

## Appendix D: Summary of Performance Evaluations Conducted During FY 2013 and Expected During 2014–15

For a complete list of program evaluations and studies from the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, please visit <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opeed/ppss/reports.html>. For a complete list of evaluation studies of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, please visit <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/projects/evaluation/index.asp>.

### Evaluation Reports From FY 2013

#### National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance

##### Academic Achievement

##### The Impact of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Program on Student Reading Achievement

1. *Study Purpose:* This study examined the impact of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) program on student reading achievement and teachers' use of differentiated instructional practices. The MAP program is one of the most widely used commercially available systems incorporating benchmark assessment and training in differentiated instruction. MAP includes computer-adaptive assessments administered to students three or four times a year and teacher training and access to MAP resources on how to use data from these assessments to differentiate instruction. The study used a randomized design and involved 32 elementary schools in five districts in Illinois.

##### 2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- Did the MAP program (that is, training plus formative testing feedback) affect the reading achievement of grade 4 students after Year 2 of implementation, as measured by the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) reading scale scores or the MAP composite test scores in reading and language use?
- Were MAP resources (training, consultation, Web-based materials) delivered by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and received and used by teachers as planned?
- Did MAP teachers apply differentiated instructional practices in their classes to a greater extent than their control counterparts?
- Did the MAP program affect the reading achievement of grade 5 students after Year 2 of implementation, as measured by the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) reading scale scores or the MAP composite test scores in reading and language use?

3. *Design:* Thirty-two elementary schools in five districts in Illinois participated in a two-year randomized controlled trial to assess the effectiveness of the MAP program. Half the schools were randomly assigned to implement the MAP program in grade 4, and the other half were randomly assigned to implement MAP in grade 5. Schools assigned to grade 4 treatment served as the grade 5 control condition, and schools assigned to grade 5 treatment served as the grade 4 control.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* This study was completed in December 2012.

### 5. *Key Findings:*

- The study found no statistically significant impacts of MAP on student reading achievement or on teachers' use of differentiated instructional practices.

### 6. *Link to Additional Information:*

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL\\_20134000.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_20134000.pdf)

## Literacy

### **Evaluation of the Content Literacy Continuum: Report on Program Impacts, Program Fidelity, and Contrast**

1. *Study Purpose:* This study examines impacts of the Content Literacy Continuum (CLC) on high school students' reading comprehension and accumulation of credits in core subject areas. The CLC combines whole-school and targeted approaches to supporting student literacy and content learning, using instructional routines and learning strategies developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. The study used a randomized design and involved 33 high schools in nine school districts within four Midwestern states.

### 2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What are the impacts of the CLC program on grade 9 students' reading comprehension and accumulation of core credits in 2009/10, the second year of the study?
- What are the impacts of the CLC program on these outcomes for grade 10 students in the second year of the study?
- What are the impacts of the CLC program on other academic outcomes, such as vocabulary test scores and grade point average?

3. *Design:* To assess the impacts of CLC on these outcomes, the study team conducted a cluster randomized trial. That is, participating high schools within each district were randomly assigned either to implement CLC (CLC schools) or to continue with "business as usual" (non-CLC schools). Impacts were estimated by analyzing the outcomes of students at the CLC schools compared with those at the non-CLC schools.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* This study was completed in December 2012.

### 5. *Key Findings:*

- The study found no statistically significant impacts of CLC on reading comprehension or accumulation of core credits.
- The CLC program had a statistically significant, positive impact on grade 9 students' reading vocabulary in the first year of the study. However, it did not affect their grade point average by a statistically significant amount, in either grade level or in either study year.

### 6. *Link to Additional Information:*

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL\\_20134001.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_20134001.pdf)

## Teacher Quality

### Effects of the Pacific CHILD Professional Development Program

1. *Study Purpose:* This study examines the impact of the Pacific Communities with High Performance in Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD) professional development program on student achievement in reading comprehension and on teacher pedagogical knowledge and instructional practice in English language arts classes. Pacific CHILD is a two-year professional development program that trains fourth and fifth grade teachers in research-based reading comprehension strategies and instructional practices for enhancing student reading comprehension. The study used a randomized design and involved 45 elementary schools across three entities in the Pacific region.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- Did grade 5 students at schools that were offered Pacific CHILD for two years perform differently on assessments of reading comprehension from grade 5 students at schools that were not offered Pacific CHILD?
- Did grade 4 and grade 5 teachers at schools that were offered Pacific CHILD for two years perform differently from teachers at schools that were not offered Pacific CHILD, as measured by either an assessment of their knowledge of theories and strategies related to effective reading instruction (including English language learner-focused theories and strategies), or an assessment of their instructional practices for enhancing student reading comprehension (including English language learner-focused practices)?

3. *Design:* To investigate these questions, the study conducted a multisite, cluster randomized experiment in which schools were the unit of random assignment and teachers and students at schools were the units of analysis. The treatment condition consisted of offering schools the opportunity for their grade 4 and grade 5 teachers to participate in the two-year Pacific CHILD professional development program. The control condition consisted of business as usual; schools in the control group were not offered Pacific CHILD during the two years while the treatment group schools were offered the intervention. The study estimated the intent-to-treat effects of Pacific CHILD as a school-level intervention, focusing on individuals who could have been potentially exposed to the full two-year intervention.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The study was completed in December 2012.

5. *Key Findings:*

- The study found positive impacts of Pacific CHILD on reading comprehension and on teachers' instructional practices and knowledge of theories and strategies related to effective reading instruction.

6. *Link to Additional Information:*

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL\\_20134002.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_20134002.pdf)

### The Effectiveness of Secondary Math Teachers from Teach For America and the Teaching Fellows Programs

1. *Study Purpose:* Title II, Part A, the Improving Teacher State Formula Grants program, is the primary federal funding under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* to support a high-quality teacher in every classroom. The program, funded at \$2.9 billion in FY 2008, targets high-

poverty districts and funds a broad array of allowable activities such as support for certification, including alternative certification.

Highly selective programs that provide alternative routes to teacher certification are viewed by some policymakers as important tools for recruiting prospective teachers, particularly in critical subject areas like secondary school math in which teacher shortages are common. Little is known, however, about the effectiveness of teachers in those programs, especially at the secondary level. This study aims to fill that knowledge gap by focusing on secondary math teachers from the two largest highly selective routes to alternative certification: Teach For America (TFA) and the Teaching Fellows programs fostered by The New Teacher Project (TNTP).

## 2. Key Questions Addressed:

- How effective are TFA teachers at teaching secondary math compared with other teachers teaching the same math courses in the same schools?
- How effective are Teaching Fellows at teaching secondary math compared with other teachers teaching the same math courses in the same schools?

3. *Design:* This study uses an experimental design in which students are randomly assigned to a class taught by a math teacher from the program being studied (TFA or Teaching Fellows) or to a similar math class in the same school taught by a teacher who did not participate in either of the programs studied. The study plan includes recruitment of approximately 80 schools in 15 school districts to take part in the study, with a focus on roughly 300 secondary school math teachers and approximately 17,000 students. Student achievement is measured by administering computer-adaptive math assessments to high school students and using scores from state- and district-administered math assessments for middle school students. A teacher survey is used to collect information on demographic characteristics, educational background, preservice teaching experience, teacher education courses taken during the current school year, and mentoring and other support services received during the current school year. Structured interviews of highly selective alternative certification program administrators are used to collect information on the strategies the programs use to recruit, screen, train, place, and support teachers.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The final report was completed in September 2013.

## 5. Key Findings:

- Most TFA and Teaching Fellows teachers in the study taught in different schools and districts, and students were not randomly assigned between TFA and Teaching Fellows teachers. As a result, the study cannot directly compare these teachers' effectiveness. Instead, the two groups were studied separately.
- The study found that TFA teachers were more effective than their comparison teachers in the same schools regardless of the comparison teachers' route to certification.
- On average, students assigned to novice TFA teachers had higher math scores than students assigned to more experienced teachers from other routes to certification.
- Students of Teaching Fellows and comparison teachers had similar scores, on average, on the math tests they took at the end of the school year; however, Teaching Fellows were more effective than teachers from less selective alternative routes to certification, but neither more nor less effective than teachers from traditional routes to certification.

- Novice Teaching Fellows were more effective than novice comparison teachers; experienced Teaching Fellows teachers were neither more nor less effective than experienced comparison teachers.

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20134015/pdf/20134015.pdf>

## Students with Disabilities

### Improving Post-High School Outcomes for Transition-Age Students with Disabilities: An Evidence Review

1. *Study Purpose:* The National Longitudinal Transition Study 2012 (NLTS 2012), also referred to as the Study of Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities, is the third in a series examining the characteristics and school experiences of a nationally representative sample of youth with disabilities. NLTS 2012 focuses on youth ages 13 to 21 (in December 2011), but also includes a small sample of students without disabilities to enable direct comparisons of students with and without individualized education programs (IEPs). It is part of the congressionally mandated National Assessment of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and is supported with funds authorized under Section 664 of IDEA. The supplemental product of the study was a systematic review of the research literature on program strategies designed to help students with disabilities transition from high school to employment, postsecondary education and training, or independent living.

#### 2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What are promising program strategies to help students with disabilities make successful transitions beyond high school?
- Where are the primary gaps in the research, in both program approaches and research methods?

3. *Design:* The overall NLTS 2012 study will survey 12,000 youth, including 10,000 with IEPs, and their parent/guardians. The evidence review used a process similar to that of the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) to systematically search for, code the quality of, and aggregate prior research related to the post-high school transitions of students with disabilities.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* This report was released in August 2013.

#### 5. *Key Findings:*

- Relatively few studies meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards for evidence of effectiveness. Culled from more than 10,000 relevant citations, a total of 43 eligible studies were reviewed and assigned a WWC standards rating, of which 16 studies met the WWC standards and provide support for two program approaches. Based on three studies that met WWC standards, community-based work programs were found to have mixed effects on students' employment outcomes and potentially positive effects on postsecondary education outcomes. Functional life skills development programs were found to have potentially positive effects on independent living outcomes, although the extent of evidence was small.
- The limited information available from high-quality intervention research in this area stems partly from the lack of tracking of students' experiences "post high school," but also from the wide use of research designs that preclude drawing conclusions with confidence about program effectiveness.

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20134011/pdf/20134011.pdf>

## Other

### Evaluation of the Regional Educational Laboratories: Interim Report

1. *Study Purpose:* The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) are a networked system of 10 organizations that serve the educational needs of 10 designated regions across the United States. The U.S. Department of Education is authorized by the *Education Sciences Reform Act* (ESRA) to award contracts to 10 RELs to support applied research, development, wide dissemination, and technical assistance activities. The REL program is administered by the Knowledge Utilization Division of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) within the Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), which was established by ESRA in 2002. The FY 2012 appropriation for the REL program was \$57.426 million.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What activities did the RELs undertake to fulfill the missions specified in ESRA?
- What were the technical quality and relevance of REL Fast Response Project reports published by IES and of the corresponding proposals?
- What were the technical quality and relevance of REL impact study reports published by IES and of the corresponding proposals?
- How relevant and useful were the REL technical assistance products to the needs of the states, localities, and policy makers in their regions?

3. *Design:* This descriptive study is relying on a combination of extant data, FY 2010 interviews with REL directors, and FY 2012 surveys of potential REL customers from state and local educational agencies. Panels of experts met during FY 2010 and FY 2012 and rated the quality and relevance of REL Fast Response Project proposals and final reports and REL impact study proposals and final reports.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The interim report was released in September 2013. The final report is scheduled for release in 2014.

5. *Key Findings:*

This report addresses the first two key questions:

- REL staff members reported activities under each of the 10 missions of the REL program specified in ESRA. The statement of work (SOW) for the REL contracts in place between 2006 and 2011 aligned explicitly with 6 of the 10 statutory missions for the REL program. Four additional statutory missions were not explicitly in the SOW for the RELs, but RELs reported activities under those missions as well.
- As of December 1, 2009, the 10 RELs had submitted 297 proposals to IES to conduct Fast Response Projects (FRPs), of which 46 percent (137) were accepted for performance under the REL contracts.
- The IES-published FRP reports received a mean quality rating of 3.81 on a 5-point scale, while the corresponding proposals received a mean quality rating of 3.24. Both of these means fell between the categories of "adequate" and "strong" quality.

- The IES-published FRP reports received a mean relevance rating of 3.64 on a 5-point scale, while the corresponding proposals received a mean relevance rating of 3.39. Both of these means fell between the categories of “adequate” relevance and “relevant.”

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20134014/>

### **School Improvement Grants: Analyses of State Applications and Eligible and Awarded Schools**

1. *Study Purpose:* School Improvement Grants (SIG) are authorized under Title I section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and provide funds to assist with turning around the nation’s persistently lowest-achieving schools. Using publicly-available data, this report examines (1) the SIG policies and practices states intend to implement based on their Cohort 2 applications for federal SIG funds, (2) the characteristics of schools eligible for and awarded SIG in Cohort 2, and (3) how these intended policies, practices, and school characteristics compare between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2. The first cohort of grantees began implementing reforms in the 2010–11 school year, with a second cohort of grantees beginning reforms in the 2011–12 school year.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- Based on states’ Cohort 2 SIG applications to the U.S. Department of Education, what SIG-related policies and practices did states intend to implement, and how do they compare to the policies and practices in states’ Cohort 1 SIG applications? (States were required to submit an application to obtain a formula-based share of federal SIG funds that they then awarded competitively to districts applying for SIG on behalf of their eligible schools.)
- What are the characteristics of the persistently lowest-achieving schools identified by states as eligible for SIG and of the schools awarded SIG funds in Cohort 2, and how do they compare to schools in Cohort 1?

3. *Actual Completion Date:* This report was released in October 2012.

4. *Key Findings:*

- Based on data from 45 states and the District of Columbia, 39 states and the District of Columbia developed new lists of SIG-eligible schools in Cohort 2.
- For Cohort 2, 25 states modified their Cohort 1 methods for determining district capacity.
- For Cohort 2, 42 states and the District of Columbia appeared to make revisions to their Cohort 1 plans for supporting SIG implementation.
- Based on data from 41 states and the District of Columbia for Cohort 2, 12,445 schools or 14 percent of all public elementary and secondary schools in these states were eligible for SIG; 81 percent of these schools had also been eligible for SIG in Cohort 1. Ultimately, 600 of the 12,445 eligible schools were awarded SIG in Cohort 2.
- As in Cohort 1, the transformation model followed by the turnaround model were the two most commonly adopted intervention models in Cohort 2, accounting for 75 percent and 19 percent of SIG-awarded Tier I and Tier II schools nationwide. As in Cohort 1, adoption of the turnaround model in Cohort 2 varied by urbanicity: 22 percent of urban SIG schools adopted the turnaround model while just 4 percent of rural SIG schools adopted it.

5. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20124060/pdf/20124060.pdf>

**Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS)****National Assessment of Career and Technical Education: Interim Report**

1. *Study Purpose:* The reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006* (Perkins IV) was intended to improve the quality of career and technical education (CTE) at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Perkins IV required a national assessment to evaluate the current status of state and local CTE programs. The interim report presents preliminary findings regarding CTE enrollment patterns, student outcomes, and international comparisons of CTE participation. A final report will provide a more comprehensive summary of findings.

2. *Study Questions Addressed:* The National Assessment of Career and Technical Education (NACTE) is designed to address the following questions:

- How have secondary and postsecondary student enrollments in CTE programs changed?
- Do students who participate in CTE realize any educational or workforce benefits?
- How are Perkins IV funds distributed and used?
- To what extent are Perkins IV accountability data valid, reliable, and comparable, and to what extent are decision makers using these data?
- Are grantees meeting the requirement to develop and implement programs of study that integrate academic and technical content?

3. *Design:* The NACTE is comprised of a set of studies of student participation in CTE, CTE student outcomes, and state and local implementation of key provisions of the Perkins IV legislation. NACTE findings are based on descriptive statistics, as well as econometric estimation of program effects using national, state, and local administrative data. The assessment also examines survey and case study data from program directors on the implementation of Perkins IV.

4. *Completion Date:* This study was completed in May 2013.

5. *Key Findings:*

- The percentage of students completing a sequence of CTE courses at the high school level declined between 1982 and 2004.
- High school graduates in the United States less frequently completed a CTE concentration than their counterparts in Europe and Asia.
- An analysis of national longitudinal data of high school students found that taking a concentrated sequence of CTE courses neither increased nor decreased math achievement or high school completion.
- Data from a natural experiment in one city found that students who chose to apply and were admitted to a CTE school by lottery were more likely to graduate on time and complete a sequence of college preparatory math courses than those who applied but were not admitted. However, the study did not find an effect on math or reading achievement.

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/sectech/nacte/career-technical-education/interim-report.pdf>

## Summary of Performance Evaluations Expected During FY 2014 and FY 2015

### National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance

#### Literacy

##### **Effectiveness of Interventions for Improving Reading Achievement of Struggling Adolescent Readers: An Assessment and Summary of the Evidence**

1. *Study Purpose:* Striving Readers is a discretionary grant program focused on raising reading achievement of middle school and high school students through intensive interventions for struggling readers and enhancing the quality of literacy instruction across the curriculum. The 2006 and 2009 cohorts of grantees were required to conduct rigorous, experimental evaluations. This study summarizes the evidence of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at struggling adolescent readers, including—but not limited to—the evaluations of the 16 Striving Readers grantees.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What is the evidence of the effectiveness of interventions aimed at struggling adolescent readers?

3. *Design:* The study is descriptive; it provided technical assistance to the local evaluations of Striving Readers grantees and also reviewed existing literature on interventions to raise reading achievement among struggling adolescent readers. The report will synthesize the evidence of the effectiveness of these interventions.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The final report is scheduled for completion in August 2014.

##### **Evaluation of Response to Intervention Practices for Elementary School Reading**

1. *Study Purpose:* The focus of this evaluation is the implementation and impact of Response to Intervention (Rtl) practices for struggling readers in elementary school. Response to Intervention (Rtl) is a multi-step approach to providing early and more intensive intervention and monitoring within the general education setting. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) permits some Part B special education funds to be used for “early intervening services” such as Rtl, and also permit districts to use Rtl to inform decisions regarding a child’s eligibility for special education under the category of specific learning disabilities.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- How do Rtl practices for early-grade reading vary across schools?
- How do schools experienced with Rtl vary the intensity of reading instruction to children based on student benchmark reading performance?
- What are the effects on grade 1–3 reading achievement of providing intensive interventions to children who are on the margin of identification for reading difficulties?

3. *Design*: The evaluation is relying on a combination of descriptive data collection from school staff and regression discontinuity methods to address the research questions, and is focusing on practices in place during the 2011–12 school year.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date*: The final report from this evaluation is scheduled for completion in 2014.

### **Early Childhood Language Development**

1. *Study Purpose*: Differences between the reading skills of disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers have been measured nationally as early as kindergarten entry in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. The focus of this evaluation is the identification of classroom practices that are associated with improved student language development and comprehension. Such practices could be used in a future rigorous evaluation of these strategies.

2. *Key Question Addressed*:

- What classroom practices are associated with greater student progress in language development, background knowledge, and comprehension in prekindergarten through third grade?

3. *Design*: The evaluation will analyze the relationships between the study's observational measures of classroom practices and direct assessments of students collected during the 2011–12 school year in 83 Title I schools.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date*: The final report is scheduled for completion in 2015.

### **School Choice**

#### **Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: An Early Look at Applicants and Participating Schools Under the SOAR Act**

1. *Study Purpose*: The federal *Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act of 2011* (SOAR) mandated that IES conduct a study of the effectiveness of the program supported by those funds.

2. *Key Questions Addressed*:

- Private schools: How many participate in the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) and what are their characteristics?
- Applicants: What is the nature of the demand being generated for the program among eligible students and families? What motivates families to apply to the OSP? How dissatisfied were they with schools before applying and what do they want most in a new school for their child?
- Scholarships: To what extent is the OSP enabling students to enroll in private schools?

3. *Design*: This descriptive report relies entirely on the application forms parents filled out when they applied to the OSP, school characteristics from the program operator's school directory and NCES databases, and scholarship award and use records from the program operator.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The final report is scheduled for completion in June 2014.

## Students with Disabilities

### National Evaluation of the IDEA Technical Assistance & Dissemination Program

1. *Study Purpose:* The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), which was most recently reauthorized in 2004, provides funds to assist states and local educational agencies make available a free appropriate public education for children with disabilities. Funded at \$12.6 billion in FY 2010, IDEA supports early intervention services for infants and toddlers, special education and related services for children ages 3 through 21, and early intervening services for students not in special education but in need of academic or behavioral support. IES is conducting studies under Section 664 of IDEA to assess the implementation and effectiveness of key programs and services supported under the law.

As specified in IDEA Part D, the Technical Assistance and Dissemination (TA&D) Program is to provide technical assistance, support model demonstration projects, disseminate useful information, and implement activities that are supported by scientifically based research to meet the needs of children with disabilities. The National Evaluation of the IDEA TA&D Program is designed to describe the products and services provided by the TA&D Program grantees, state and local needs for technical assistance, and the role that the TA&D Program plays in meeting these needs and supporting implementation of IDEA.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- This report examines (1) the primary technical assistance activities carried out by the TA&D Program national centers; (2) states' needs for technical assistance and the extent to which these needs are addressed by TA&D centers or other sources; and (3) within specific areas of special education, the extent to which states are satisfied with the products and services received from TA&D Program centers.

3. *Design:* Data collection included administering surveys to TA&D Program grantees, all state IDEA Part B and Part C administrators, and a sample of state-level special education program staff.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The final report is scheduled for completion in October 2014.

### The Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in School Accountability Systems: An Update

1. *Study Purpose:* The focus of this study is on the inclusion of students with disabilities (SWDs) in school accountability systems and the variation in school practices in schools accountable and schools not accountable for the performance of the SWD subgroup under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- To what extent are schools accountable for the performance of the SWD subgroup, and how does this accountability vary across schools and over time?
- To what extent have schools accountable for the SWD subgroup been identified as needing improvement?

- How does school accountability for the SWD subgroup related to regular and special education practices for students with disabilities?
3. *Design*: The evaluation is relying on descriptive statistics to study patterns of school accountability across states and over time and to examine how school practices vary with school accountability for the SWD subgroup. Data sources for the evaluation include extant data from the Department of Education's *EDFacts* database and 2011 surveys of principals and special education designees from elementary and middle schools in 12 states.
4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date*: This report, an update of the 2012 interim report, was released in October 2013.
5. *Key Findings*:

This report addressed the first two key questions listed above for this study:

- Across the 44 states with relevant data and DC, 35 percent of public schools were accountable for the performance of the SWD subgroup in the 2009–10 school year, representing 59 percent of SWDs in those states. In those same 44 states and DC, 62 percent of middle schools were accountable for SWD performance, while 32 percent of elementary schools and 23 percent of high schools were accountable.
  - In 31 states with relevant data, 56 percent of public schools were not accountable for the SWD subgroup in any of the 4 years examined, in comparison with 23 percent of schools that were consistently accountable in each of the 4 years.
  - Among schools that were consistently accountable for the performance of the SWD subgroup across 22 states during the 4 years, 56 percent were never identified for school improvement over this time period. By comparison, among schools that were consistently not accountable for SWD subgroup performance in these states, 80 percent were never identified for improvement.
6. *Link to Additional Information*: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20134017/>

### **Practices of Schools Accountable for the Students with Disabilities Subgroup**

1. *Study Purpose*: The focus of this study is on the inclusion of students with disabilities (SWDs) in school accountability systems and the variation in school practices in schools accountable and schools not accountable for the performance of the SWD subgroup under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*.
2. *Key Questions Addressed*:
- To what extent are schools accountable for the performance of the SWD subgroup, and how does this accountability vary across schools and over time?
  - To what extent have schools accountable for the SWD subgroup been identified as needing improvement?
  - How does school accountability for the SWD subgroup relate to regular and special education practices for SWD?
3. *Design*: The evaluation is relying on descriptive statistics to study patterns of school accountability across states and over time and to examine how school practices vary with school accountability for the SWD subgroup. Data sources for the evaluation include extant data

from the Department of Education's *EDFacts* database and 2011 surveys of principals and special education designees from elementary and middle schools in 12 states.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* This report, which will address the third key question listed above, is scheduled for completion in 2014.

### **Evaluation of the Personnel Development Program to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities**

1. *Study Purpose:* This descriptive evaluation is of the Personnel Development Program (PDP) funded under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, Title I, Part D, Subpart 2, Sec. 662. Projects funded under the program are designed to help address state-identified needs for personnel in special education, and help ensure that special education personnel are highly qualified and that teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide appropriate instruction to students with disabilities. A portion of PDP grants is awarded to National Centers, which are to provide national capacity-building and scientifically based products and services to a variety of audiences. Grants are also awarded to specific institutions of higher education to develop courses of study for special education teachers and other service providers. These training grants can be used to improve the quality of personnel preparation programs and for stipends that support students enrolled in the programs. The PDP was funded at \$88.299 million in FY 2012.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What products were developed and services provided by the PDP National Centers funded between FY 2001 and FY 2007, and at what cost?
- What were the quality and relevance/usefulness of documented materials and technical assistance provided by PDP National Centers funded between FY 2001 and FY 2007?
- What were the characteristics of funded courses of study at IHEs awarded PDP training grants in FY 2006 or FY 2007?
- How did funded courses of study use PDP training grant funding?
- How many scholars enrolled in the funded courses of study, completed their programs, or dropped out before completion?
- What were the quality and relevance/usefulness of new or significantly modified components for funded courses of study?
- What became of courses of study that did not receive PDP training grant funding?

3. *Design:* The evaluation relied on a combination of extant data and surveys of PDP grantees and applicants. Panels of experts rated the quality and relevance/usefulness of products and services from 12 National Centers and course-of-study components developed or significantly modified by recipients of PDP training grants awarded in FY 2006 or FY 2007.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The report from this evaluation was released in January 2014.

5. *Key Findings:*

- For 15 products identified by national technical assistance center staff as their signature works and reviewed by independent panels of experts, the mean rating (on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the highest) was 4.13 for quality and 4.25 for relevance/usefulness. For

86 nonsignature products, the mean rating was 4.11 for quality and 3.91 for relevance/usefulness.

- For 134 new or significantly modified components from 99 courses of study supported by PDP training grants, the mean quality rating (on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the highest) was 3.71.
- Thirty-four percent of courses of study that were not funded through FY 2006 and FY 2007 training grant competitions were developed or maintained without PDP funding.

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20144007/>

## Teacher Quality

### Teaching Residency Programs: Description of a New Model for Preparing Teachers for High-Need Schools

1. *Study Purpose:* Teaching Residency Programs (TRPs) involve a year-long “clinical” experience (the “residency”) shadowing and co-teaching with an experienced mentor. TRPs also provide continued support and mentoring after participants become teachers of record. Before and during their residencies, participants in TRPs take coursework. The evaluation of TRPs, which focuses on residency programs that have received grants from the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Program, will provide important descriptive and implementation information on TRPs, as well as information on the teacher retention outcomes of teachers who participate in TRPs.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What are the characteristics of TRPs (e.g., length of overall program, criteria for selecting program participants)? What are the characteristics of participants in TRPs?
- What are the retention rates of novice TRP teachers and their novice colleagues who did not go through TRPs?

3. *Design:* Descriptive information concerning TQP grantees operating TRPs was collected through a survey administered in spring 2012. More detailed implementation information was collected through TRP program director interviews and surveys of residents and mentors, conducted within a subset of TRPs during spring 2012. Teacher mobility will be tracked through district records and teacher surveys in order to examine retention in the profession, district, and school, among novice TRP and novice non-TRP teachers in a subset of six districts.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The first report is expected in summer 2014. A follow-up evaluation brief is expected by spring 2015.

### Evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund: Implementation and Early Impacts of Pay-for-Performance After One Year

1. *Study Purpose:* This evaluation studies the Teacher Incentive Fund program with a particular focus on the performance pay component of the grants.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What is the effect on student achievement of a performance-based bonus compared to an across-the-board 1 percent annual bonus?

- Are there differences in the composition and effectiveness of teachers and principals between these two methods of paying teachers and principals?
  - Are there any differential effects on recruitment and retention of teachers and principals?
  - Is a particular type of performance-based bonus model—for example, school- or individual-based or mixed programs—associated with greater gains in student achievement?
  - Are other key program features correlated with student and educator outcomes?
  - What are the experiences and challenges of districts when implementing these programs?
3. *Design:* Study schools were randomly assigned within a grant to either implement all components of the performance-based compensation system (PBCS) or the PBCS with a 1 percent across-the board bonus in place of the differentiated effectiveness incentive component of the PBCS. Data collection will include a grantee survey, a survey of teachers and principals, teacher and principal school assignment records, student record information (such as student demographics and student test scores), and grantee interviews to document implementation information, as well as to conduct impact analyses.
4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The first report is scheduled for release in fall 2014.

### **Transfer Incentives for High-Performing Teachers: Final Results from a Multisite Randomized Experiment**

1. *Study Purpose:* This evaluation studies implementation of a policy, known to participating study school districts as the Talent Transfer Initiative (TTI), that provides incentives to identified high value-added teachers to teach in low-performing schools with high-need students.
2. *Key Questions Addressed:*
- What can we learn from the implementation of TTI? Specifically, what can we learn about timing and scale of implementation, who transfers, and from where they transfer?
  - What were the intermediate impacts on participating schools? Specifically, how did TTI affect the dynamics within the school, such as the allocation of resources, staffing patterns, assignment of students to teachers and courses, and school climate?
  - What was TTI's impact on student test scores?
  - What was TTI's impact on teacher retention?
3. *Design:* The study is being conducted in 10 school districts (168 school-grade teams in 112 schools), and the design consists of segmenting the schools within districts to those eligible and not eligible for the treatment (the pay incentive). The treatment-eligible schools are randomly assigned to receive the treatment or not. Using value-added analysis, high-performing teachers teaching in the non-eligible schools are identified. The two-year treatment, conducted in school years 2009–10 and 2010–11 (in seven of the districts) and 2010–11 and 2011–12 (in an additional three districts), consists of hiring among the pool of those identified as high performing and interested in teaching in the treatment schools. The control schools follow normal hiring practices. Program transfer teachers receive a transfer incentive of \$10,000 for each of the two years that they remain in the treatment school. Existing teachers in study-eligible schools that meet program criteria and remain in their school receive a retention payment of \$5,000 a year. Data collection includes measures of teacher characteristics and hiring experiences, district/school hiring experiences and practices, and student achievement obtained from administrative records.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The final report was released in November 2013.

5. *Key Findings:*

The report examined the willingness of teachers to transfer when offered an incentive, teacher retention in the schools to which they transferred, and the impact on student achievement at the low-performing schools. The study found that:

- The transfer incentive successfully attracted high value-added teachers to fill targeted vacancies.
- The transfer incentive had a positive impact on teacher-retention rates during the payout period; retention of the high-performing teachers who transferred was similar to their counterparts in the fall immediately after the last payout.
- The transfer incentive had a positive impact on math and reading achievement at the elementary school level in each of the two years after transfer. These impacts were equivalent to raising achievement by between 4 and 10 percentile points relative to all students in their home state.
- There were no impacts—positive or negative—on achievement in middle schools.
- Author calculations suggest that this transfer incentive intervention in elementary schools would save approximately \$13,000 per grade per school compared to the cost of class size reduction aimed at generating the same size impacts. However, overall cost effectiveness can vary depending on a number of factors such as teacher retention rates after the last installments of the incentive are paid out after the second year.

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20144003/pdf/20144003.pdf>

### **Access to Effective Teaching for Disadvantaged Students**

1. *Study Purpose:* Recent Department of Education initiatives, such as Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund, and the flexibility policy for the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, are designed in part to ensure that disadvantaged students have equal access to effective teaching. This study provides information about the extent that disadvantaged students receive less-effective teaching than other students. The study also examines teacher mobility in participating districts and how patterns of mobility might contribute to unequal access.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- To what extent do disadvantaged students have equal access to effective teaching within school districts, and how does this change over time?
- Is access to effective teaching related to different patterns of teacher hiring, retention, and mobility for high- and low-poverty schools?
- What policies are districts implementing that could promote an equitable distribution of effective teachers?

3. *Design:* The study is descriptive. It documents the distribution of effective teaching, as measured by value added, and changes in the distribution of effective teaching across the 2008–09 through 2012–13 school years. The study also describes district policies designed to address inequitable distribution of effective teaching implemented during those years. Lastly, the study will examine teacher mobility patterns within participating districts. Data collection

included the annual collection of district administrative records including student achievement to conduct value added analyses as well as annual semi-structured interviews with district leadership to provide information on district policies. Data collection also included district personnel data to examine teacher mobility within participating districts. The study will be conducted in 29 geographically-dispersed school districts.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The report was released in November 2013.

5. *Key Findings:*

- On average, disadvantaged students had less access to effective teaching than relatively more advantaged students. Providing equal access to effective teaching for disadvantaged and other students would reduce the student achievement gap from 28 percentile points to 26 percentile points in English/language arts (ELA) and from 26 percentile points to 24 percentile points in math in a given year.
- Access to effective teaching patterns for disadvantaged students were similar over the three years studied, 2008–09 through 2010–11.
- Access to effective teaching varied across study districts. Access ranged from districts with equal access to districts with differences in access as large as 0.106 standard deviations of student test scores in ELA and 0.081 standard deviations of student test scores in math, favoring relatively more advantaged students.
- Access to effective teaching was more related to the school assignment of students and teachers than the way that students were assigned to teachers within schools.

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20144001/pdf/20144001.pdf>

### **Do Disadvantaged Students Get Less Effective Teaching? Key Findings from Recent Institute of Education Sciences Studies**

1. *Study Purpose:* Recent Department of Education initiatives, such as Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund, and the flexibility policy for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, are designed in part to ensure that disadvantaged students have equal access to effective teaching. This brief provides information about the extent that disadvantaged students receive less-effective teaching than other students by synthesizing findings from several IES-funded studies, including the report, “Access to Effective Teaching for Disadvantaged Students.”

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What do three IES-funded studies on teacher distribution conclude about equitable access to effective teaching?
3. *Design:* This evaluation brief synthesizes the descriptive findings from three IES-funded studies on teacher distribution that have been peer-reviewed. The brief presents the findings from each study using the same approach, measuring whether disadvantaged students had less effective teaching on average than other students. The sample, collectively, spans 17 states.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The evaluation brief was released in January 2014.

### 5. Key Findings:

- Disadvantaged students received less-effective teaching on average. Based on data from 29 districts in grades 4–8 and two states in grades 4 and 5, disadvantaged students received less-effective teaching in a given year than other students in those grades. The average disparity in teaching effectiveness was equivalent to about four weeks of learning for reading and two weeks for math. For context, the overall achievement gap for disadvantaged students in grades four through eight is equivalent to about 24 months in reading and 18 months in math. Study authors estimate differences in teaching effectiveness for one year represent 4 percent of the existing gap in reading and 2 to 3 percent in math.
- Access to effective teaching varied across districts. The size of the differences in effective teaching in a given year between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students varied across the 29 districts studied. The disparities for each district ranged from no statistically significant difference to a difference equivalent to 14 weeks of learning in reading and math in grades 4 through 8.

6. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20144010/pdf/20144010.pdf>

### Other

#### Evaluation of the Regional Educational Laboratories: Final Report

1. *Study Purpose:* The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) are a networked system of 10 organizations that serve the educational needs of 10 designated regions across the United States. The U.S. Department of Education is authorized by the *Education Sciences Reform Act* (ESRA) to award contracts to 10 RELs to support applied research, development, wide dissemination, and technical assistance activities. The REL program is administered by the Knowledge Utilization Division of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEERA) within the Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), which was established by ESRA in 2002. The FY 2012 appropriation for the REL program was \$57.426 million.

#### 2. Key Questions Addressed:

- What activities did the RELs undertake to fulfill the missions specified in ESRA?
- What were the technical quality and relevance of REL Fast Response Project reports published by IES and of the corresponding proposals?
- What were the technical quality and relevance of REL impact study reports published by IES and of the corresponding proposals?
- How relevant and useful were the REL technical assistance products to the needs of the states, localities, and policymakers in their regions?

3. *Design:* This descriptive study is relying on a combination of extant data, FY 2010 interviews with REL directors, and FY 2012 surveys of potential REL customers from state and local educational agencies. Panels of experts met during FY 2010 and FY 2012 and rated the quality and relevance of REL Fast Response Project proposals and final reports and REL impact study proposals and final reports.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The final report is scheduled for completion in 2014.

## State Implementation of Reforms Promoted Under the Recovery Act

1. *Study Purpose:* This report is part of the multi-year U.S. Department of Education evaluation *Charting the Progress of Education Reform: An Evaluation of the Recovery Act's Role*. The Department seeks to understand through this evaluation how states, districts, and schools are working to implement the education reforms promoted by the Recovery Act. The current report focuses on whether, and how, state education agencies (SEAs) were implementing the reforms that the Recovery Act emphasized one year after the act was passed and sets the stage for examination of implementation at the local level.

### 2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- To what extent did SEAs report implementing key reform strategies promoted by the Recovery Act in the 2010–11 school year? How much of the 2010–11 school year implementation reflects progress since the Recovery Act? What were the greatest reform implementation challenges for SEAs in the 2010–11 school year?

3. *Design:* This report is primarily based on data from surveys of all 50 SEAs and the District of Columbia (DC) administered during spring 2011. Survey respondents were the chief state school officer or other state agency officials designated by the chief as most knowledgeable about the topics in the survey.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* This report was released in January 2014. The final report is scheduled for completion in 2014.

5. *Key Findings:* Findings and additional information can be found at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20144011/pdf/20144011.pdf>.

## Case Studies of Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants

1. *Study Purpose:* School Improvement Grants (SIG) are authorized by Title I, Section 1003(g) of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. The purpose of the grants—awarded based on the Title I funding formula to states, which then competitively distribute the funds to districts applying on behalf of their eligible schools—is to support the turnaround of the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools. To qualify for the three-year grant, schools must (among other requirements) be willing to implement one of four prescribed intervention models: turnaround, restart, closure, or transformation. About \$546 million was allocated in FY 2009 for SIG with a supplement of \$3 billion from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*. With the possibility of rollover funds, this amounts to a \$3.5 billion injection into the SIG program during the 2010–11, 2011–12, and 2012–13 school years. This study will provide descriptively rich, primarily qualitative information for a small set of schools receiving SIG in the first cohort to implement an intervention model beginning in the 2010–11 school year.

### 2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What is the background and context of these persistently lowest-achieving schools? How do the leadership and staff in these schools define the performance problem, and to what do they attribute their problems?
- What leadership styles do the principals of these persistently lowest-achieving schools exhibit? What actions do these schools engage in to try to improve their history of low performance?

- What is the change process in these persistently lowest-achieving schools, particularly in terms of school climate and staff capacity?
- What improvements do school stakeholders perceive during the three-year course of SIG, and do these improvements appear to be sustainable?

3. *Design:* This study employs a school-level case study design. A core sample of 25 SIG schools was purposively selected from six states to represent a range of geographic regions, urbanities, school sizes, racial/ethnic compositions, socioeconomic statuses, SIG intervention models, and SIG funding levels, among other factors. Data collection took place over three school years, beginning in spring 2011 and concluding in spring 2013, and included interviews with each state's SIG leaders, a teacher survey, and site visits to the case study schools, which included analysis of fiscal records, as well as interviews and focus groups with district officials, principals, teachers, parents, union officials, external support providers, and students.

4. *Estimated or Actual Completion Date:* The first report, based on the first year of data, is scheduled for release in 2014. The final report, based on the second and third year of data, is scheduled for release in 2015.

### **A Focused Look at Rural Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants**

1. *Study Purpose:* School Improvement Grants (SIG) are authorized by Title I, Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The purpose of the grants—awarded based on the Title I funding formula to states, which then competitively distribute the funds to districts applying on behalf of their eligible schools—is to support the turnaround of the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools. To qualify for the three-year grant, schools must (among other requirements) be willing to implement one of four prescribed intervention models: turnaround, restart, closure, or transformation. About \$546 million was allocated in FY 2009 for SIG with a supplement of \$3 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. With the possibility of rollover funds, this amounts to a \$3.5 billion injection into the SIG program during the 2010–11, 2011–12, and 2012–13 school years. This report will provide descriptively rich, primarily qualitative information for a small set of rural schools receiving SIG in the first cohort to implement an intervention model beginning in the 2010–11 school year.

2. *Key Questions Addressed:*

- What are the context and challenges of these rural SIG schools that are trying to turn around a history of low performance?
- How did these rural SIG schools perceive their rural context to influence the recruitment and retention of teachers and the engagement of parents, and what improvement actions did they implement in these two areas?

3. *Design:* This study employs a school-level case study design. A sample of 9 SIG schools located in rural areas was purposively selected from four states to represent a range of geographic regions, school sizes, racial/ethnic compositions, socioeconomic statuses, SIG intervention models, and SIG funding levels, among other factors. Data were collected in spring 2012, and included interviews with each state's SIG leaders, a teacher survey, and site visits to the case study schools, which included analysis of fiscal records, as well as interviews and focus groups with district officials, principals, teachers, parents, union officials, external support providers, and students.

4. *Estimated Completion Date:* The report is scheduled for completion in spring 2014.

## **A Focused Look at Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants That Have High Percentages of English Language Learner Students**

1. *Study Purpose:* School Improvement Grants (SIG) are authorized by Title I, Section 1003(g) of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. The purpose of the grants—awarded based on the Title I funding formula to states, which then competitively distribute the funds to districts applying on behalf of their eligible schools—is to support the turnaround of the nation’s persistently lowest-achieving schools. To qualify for the three-year grant, schools must (among other requirements) be willing to implement one of four prescribed intervention models: turnaround, restart, closure, or transformation. About \$546 million was allocated in FY 2009 for SIG with a supplement of \$3 billion from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*. With the possibility of rollover funds, this amounts to a \$3.5 billion injection into the SIG program during the 2010–11, 2011–12, and 2012–13 school years. This report will provide descriptively rich, primarily qualitative information for a small set of schools with high percentages of English Language Learner (ELL) students, that are receiving SIG in the first cohort to implement an intervention model beginning in the 2010–11 school year.

### *2. Key Questions Addressed:*

- What are the context and challenges of these high-ELL SIG schools that are trying to turn around a history of low performance?
- How did these high-ELL SIG schools approach the improvement process, and what supports did they provide to their ELLs?
- What capacity did these high-ELL SIG schools have to address the unique needs of their ELLs?

3. *Design:* This study employs a school-level case study design. A sample of 11 SIG schools with high percentages of ELLs was purposively selected from four states to represent a range of geographic regions, urbanities, school sizes, racial/ethnic compositions, socioeconomic statuses, SIG intervention models, and SIG funding levels, among other factors. Data were collected in fall 2011, and included interviews with each state’s SIG leaders, a teacher survey, and site visits to the case study schools, which included analysis of fiscal records, as well as interviews and focus groups with district officials, principals, teachers, parents, union officials, external support providers, and students.

4. *Estimated Completion Date:* The report is scheduled for completion in spring 2014.

## **Implementation and Impact Evaluation of Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants**

1. *Study Purpose:* Race to the Top (RTT) is a Department-sponsored competitive grant program that funds states and districts planning to implement comprehensive education reform in one or more core areas. Since 2010, RTT has funded a general state competition, as well as a state competition focused on early learning and a district competition focused on personalized learning. With funds from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (Recovery Act), the general state competition awarded \$4 billion to states in support of comprehensive K–12 education reform in four core areas: teachers and leaders, standards and assessments, data systems, and school turnaround. The School Improvement Grants (SIG) program is authorized through Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* and provides three-year awards to support turnaround in the nation’s persistently lowest-achieving schools. In FY 2009, the \$546 million SIG appropriation was supplemented by \$3 billion through the

Recovery Act, for a total of \$3.5 billion. SIG funds are disbursed to states by formula based on Title I allocations. States then competitively award funds to districts applying on behalf of their eligible schools. Schools receiving SIG must implement one of four prescriptive intervention models: turnaround, transformation, closure, or restart. Both RTT and SIG received substantial funding through the Recovery Act. This study will examine the implementation and impacts of RTT and SIG, focusing on the initial general state competition for RTT and the first cohort of SIG schools implementing intervention models beginning in the 2010–11 school year.

## 2. Key Questions Addressed:

- Which policies and practices promoted by the RTT program do RTT states report adopting, and how do they compare to the policies and practices that non-RTT states report adopting?
- Is receipt of an RTT grant related to improvement in student outcomes?
- Are SIG-funded schools adopting the improvement or turnaround strategies promoted by the four SIG intervention models, and how do they compare to strategies in schools not implementing a SIG-funded intervention model? How are states and districts supporting such efforts?
- Does receipt of SIG funding to implement a school intervention model have an impact on outcomes for low-performing schools?
- Is implementation of the four school intervention models and the strategies prescribed by those models related to improvement in outcomes for low-performing schools?

3. *Design:* The RTT sample includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC). Data from interviews with all states and DC will inform the first evaluation question. The second evaluation question will be addressed using a short interrupted time series design with state-level National Assessment of Educational Progress data. The SIG sample includes about 525 schools in 60 districts from 22 states, purposively selected to support a regression discontinuity design to address the fourth evaluation question. Data from state/district interviews and school surveys will inform the third and fifth evaluation questions. Administrative data on student and school achievement are being collected through the 2012–13 school year to inform the fourth and fifth evaluation questions.

4. *Estimated Completion Date:* The first report is scheduled for completion in 2014, and the final report is scheduled for completion in 2015.

## Operational Authority, Support, and Monitoring of School Turnaround

1. *Study Purpose:* The federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, to which \$3 billion were allocated under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (Recovery Act), supports schools attempting to turn around a history of low performance. This study of SIG focuses on a purposive sample of SIG-eligible schools, including (1) a group of schools that received SIG to implement one of four intervention models specified by the U.S. Department of Education and (2) a comparison group of schools from the same districts that were not implementing one of these four intervention models with SIG support.

2. *Key Questions Addressed and Design:* This report focuses on the implementation of SIG by examining three interrelated levers for school improvement: (1) school operational authority, (2) state and district support for turnaround, and (3) state monitoring of turnaround efforts. SIG principles emphasize that school leaders should be given the autonomy to operate on matters such as staffing, calendars, and budgeting, but then also be appropriately supported and

monitored by states and districts to ensure progress. It is thus of interest to document the actual policies and practices related to these three levers, and to see whether there are differences between study schools implementing a SIG-funded intervention model and comparison schools not implementing a SIG-funded intervention model. Findings are based on spring 2012 survey responses from 450 school administrators and interviews with administrators in the 60 districts and 21 of the 22 states where these schools are located.

3. *Actual Completion Date:* The report was completed in January 2014.

4. *Key Findings:*

- The most common area in which schools implementing and not implementing a SIG-funded intervention model reported having primary responsibility was their budgets (55 percent and 54 percent). Fewer than half of the schools in both groups reported primary responsibility in the other seven operational areas examined, such as student discipline policies (38 percent and 35 percent), staffing (37 percent and 46 percent), assessment policies (25 percent and 21 percent), and curriculum (18 percent and 16 percent).
- The most common technical assistance and other supports for turnaround that states reported providing related to developing school improvement plans (20 of the 21 states interviewed) and identifying effective improvement strategies (19 of the 21 states interviewed). These two supports were also the ones districts and schools most frequently reported receiving. Schools implementing a SIG-funded intervention model were no more likely than non-implementing schools to report receiving supports in nine of twelve areas examined, including working with parents, school improvement planning, and recruiting or retaining teachers.
- All 21 of the states interviewed reported being responsible for monitoring low-performing schools, although just 13 of them reported that districts were also responsible. State monitoring almost universally took the form of analyzing student data (21 states) and conducting site visits (20 states), and to a lesser extent having discussions with parents/community (16 states) and surveying school staff (12 states). Most states also reported that monitoring not only served accountability purposes, but also was used for formative purposes, such as to assess implementation fidelity (14 states) and identify additional supports for schools (14 states).

5. *Link to Additional Information:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20144008/>

### **Adoption of Teacher Evaluation Policies Promoted by Race to the Top**

1. *Study Purpose:* Race to the Top (RTT) is a Department-sponsored competitive grant program that funds states and districts planning to implement comprehensive education reform in one or more core areas. Since 2010, RTT has funded a general state competition, as well as a state competition focused on early learning and a district competition focused on personalized learning. With funds from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (Recovery Act), the general state competition awarded \$4 billion to states in support of comprehensive K–12 education reform in four core areas: teachers and leaders, standards and assessments, data systems, and school turnaround. This study will examine the implementation of RTT, focusing on the initial general state competition for RTT.

## 2. Key Questions Addressed:

- Which policies and practices promoted by the RTT program in the area of teacher evaluation do RTT states report adopting, and how do they compare to the policies and practices that non-RTT states report adopting in this area?
3. *Design:* The RTT sample includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC). Data from interviews with all states and DC conducted in spring 2012 will inform the analysis.
  4. *Estimated Completion Date:* The report is scheduled for completion in summer 2014.

## Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS)

### Feasibility Study on Improving the Quality of School-Level Expenditure Data

1. *Study Purpose:* Concerns about the equitable distribution of school funding within school districts have led to new federal data collections on school-level expenditures, and proposed legislation would require that these data be used to demonstrate compliance with the comparability provision under Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA). The quality of these data is uncertain, and data quality issues appear to be most acute for non-personnel expenditures. Most school districts typically do not have accounting systems that systematically track expenditures at the school level, and therefore have to retroactively allocate expenditures to individual schools in order to comply with these data collection requirements. Some state and local staff have expressed concern about their ability to report these data accurately, and have also asked for clearer guidance about the specific categories of expenditures that should be included and excluded.

This feasibility study explores options for improving the completeness, consistency, and accuracy of school-level expenditures that would be most appropriate to include for the purpose of assessing equity, as well as technical and operational challenges for including certain types of expenditures. The study also examines the experiences of states and districts that currently track school-level expenditures, including variations in definitions and practices used in these jurisdictions, the types of changes to accounting systems and practices that are required, and the potential cost of implementing such strategies.

## 2. Key Questions Addressed:

- In states and districts that currently track expenditures at the school level, what types of personnel and non-personnel expenditures are included in the school-level data?
- What is the quality of existing school-level expenditure data? What specific steps could be taken to improve the completeness, consistency, and accuracy of these data?
- What changes would states and districts need to make to track expenditures at the school level if they do not currently do so? What costs have states and districts incurred to implement such data systems?

3. *Design:* The study will explore options for improving the completeness, consistency, and accuracy of school-level expenditure reporting by: (1) convening an expert panel to identify specific challenges and potential solutions; (2) interviewing fiscal staff in nine states and districts that have finance systems that track school-level finance data; and (3) collecting and analyzing available school-level expenditure data in the selected states and districts.

4. *Estimated Completion Date:* The final report is scheduled for completion in October 2014.