to ensure that the school is student focused by implementing interventions that meet the needs of the whole student.

To improve instruction and create a student focused environment, Fair High School planned to use external providers to increase job-embedded professional development opportunities in order to increase the capacities of the staff to use technology and data to inform their instructional practices in the classroom. The staff reported the focus on differentiating instruction has been particularly helpful; however, staff and students reported that despite a significant investment in technology, not all teachers are incorporating technology into their instructional practices.

Finally, to improve the culture of the school and to make sure that the environment is student focused, the school proposed using Intervention Specialists to provide interventions to students who have demonstrated behavioral as well as academic deficiencies. Further, the school proposed implementing student mentoring programs and a transition academy for incoming students. As a result of implementing the school's SIG plan, students and staff reported that the school was much more orderly and community oriented. Students also expressed being prideful about various activities happening at the school.

Fair High School has experienced several challenges in implementing SIG. The school did not have a permanent principal to lead SIG implementation during the first year of the program and struggled to implement strategies to recruit, place and retain staff. The staff and parents also stated that the school is looking to continue to improve opportunities for family and community engagement.

Fair High School did not institute a system of rewards for staff that have increased student achievement or increase learning time consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. Also, the school did not implement a teacher and principal evaluation system that incorporates data on student growth.

Fiscal

The ADE reserves 5 percent of the State's SIG allocation for consolidation with other agency administrative funds to provide for salaries, benefits and school support services.

The ADE awards each eligible SIG application through an extensive review of the LEA's budget and budget narrative to ensure that the budget reflects the funds necessary to fully and effectively implement each school's transformational plan.

The ADE also reviews budgets annually as a part of its continuation funding process for sub-grantees. Also, budget amendments are reviewed on a rolling basis by the ADE for revisions to specific line items such as additional positions, technology acquisition or contracted services. Before budgets are submitted, however, several initial levels of review are required by the LEAs and the ADE SIG implementation support staff.

For those SIG schools located in districts that have been identified by the ADE as having fiscal distress the Commissioner has required, per an addendum to the State's approved FY 2011 SIG application, that the LEA allow the State to reserve 10% of the SIG award for a SIG Site Director to be placed in the school to provide technical assistance and ensure the fidelity of implementation.

The State audits LEAs annually to ensure that internal controls and expenditures are compliant.

The ADE has terminated one school's SIG award and distributed the funds among other SIG awarded schools through the continuation process.

Technical Assistance

In the ADE's approved SIG application, the SEA states that it will provide technical assistance to LEAs and schools throughout the application process through webinars and trainings as well as before, during and after quarterly monitoring visits via webinars and workshops. Additional technical assistance is provided by the ADE to LEAs and schools implementing SIG through visits by SIG Site Directors and through activities provided by central office staff.

During the site visit, the LEAs and schools indicated that the ADE is constantly providing assistance with respect to allowable and unallowable expenses, best use of funds and how to meet the goals that were stated in each approved SIG application. The LRSD and the MSD indicated that the utilization of the SIG Site Director has greatly helped focus their SIG implementation and helped to hold them accountable for meeting their goals. The LRSD stated that the ADE's support has increased during the Cohort 3 application process and that the LRSD SIG schools are better prepared to implement the transformation model with fidelity because of this assistance.

Monitoring

The ADE's plan for monitoring the implementation of the SIG program, as stated in its approved SIG applications, includes monitoring changes in instructional practice against student achievement goals outlined in each SIG school's approved plan. Schools, as outlined in the application, are required to submit quarterly reports to the ADE that detail each school's implementation to date as well as progress toward meeting measurable goals such as attendance and academic achievement.

The ADE has implemented its monitoring plan as outlined in its approved applications. The State monitors each SIG school four times per year and issues a report after each visit with required corrective actions for program requirements that are not being implemented with fidelity. The LEA must supply an action plan to the State for resolving any monitoring findings within 30 days.

The LEAs visited provide informal monitoring for each SIG school through site-based implementation strategy meetings that include opportunities to address problems with SIG implementation and receive targeted technical assistance. The oversight of SIG by the ADE is strong given the placement of State support staff in LEAs and the layers of accountability required to make changes to school-level SIG implementation plans.

Data Collection /Use of Data

The ADE indicated in its approved SIG applications that it would implement quarterly progress monitoring of each SIG school that included a review of leading indicator data. SIG schools were to be required to report academic progress toward meeting annual student achievement goals, the number of minutes within the school year, student attendance and discipline data in addition to the number and percentage of students enrolled in advanced coursework.

To date, the ADE is collecting qualitative as well as quantitative data for the purpose of monitoring full implementation of SIG. SIG school leaders provide the State with reflection pieces on achieving their annual SIG implementation goals. Further, LEAs and schools report quarterly leading and lagging indicator data as required per the State's approved SIG applications. This data is used to inform second and third year funding renewal decisions as well as to identify technical assistance needs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation (Parent and Community Engagement): Parents at Fair High School felt that the school could provide better opportunities for outreach to families.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide the ADE resources on effective strategies for engaging families and the community (Responsibility: ED).
- Develop a family and community engagement plan or a set of strategies to involve parents in SIG implementation and to capitalize on community resources (Responsibility: ADE and LEA).

Implementation (Rewards): Fair High School and Marvell-Elaine staff indicated that there was not a consistent system of recognition and rewards for teachers and leaders.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Identify resources and provide guidance to the ADE on rewards, financial and otherwise, used in other districts and States (Responsibility: ED).
- Provide focused technical assistance to LEAs to support the development of a plan for identifying and rewarding teachers for their work (Responsibility: ADE).
- Develop criteria for making rewards and identify resources to help school leaders grant rewards to teachers (Responsibility: LEA).

Implementation (Sustainability): LEA and school staff in both MSD and LRSD requested additional technical assistance on sustaining turnaround reforms that includes assistance with aligning Federal, State and local funding streams for sustainability purposes and assistance with identifying and writing proposals for additional grants or sources of funding.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide the ADE resources on sustaining activities and strategies implemented through the SIG program (Responsibility: ED).
- Provide focused technical assistance to LEAs on sustaining strategies implemented through the SIG program, such as:
 - Conducting a comprehensive review of programmatic activities to identify sustainable resource constraints;
 - Adopting a plan to provide targeted assistance to schools well in advance of the start of the third year of implementation; and,
 - Providing information regarding options for SEA support and resources to LEAs to continue turnaround activities after SIG funds are no longer available (Responsibility: ADE).
- Adopt a comprehensive plan for continued school transformation upon exiting the SIG program (Responsibility: LEA).

Implementation (Curriculum and Instruction): LEA and school staff in both MSD and LRSD requested continued curriculum development assistance to align with the Common Core Standards (CCS).

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide the ADE resources on effective strategies for aligning curriculum to CCS (Responsibility: ED).
- Provide focused technical assistance to LEAs on strategies and methods for transitioning to CCS, such as:
 - Providing professional development to assist LEAs with aligning the curriculum to CCS; and,
 - Developing trainings for LEAs targeted to teachers and leaders on changes to the curriculum and instructional strategies for teaching the new standards (Responsibility: ADE).

Implementation (Principal Replacement): Three of the four LRSD SIG schools have had interim principals placed in the school for up to a year during SIG implementation.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide the ADE with strategies for ensuring that each LEA clearly outlines their plan for replacing the principal when implementing the transformation or turnaround model as a part of the LEA application process for SIG funding (Responsibility: ED).
- Work with LEAs to ensure that each SIG school implementing the transformation or turnaround model has a permanent principal in place prior to the start of the first year of SIG implementation (Responsibility: ADE).

Fiscal (Technology): The ADE has requested additional guidance on reasonable technology costs and grant allocations for technology purchases.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide the ADE with resources and guidance around setting technology purchase parameters during the grant-making process (Responsibility: ED).

MONITORING FINDINGS

Summary of Monitoring Indicators

Critical Element	Requirement	Status	Page
1. Application Process	The SEA ensures that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	None	
2. Implementation	The SEA ensures that the SIG intervention models are being implemented consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	Finding(s)	12-13
3. Fiscal	The SEA ensures LEAs and schools are using funds consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)) ; §1114 of the ESEA; and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87]	None	
4. Technical Assistance	The SEA ensures that technical assistance is provided to its LEAs consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	None	
5. Monitoring	The SEA ensures that monitoring of LEAs and schools is being conducted consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended	None	

	(75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]		
6. Data Collection	The SEA ensures that data are being collected consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections II and III of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	None	

Monitoring Area: School Improvement Grant

Critical Element 2: The SEA ensures that the SIG intervention models are being implemented consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program.

Finding: The ADE has not ensured that the LRSD is implementing an evaluation system that includes student achievement growth as a significant factor in evaluating teachers and principals.

Citation: Section § I.A.2.(d)(1)(i)(B) of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)), requires a State to “use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that (a) take into account data on student growth as a significant factor as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates; and, (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.”

Further action required: The ADE must submit to ED evidence that it has reviewed all LEAs implementing the transformation model to determine if the principal and teacher evaluation system is being implemented as required by the SIG program. The ADE must then work with the LRSD and any other LEA it determines is not meeting this requirement to ensure that all SIG schools implementing the transformation model are implementing a rigorous, transparent and equitable teacher and principal evaluation system at the start of the 2013-2014 school year. In the event that the ADE determines that an LEA lacks the capacity to fully implement the evaluation system for the 2013-2014 school year, the ADE must submit to ED its plan to address compliance prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year.

Finding: The ADE has not ensured that the LRSD is implementing a system of rewards that meets the requirements of the SIG program. At this time, student achievement is not a significant part of a system of incentives for teacher and leader performance.

Citation: Section § I.A.2.(d)(1)(i)(C) requires that an LEA must “identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who,” in implementing the transformation model, “have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.” (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)).

Further action required: The ADE must submit to ED evidence that it has reviewed all LEAs implementing the transformation model to determine that a system of rewards is being implemented per the SIG requirements. The ADE must submit to ED a plan outlining how it will work with LEAs to develop a system that identifies and rewards school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing the transformation model, have increased student achievement. The plan must include a timeline for implementation in each school that is determined to not have a system in place. Should the ADE determine through its review that an LEA does not have the capacity to implement this requirement the ADE must submit to ED the steps it will take to bring the LEA into compliance prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year.

Finding: The ADE has not ensured that schools implementing the transformation model have increased learning time by lengthening the school day, week or year for extra-curricular activities and to allow for teacher collaboration as well as for instruction in core content areas per the final requirements of SIG.

Citation: Section I.A.2 (a)(1)(viii) of the final requirements states that an LEA implementing the SIG program must “establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time.” Section I.A.3 of the final requirements defines *increased learning time* as “using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects.”(75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)).

Further action required: The ADE must submit to ED evidence that it has reviewed all LEAs implementing the transformation model to determine that increased learning time is being implemented per the SIG requirements. The ADE must also submit to ED a timeline and plan outlining how it will work with LEAs that are not implementing increased learning time to become compliant. Should the ADE determine through its review that an LEA does not have the capacity to implement this requirement the ADE must submit to ED the steps it will take to bring the LEA into compliance prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year.