

**Connecticut State Department of Education
Targeted Monitoring Review of School Improvement Grants (SIG) under
Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
April 22-25, 2013**

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG) MONITORING REPORT FOR CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

BACKGROUND						
Models	Number of SIG Schools Implementing the Model - Cohort I		Number of SIG Schools Implementing the Model - Cohort II		Number of SIG Schools Implementing the Model - Cohort III	
Turnaround	6		1		N/A	
Transformation	7		3		N/A	
Restart	0		1		N/A	
Closure	0		0		N/A	
Tier	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	18	10	12	2	N/A	N/A
Tier II	5	3	5	3	N/A	N/A
Tier III	214	0	206	0	N/A	N/A

MONITORING TRIP INFORMATION	
Monitoring Visits and Award Amounts	
SEA Visited	Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
Total FY 2009 SIG Allocation	\$25,748,565
Total FY 2010 SIG Allocation	\$4,231,455
Total FY 2011 SIG Allocation	\$3,867,157
Total FY 2012 SIG Allocation	\$3,665,242
LEA Visited	New Haven Public Schools
LEA Information	Cohort 1: 4 schools awarded \$7,890,000 Cohort 2: 1 school awarded \$2,368,283 Cohort 3: 0 schools awarded
School Visited	Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy
School Information	Model: Restart Cohort: 2 School-Level Award: \$2,368,283
LEA Visited	Hartford Public Schools

LEA Information	Cohort 1: 4 schools awarded \$4,861,137 Cohort 2: 0 schools awarded Cohort 3: 0 schools awarded
School Visited	Jumoke Academy at Milner
School Information	Model: Restart Cohort: 1 School-Level Award: \$1,230,569
Staff Interviewed	
➤ CSDE Staff	
➤ New Haven Public Schools Staff	
➤ Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy Staff:	Principal, School Leadership Team, Teachers, Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits
➤ Hartford Public Schools Staff	
➤ Jumoke Academy at Milner Staff:	Principal, School Leadership Team, Teachers, Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits
U.S. Department of Education Staff	
Team Leader	Carlas McCauley
Staff Onsite	Sara Waly and Christopher Tate from the Office of School Turnaround Christine Pilgrim from the Office of Special Education Programs

OVERVIEW OF MONITORING PROCESS

The following report is based on the U.S. Department of Education’s (Department) on-site monitoring visit to Connecticut from April 22-25, 2013 and review of documentation provided by the State educational agency (SEA), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools.

The *School Improvement Grant (SIG) Monitoring Report* provides feedback to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) on its progress in implementing the program effectively, and in a manner that is consistent with the SIG final requirements, 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 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 report consists of the following sections:

- **Background Information:** This section highlights significant achievements in the CSDE’s implementation of the SIG grant. This section also includes a brief overview of the CSDE’s structure and vision for SIG implementation.
- **Summary of the CSDE’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 April 22-25, 2013 or through written documentation provided to the Department.

- ***Technical Assistance Recommendations:*** This section addresses areas where additional technical assistance may be needed to improve the quality of SIG program implementation.
- ***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 the CSDE's Implementation of SIG

CSDE Highlights

- Districts and schools stated that the CSDE's monthly progress monitoring and technical assistance visits to SIG schools provided helpful feedback that informed their turnaround efforts. During these visits, the CSDE engaged in observation and walk-throughs using the CSDE monitoring tools customized for the model being implemented.
- Districts and schools expressed that the CSDE's frequent SIG External Advisory Council meetings provided an opportunity for SIG principals to interact and visit each other's schools, while also allowing both entities to receive technical assistance from the CSDE.
- New Haven Public Schools commented that the CSDE was very responsive to questions and requests for clarification to its SIG application during the initial application process.

New Haven Public Schools/ Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy Highlights

- New Haven Public Schools use a benchmark assessment that provides predictions about how individual students will perform on the Connecticut state assessments. Based on the data, the district identifies at-risk students and compiles the data into data sheets that identify areas of strength and weakness for schools. The district holds monthly district data team meetings in which it reviews the latest data to determine areas of focus. Discussion and analysis during district data team meetings inform school data team conversations, which influence decision-making around intervention groups at the school level.
- Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy stated that it experienced a shift in the culture and climate in the school. The school attributed the shift to the high expectations for student behavior, consistent messaging around behavioral expectations throughout the school, character education assemblies, and student incentives for behavior and academic performance, such as field trips, celebrations, and recognition.

Hartford Public Schools/ Jumoke Academy at Milner

- Jumoke Academy at Milner increased parent engagement by recruiting a parent liaison that supports parents and facilitates communication between parents and the school. The liaison also is tasked with organizing social nights for parents and hosting a Parent Academy that educates parents on issues such as services for students with special needs, bullying, advocacy.

The CSDE Structure

The CSDE has one full-time staff member dedicated to working on SIG implementation. This position is the CSDE consultant responsible for SIG implementation and is part of the CSDE Turnaround Office. Additional CSDE staff support the implementation of SIG, including two part-time SIG monitors.

The CSDE has not changed its structure as a result of SIG implementation.

The CSDE, with the backing of Governor Malloy's administration and the education reform legislation (Public Act 12-116) passed in 2012, believes that schools and districts can serve as the units of change to improve the outcomes for low-income and minority students and close

achievement gaps. It has several school and district-level initiatives designed for this purpose, most notably the Commissioner's Network and Alliance Districts. As a recipient of a waiver granted through ESEA flexibility, the CSDE also works closely with its Focus, Review and Turnaround Schools – eighty percent of which are in the ten lowest-performing districts in the state.

The CSDE's vision for the Alliance Districts includes having clear and coherent plans to (1) advance district systems and infrastructure in the areas of academics, human capital, operations, and culture and climate; and (2) dramatically improve performance in their lowest-performing schools. The CSDE will work to support these districts in the implementation of their plans especially in the areas of English Language Learners (ELL), climate, Common Core State Standards and talent, including educator evaluation and support, because of the power of these levers to move student achievement when implemented effectively.

For supporting schools directly, the mission of the Turnaround Office is to work with Connecticut's seventy-five lowest-performing schools over five years to ensure that they implement strategies and interventions that will significantly improve student outcomes. While the CSDE expects to see improved outcomes in all schools, it believes that through significant interventions in seventy-five schools it can close the achievement gap by forty-six percent.

SUMMARY OF THE CSDE'S IMPLEMENTATION OF SIG CRITICAL ELEMENTS

Application Process

During the 2010-2011 school year, the CSDE did not make awards to LEAs in accordance with the July 1, 2010, timeline in its approved SIG application. The CSDE applied for a waiver of the carryover requirement for SIG and did not receive approval until July 26, 2010, which resulted in delays in making awards to LEAs. During the 2011-2012 school year, the CSDE did not make awards to LEAs in accordance with the May 9, 2011, timeline in its approved SIG application. The CSDE did not receive approval for its application from the Department until March 28, 2011, which delayed its process of making awards. Additionally, the CSDE reported that its review of LEA applications took longer than it anticipated. The CSDE awarded SIG funds to cohort two schools on June 9, 2011.

The CSDE conducted its SIG competition in accordance with what was outlined in its approved application. The CSDE notified LEAs with SIG-eligible schools through letters, emails, and phone calls. During interviews, LEA staff stated that the CSDE supported LEAs through the application process by organizing a conference call with interested districts to answer questions and disseminate information regarding school eligibility and the SIG models. The CSDE also met in-person with district staff and corresponded with districts via email regarding application questions. Additionally, the CSDE met in-person with districts to discuss feedback to their applications and budget proposals.

Since awarding the grants, the CSDE has received multiple requests from LEAs to amend the budgets to their applications.

Implementation

New Haven Public Schools/ Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy

New Haven Public Schools identified three major areas of concern in Roberto Clemente's needs assessment: staff performance, student achievement, and the culture of the school. The district, in selecting a restart partner, considered several education management organizations (EMOs) before selecting Renaissance School Services to manage the turnaround process at the school. The district's application for SIG funds states that a Restart Plan, detailing the process for improving instruction and increasing student achievement in numeracy and literacy, would be provided by the EMO to the district prior to the start of the first year of school implementation. This plan was not provided to the Department prior to or at the time of the visit; however, an outline of the company's three phases for turning around the school was provided post-visit. During the school visit, EMO staff expressed that a detailed plan for turning around the school detracted from the actual work of the turnaround process and that the organization's previous experience was sufficient of the organization's capacity to turnaround the school.

In its application, New Haven indicated that it would select an operator who demonstrated experience in the turnaround field and who would increase student achievement through a rigorous staff review and the implementation of the district's teacher and leader evaluation system. The EMO reconstituted more than seventy-five percent of the staff within the building and replaced the school leadership while creating two additional staff administrator positions. Renaissance staff and school leadership reported that, at times, the initial year of implementation

proved difficult as the EMO's turnaround process and the district's systems were not fully aligned. The district did not initially provide the kind of autonomy expected by the EMO and expectations and responsibilities of each party did not appear to be clearly communicated. New Haven and school leadership agree that during the 2012-2013 school year, the second year of SIG implementation, the communication of expectations and the roles and responsibilities of each party in the turnaround process have been made clear.

To support the EMO in turning around the school, New Haven outlined in its application to the CSDE several performance metrics the district would use to measure the performance of the EMO during their management of Roberto Clemente, which included adherence to policies, increased student and parent engagement, and progress on summative and interim student academic performance. In return, to ensure that the EMO was able to successfully implement reforms and to support the EMO successfully meeting the requirements of the district, New Haven agreed to provide the EMO with the resources necessary to adequately address any concerns related the operation of the EMO at Clemente. While initial recommendations made through observational walkthroughs of the school by district staff during the first year of turnaround were not well-received, district staff and EMO staff report that the performance review recommendations during the second year of implementation have been welcomed.

Finally, as a part of the restart process at the school the EMO replaced the principal with an experienced turnaround leader from another Renaissance school and created two additional leadership positions to effectively support transforming the academic and professional as well as social and emotional environment within the school. By replacing more than seventy-five percent of the staff in the building and increasing the amount of time providing targeted professional development to the staff, Renaissance believes that the ambitious academic targets in literacy and math set by the organization can be met in three to five years.

To fully address the major areas of concern in the needs assessment of Clemente's application for a SIG grant to fund the restart process, the EMO has implemented the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation system and increased the rigor of instruction by providing targeted professional development to staff on the use of data to inform and differentiate instruction. The school leadership team and the EMO have also increased instructional time by restructuring the school day. The school has also provided incentive pay to teachers for required additional time spent on professional development. The school's leadership does not feel that the school has received all of the resources it would receive absent SIG funds. Documentation did not support this claim. Additionally, during interviews, the district made clear that all district resources were available to the school should the leadership team choose to access them. For example, the Community Liaison assigned to Clemente has not been utilized by the EMO but is available. The EMO expressed that it would prefer a Community Liaison who possesses skills, such as Spanish fluency, that meet the needs of the school community in which they operate.

In interviews, the staff, parents and district leadership indicated that Clemente has benefited from the restart process.

Hartford Public Schools/ Core Knowledge at Milner

During its first two years of SIG implementation, Hartford Public Schools (HPS) chose the turnaround model for Core Knowledge at Milner.

Hartford Public Schools stated that it evaluated the needs at Milner based on examination of the data, school walk-throughs, and discussion with the principal. HPS's current process for reviewing school needs, School Quality Reviews, was not established at the time of the SIG application process. Based on HPS's analysis, one area of focus was identified within its SIG application: increasing student academic achievement in reading and mathematics. The school leader in place at the start of SIG reforms identified culture and climate as an additional area of focus of the reforms. The HPS School Accountability Plan for 2010-2011 for Core Knowledge at Milner reinforced these areas of focus as being primary goals, and referenced a third primary goal: strong parent/community communications and collaboration.

In its application, Core Knowledge at Milner indicated that it would increase student achievement in mathematics and reading by adopting Core Knowledge Curriculum and by providing professional development opportunities for school staff to ensure effective delivery of Core Knowledge model strategies.

During interviews, the school leadership team communicated its inability to implement the Core Knowledge model to fidelity. The school leadership team stated that concerns from HPS about lagging achievement scores at the onset of the school's turnaround implementation efforts was one reason the leadership team was pressured to deviate from the Core Knowledge Curriculum. The school leadership team also removed staff members trained on the Core Knowledge model from the school and were replaced with teachers without Core Knowledge experience. According to the leadership team, retraining teachers each year on the Core Knowledge model presented a challenge to implementing the program to fidelity. The Commissioner's Network Operations and Instructional audit conducted at Core Knowledge at Milner in July 2012 stated that training and implementation of the Core Knowledge model occurred, but staff turnover meant less staff with a working knowledge of the model. Staff also stated that there was not adequate instructional time dedicated to the model's implementation. HPS stated that the turnover in district personnel assigned to support Core Knowledge at Milner was the reason for conflicting messages the school received with regard to the curriculum and model it should implement. The CSDE stated that the school adopted the Core Knowledge model but received little to no support or training from Core Knowledge following the initial implementation of the model.

Furthermore, the school leadership team communicated that the school served a very transient student population. The school experienced a forty-percent turnover of its student body every year. The school leadership stated that the turnover over of staff made it difficult to determine which implementation strategies worked and which were ineffective.

To improve culture and climate, Core Knowledge at Milner planned to implement a Positive Behavioral Support System, hire a behavioral specialist to provide support and strategies to students with behavior issues, and collaborate with the school's community partners to provide consistent expectations for behavior. The Positive Behavioral Support System was implemented

and a school store was established to provide further positive behavioral incentives for students, which the school leadership team believed to be effective. The school leadership team also organized retreats and staff development on Second Step, a character education program however, the leadership team communicated that the program was implemented unevenly by teachers. A behavioral technician was assigned to both upper and lower grades, and the technicians worked in collaboration with a Catholic Charities case manager, who provided support for families and students (Catholic Charities is the school's primary community partner). While the school leadership team and LEA reported that the school culture improved greatly over the two years of SIG implementation, parents conveyed that it still appeared as though teachers did not seem to be able to control their students.

To improve parent/community collaboration and communication, Core Knowledge at Milner planned to work with a lead agency providing wrap-around services and participation by additional community agencies (Catholic Charities). The school also planned to collaborate with other community partners, including the Christian Activities Council, Met Life (literacy, tutoring), Jewish Literacy Coalition, Asylum Hill Family Center, Mega Education (academic incentives program), Central Area Health Education Center (health careers exposure and mentorship), Sankofa Kuumba, Mad Science, YMCA, and Hartford Children's Theater to provide extended-day and other programming, to align activities with school curricula, and to provide consistent expectations for behavior.

The school leadership team stated that Catholic Charities, the school's primary community partner, implemented an afterschool program with both an academic and enrichment focus. The leadership team stated that interest in the program was extremely high among students and families. A wait list was established for the afterschool program because demand exceeded the program's capacity. The school leadership reported that, in addition to providing after school supports for students, Catholic Charities representatives helped with lunch, recess, and behavioral management. The school leadership team reported that the school utilized a parent resource teacher from Hartford Public Schools and a family support liaison from Catholic Charities which functioned as a resource for parents. The school leadership team also reported that parents received training on the Core Knowledge model and how it would be implemented. Parents expressed satisfaction with the support provided through Catholic Charities and other school partnerships; however, parents reported difficulties in communication between the school and parents and expressed that they believed teachers had low expectations for their students. Parents reported that while the school attempted to communicate with parents through memos, the memos about events did not consistently reach parents.

In addition to addressing the major areas of concern in the needs assessment, the school leadership and Hartford Public Schools indicated that Core Knowledge at Milner retained the principal that was hired as part of a turnaround effort prior to the implementation of SIG (the principal started July 1st, 2008), used data to inform and differentiate instruction, and screened and replaced more than 50 percent of the staff.

Core Knowledge at Milner did not increase learning time in accordance with SIG guidance.

Hartford Public Schools/ Jumoke Academy at Milner

During its last year of SIG implementation, Hartford Public Schools chose to implement the Restart model at Core Knowledge at Milner. The school became Jumoke Academy at Milner run by Family Urban Schools of Excellence (FUSE).

An audit of Core Knowledge at Milner was conducted in July of 2012 as a requirement of the Commissioner's Network. The CSDE stated that this audit essentially served as the school's needs assessment. The CSDE reported that HPS was not asked to submit an amended SIG application to reflect the change in the school's model and implementation of interventions. Instead, the CSDE used the school's turnaround plan, submitted as a requirement of the Commissioner's Network, as documentation of the change in model and interventions. The school's turnaround plan was informed by the audit. The turnaround plan outlines three major areas of need: school climate and safety, consistency in curriculum and staffing, and teaching and learning strategies to increase instructional time.

In its turnaround plan, Jumoke Academy at Milner indicated that it would improve school climate and safety by instituting uniforms, attendance policies with strict guidelines, One Voice (a cultural approach throughout the school), Diversity celebration, Home-School community Connection, Blazer ceremony, parent academies, proactive communications/outreach program, and continue community school partnerships aimed at addressing non-academic issues, supporting academic excellence, and parent engagement and educational enhancement activities.

During interviews, the school leadership team and parents commented that the Blazers, instituted for students in the upper grades, was a source of pride for students. Additionally, parents praised the parent academies and the school's proactive communications program, particularly the efforts of the school's parent liaison, who they said was a great support for parents and made the school more accessible and welcoming. The school leadership team and parents also praised the school's primary community partner, Catholic Charities. A representative from Catholic Charities stated that they were looking to increase capacity of their afterschool offerings in response to high demand from the school. Parents commented that they felt teachers had high expectations for their students and that the environment within the school and classrooms felt more controlled and focused on learning.

To address consistency in curriculum and staffing, Jumoke Academy at Milner planned to train all stakeholders (staff, parents, students, leaders) in the Jumoke model, integrate the Data Team concept with the curriculum coaching model, implement a structured teacher selection and retention process, establish curriculum coaches and leadership structured to empower teachers, and hire academic assistants as additional resources for each classroom.

The school leadership team expressed that while the school was implementing the district's curriculum, it was also implementing the Jumoke Academy curriculum in accordance with the Jumoke Academy model. The school leadership team and teachers commented that weekly tiered intervention meetings, by grade level, have both an academic and social-emotional focus. These meetings can involve the school social worker, assistant principal, principal, catholic charities caseworkers, discipline staff, English Learner staff, special education staff, and the bilingual instructor. During these meetings, staff examine academic and behavioral data for

students not meeting grade level expectations, discuss strategies for providing students support, discuss resources teachers may need. Additionally, teachers mentioned that Academic Assistants supported teachers in differentiating instruction by distributing data on class performance in an effort to help staff identify student needs and tailor instruction to meet those needs. To address high teacher turnover of years past, the school leadership team reported that it asked all teachers to make a commitment to teach for three years at Jumoke Academy at Milner to establish more consistency in staffing.

Finally, to improve teaching and learning strategies to increase instructional time, Jumoke Academy at Milner proposed to implement a strategy to serve English Learner students, use a curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards, and focus on effective staff development practices driven by empowered teachers.

Teachers commented that a few of them received off-site training on strategies for instructing English Learners, but content gleaned from that professional development was not disseminated to other teachers. Teachers reported that while they were not surveyed about their professional development needs, the predominant understanding is that whatever teachers require is available. The school leadership team and teachers mentioned that professional development was provided around differentiation of instruction; however, teachers also expressed an interest in more professional development around data analysis and data-based decision-making.

In addition to addressing the major areas of concern in the needs assessment, Jumoke Academy at Milner hired a new principal, screened and replaced more than 75 percent of the staff and was in the process of implementing a new teacher and principal evaluation system that incorporates data on student growth.

Fiscal

The CSDE reserves five percent of the State's SIG allocation and uses its reservation for one full-time equivalent (FTE). The CSDE also uses its reservation for annual evaluation of SIG implementation (one was completed after the first year and one will be completed at the end of the 2012-2013 school year), data team facilitators, academic coaches for schools that request them, supporting schools with additional resources such as supplies, and travel for SIG-related meetings.

The CSDE ensures that SIG funds are spent on allowable activities. During the initial budget approval stage, the grantee completes a budget shell which the program manager, bureau chief, associate commissioner, and fiscal office approve.

If the LEA wishes to make amendments to its budget, it contacts its program officer, discusses if the change is appropriate, and the program officer requests a budget revision from the LEA if funding is transferring across line items.

Expenditures are driven through the grant process. The request first passes through the procurement office. The program manager reviews the request and determines whether it is an allowable use of funds. The budget form submitted along with the grant delineates each general line item (for items such as salary, purchase services, or equipment). Once the program officer

approves the request, it is entered into the electronic grant system. Funds are assigned by project coding. Financial reports are submitted annually. The reports have to match each grantees' budget and expenditures.

The cash management system operates separately from the accounting system. It manages and controls the draw-down of funds by the LEA. Draw-downs are monitored daily.

To ensure that its LEAs adhere to proper accounting of time and attendance for SIG paid staff and maintain equipment and materials purchased with SIG funds, the CSDE utilizes an A-133 auditor, who conducts yearly audits of grantees. Any issues relating to the proper accounting of time and attendance and maintenance of equipment and materials purchased with SIG funds would emerge as findings from the audit.

Technical Assistance

Connecticut State Department of Education

During interviews, the CSDE stated that it provides technical assistance to support LEAs in SIG implementation through monthly school-level reviews. These reviews function as monitoring visits and also allow the CSDE to determine technical assistance needs. SIG principals and LEA staff dedicated to SIG also receive support from the CSDE through its SIG External Advisory Council meetings, which occurred four times over the 2012-2013 school year. During these meetings, the CSDE communicated updates and conducted professional development relevant to the attendees' work in turning around the lowest-performing schools. Attendees were also encouraged to network and share best practices. SIG schools also receive assistance from the CSDE in sustainability planning as well as other identified needs that may lead the CSDE to coordinate support for schools through acquiring the services of academic coaches, data team facilitators, or other means.

LEA leadership and school staff praised the CSDE's support for SIG implementation. The CSDE provided thorough pre-application technical assistance both through webinars and in-person support. Also, the CSDE staff support implementation through feedback and coaching, which LEAs commented was valuable, given the field experience of the CSDE staff.

New Haven Public Schools

New Haven proposed to support schools in implementing SIG by ensuring that the EMO had the autonomy and resources necessary to fully implement their turnaround plan.

In interviews, Clemente leadership stated that the LEA did not have the necessary expertise to provide assistance to the school. The EMO stated that the LEA was able to provide the school the support it needed, due to the EMO's expertise in turnaround. The EMO and LEA both stated that during the second year of implementation, the relationship appears to have grown stronger, and the leadership team is more receptive to the district's input.

Hartford Public Schools

Hartford proposed to support schools in implementing SIG by ensuring that each school had the resources necessary to fully and effectively implement the instructional programs selected through the turnaround process. Further, the district ensured that, through regular walkthroughs,

the district would identify specific needs that could be met through additional expert resources and by allowing school leadership the autonomy to receive the supports necessary to fully implement the SIG program.

The LEA offers various instructional supports and professional development to school leadership and staff. Presently, the operator has the flexibility necessary to select the additional professional development or opt out of particular professional development sessions as necessary.

In interviews, school staff commented that the technical assistance it received from HPS during the first two years of SIG implementation did not meet its needs. The LEA did not ensure that Milner received the necessary supports from Core Knowledge to fully implement the program and, often, the district imposed programming and did not ensure that the principal had the autonomy and support to fully implement the school's turnaround plan. The LEA did provide assistance in the development of data teams at each SIG school, and other forms of technical assistance were primarily directed at the principal. At this time, technical assistance at Milner is now provided to the school through the Education Management Organization (EMO) in the form of coaching and leadership development.

During interviews, Hartford stated that it revised its support structure for schools undergoing turnaround this past school year to ensure more continuity in the district support personnel assigned to each school, which it believes will improve support for its schools.

Monitoring

In its approved applications, the CSDE identified a Technical Assistance Team that would be assigned to each LEA to review implementation of the SIG program through on-going progress monitoring as well as bi-annual reviews. Each team would monitor the implementation of the State approved application and measure each school's progress toward meeting its three-year student achievement goals in math and language arts. The real function of the monitoring meeting, per the CSDE staff, is to identify needs to further inform the technical assistance each school and district needs to fully implement a comprehensive turnaround plan.

During interviews, LEA staff reported that the CSDE monitoring of implementation of the SIG program was strong. The CSDE staff conducted regular walkthroughs and provided timely feedback to support implementation. However, staff reported the CSDE did not hold LEAs accountable in all instances for insuring the implementation of interventions in approved LEA applications or for ensuring that all SIG requirements were met. For example, Hartford Public Schools did not implement with fidelity Milner's approved intervention strategy or provide the necessary autonomy or supports to ensure that the school's leadership could fully and effectively implement the school's approved interventions.

Data Collection

The CSDE uses its data system to collect data on SIG achievement and leading indicators from LEAs and schools. LEAs submit data to the SEA three times a year.

According to ED Facts records, the CSDE has not submitted all required achievement and leading indicator data to the Department. The CSDE has not submitted data on teacher attendance rate for the 2011-12 school year. Additionally, the CSDE has missing data on truancy for the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years. There are inconsistencies with data that the CSDE reported on advanced coursework/dual enrollment.

The CSDE uses the data it collects to work with LEAs to develop plans specific to each school's designation as a turnaround, focus, or review school. Data is used to review implementation of those plans. Data is also used for the identification of best practices to share with other schools. Additionally, data is used to inform decisions around professional development and supports to provide to LEAs and principals. The CSDE is working to build a data dashboard for all schools, which will be used to further inform these efforts.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Issue: Monitoring

The CSDE did not ensure that Hartford Public Schools had the capacity to fully and effectively implement interventions under the model chosen by Core Knowledge at Milner. The State's monitoring of Milner, as stated in the CSDE's reports, gave little indication of concern about the full and effective implementation of the turnaround model. The State did note that the principal did not have autonomy during the first year of implementation; however, after the last visit to Core Knowledge at Milner before the school became Jumoke Academy the CSDE states "Autonomy has been given to the Principal to staff effectively, use funds creatively and be flexible with time and scheduling this year as it relates to the SIG." This is inconsistent with accounts provided by the school, LEA, and SEA of the leader's autonomy throughout the two initial years of SIG implementation and, as stated during interviews, did affect the implementation of the Core Knowledge program.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Connect the CSDE with another SEA that has developed strong SIG monitoring tools and processes (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Provide resources and feedback to the SEA to support the revision of its SIG monitoring tools and processes (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Revise SIG monitoring tools and processes to ensure the SEA is accurately capturing and responding to implementation challenges as they arise (Responsibility: CSDE)*

2. Issue: Technical Assistance

During the visit, the education management organization (EMO) hired to lead the turnaround at Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy (Renaissance School Services, LLC) expressed concerns regarding lack of flexibility from the LEA over staffing decisions at the school, untimely communication from the LEA on requests and purchase orders, and lack of freedom from LEA and state requirements/processes that it communicated to be burdensome and in conflict with the school's processes. The New Haven Public Schools reiterated that there had been challenges working with the EMO, particularly within the first year of the external provider's takeover of the school. While New Haven Public Schools believed the relationship between the EMO and LEA had improved, EMO leadership continues to cite the aforementioned issues and concerns.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Connect the CSDE with another SEA that provides strong support to schools and LEAs in navigating relationships with external providers (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Participate in technical assistance calls between the LEA and SEA as needed by the SEA. (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Provide focused technical assistance to the LEA to support its development of a plan for more effectively communicating with the EMO. (Responsibility: CSDE)*
- *Develop a plan for how to more effectively communicate with its external providers (particularly EMOs) by the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year (Responsibility: New Haven Public Schools)*

3. Issue: Technical Assistance

During the visit, school leadership at Jumoke Academy at Milner referenced the wealth of student academic and social-emotional data (such as suspension data, discipline referrals) it utilizes at the school-level. The school leadership stated that the data was used to inform decision-making around instruction and social emotional interventions and supports for students. A few of the teachers interviewed, however, stated that they struggled with the analysis of student data and could use additional support in data analysis and data-based decision-making.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Provide technical assistance to the CSDE to support its development of a plan for supporting the EMO in providing more focused, intensive support for teachers in analyzing student data and making data-based decisions. (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Provide technical assistance to the EMO to support its development of a plan for providing more focused, intensive support for teachers in analyzing student data and making data-based decisions. (Responsibility: CSDE)*
- *Develop a plan for how to increase support for teachers in analyzing student data and making data-based decisions by the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year (Responsibility: Family Urban Schools of Excellence/Jumoke Academy at Milner)*

4. Issue: Application Process

Hartford Public Schools (HPS) submitted an application for Core Knowledge at Milner and was awarded funds consistent with the final requirements. However, after the second year of SIG implementation, HPS chose to change models at the school and implement the restart model with a charter management organization. Jumoke Academy at Milner is currently using SIG funds, but that is not reflected in HPS's SIG application.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Provide focused technical assistance to the SEA to support its development of a plan for more effectively capturing changes in an LEA's application. (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Develop a plan for how to more effectively capture changes in an LEA's application (Responsibility: CSDE)*

5. Issue: Implementation

In information collection prior to the monitoring visit, the CSDE stated that it does not often collaborate with its Bureau of Special Education on its visits to SIG schools. During conversations with the CSDE over technical assistance and data collection, the CSDE mentioned two areas of work that may be particularly conducive to more collaborative efforts.

During interviews, the CSDE described its Technical Assistance Team, which is assigned to each LEA to review implementation of the SIG program through on-going progress monitoring as well as bi-annual reviews that inform the technical assistance each school and district needs to fully implement a comprehensive turnaround plan.

In interviews, the CSDE also stated that it uses the wealth of data collected by the SEA for the identification of best practices to share with other schools and to inform decisions around professional development and supports to provide to LEAs and principals. These seem to be two areas, in particular, where it would be beneficial to include other offices within the SEA to ensure the leveraging of all resources to support SIG schools and LEAs.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Connect the CSDE with another SEA that engages in strong inter-agency collaborative efforts (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Provide focused technical assistance to the SEA to support its development of a plan for more effectively collaborating with its Bureau of Special Education, particularly around its Technical Assistance Team progress monitoring efforts and the efforts driven through its data collection. (Responsibility: ED)*
- *Develop a plan for how to more effectively collaborate with its Bureau of Special Education and other offices, particularly around its Technical Assistance Team progress monitoring efforts and the efforts driven through its data collection. (Responsibility: CSDE)*

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. <i>[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))]</i>	Findings	21-22
2. Implementation	The SEA ensures that the SIG intervention models are being implemented consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. <i>[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))]</i>	Finding	22
3. Fiscal	The SEA ensures LEAs and schools are using funds consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. <i>[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]</i>	N/A	N/A
4. Technical Assistance	The SEA ensures that technical assistance is provided to its LEAs consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. <i>[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))]</i>	N/A	N/A
5. Monitoring	The SEA ensures that monitoring of LEAs and schools is being conducted consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. <i>[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</i>	Finding	N/A

	(October 28, 2010))]		
6. Data Collection	The SEA ensures that data are being collected consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. <i>[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))]</i>	Finding	23

Monitoring Area: School Improvement Grant

Critical Element 1: The SEA ensures that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program.

Finding: The SEA did not ensure that its application process was carried out consistent with its approved SIG application. Although CSDE conducted competitions through which it assessed the capacity and commitment of the LEA applicants, the CSDE made awards to all LEAs that applied, despite concerns regarding the capacity of two LEAs to implement the chosen models in their schools.

During the visit, the CSDE stated that prior to and during the application process it had concerns that two LEAs, Bridgeport Public Schools and Hartford Public Schools, did not have the capacity to implement the interventions required by SIG. The CSDE stated that, despite these concerns, it awarded those LEAs SIG funding.

Citation: Section II.B.2.(b)(iii) 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)), states that an SEA must ensure the LEA has the capacity to implement the selected intervention fully and effectively in each Tier I and Tier II school identified in its application.

Further action required: The CSDE must submit evidence that it has conducted a review to ensure that LEAs awarded FY 2012 continuation funds have the capacity to implement the chosen intervention(s) fully and effectively. The CSDE must submit the evidence to ED within 35 days of receiving a copy of this report. For any LEA that CSDE has determined lacks the capacity to implement the intervention(s) fully and effectively, the CSDE must submit a plan for supporting the LEA(s) and school(s) in overcoming the lack of capacity during the remaining period of the grant. In its FY 2013 SIG application, the CSDE must include a plan for ensuring that LEAs awarded have demonstrated the capacity to implement required reforms.

Critical Element 1: The SEA ensures that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program.

Finding: The SEA did not ensure that its application process was carried out consistent with its approved FY 2009 and FY 2010 SIG applications. The CSDE stated in its approved SIG applications that it would, “review the LEA’s criteria regarding how to recruit, screen and select external providers to determine that it is in accordance with SIG guidelines and CSDE policy”; it further stated that LEAs would be required to “provide CSDE specific information regarding each external provider in the LEA’s application in order for the CSDE to approve the use of external providers” and that the CSDE would evaluate an external provider’s capacity to provide effective services by examining information submitted in the Evaluation of External Providers form (provided in the SEA’s SIG applications).

During a post-monitoring debrief, the CSDE stated that it collected the Evaluation of External Providers form from LEAs but did not use the forms to evaluate external providers. The CSDE

also stated that it did not review LEA criteria regarding how to recruit, screen and select external providers to determine that it was in accordance with SIG guidelines and CSDE policy.

Citation: Section II.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 submit to the Department for approval an application that contains such information as the Secretary may reasonably require. The FY 2009 and 2010 SIG applications required States to describe their process for ensuring that LEAs are meeting the requirement to recruit screen, and select external providers, if applicable, to ensure their quality.

Further action required: The CSDE must review each LEA's criteria on recruiting, screening and selecting external providers to determine that it is in accordance with SIG guidelines. For any LEA that the CSDE has determined does not have rigorous criteria for recruiting, screening, and selecting external providers, the CSDE must submit a plan for supporting the LEA(s) and school(s) in developing more rigorous criteria. The CSDE must submit the results of the review, and any plans developed as a result of the review, to ED within 60 days of receiving a copy of this report.

The CSDE must submit evidence that all LEAs working with external providers submitted Evaluation of External Provider forms. The CSDE must evaluate the external providers' capacity to provide effective services, consistent with the CSDE's approved SIG applications. The CSDE must submit the results of the reviews to ED within 35 days of receiving a copy of this report. For any external provider that the CSDE has determined should not support schools in implementing reform efforts, the CSDE must submit a plan for supporting the LEA(s) and school(s) in working with the external provider during the remaining period of the 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 CSDE did not ensure that all SIG schools implemented increased learning time (ILT) with fidelity, as required for the turnaround and transformation models. Although some of its schools restructured their schedules to maximize learning time, several schools did not significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for the three required ILT components: instruction in core academic subjects, instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities, and additional time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development.

Citation: Section I.A.2(d)(3)(i)(A) of the final requirements stipulates, as part of the transformation model (and Section I.A.2(a)(1)(viii)) as part of the turnaround model, that an LEA 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 CSDE must submit evidence to ED that it has reviewed each LEA that received SIG funds to implement the transformation and turnaround models to determine if increased learning time is being provided consistent with the SIG final requirements. The CSDE must submit the results of the review to ED within 35 days of receiving a copy of this report. For any school that CSDE has determined is not currently implementing increased learning time, as outlined in the SIG final requirements, the CSDE must submit to ED a timeline for implementation.

Critical Element 6: The SEA ensures that data are being collected consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program.

Finding: The CSDE did not report teacher attendance data for the 2011-2012 school year to EDFacts. The CSDE also has missing data on truancy for the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years.

Citation: Section III.A.4 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)), states that an SEA must report on the SIG leading and achievement metrics annually, with the first report providing baseline data and each subsequent report providing data based on the prior year of implementation of one of the four interventions. The SEA must provide such annual reports for each year for which the SEA allocates SIG funds under section 1003(g) of the ESEA.

Further action required: The CSDE must submit teacher attendance data for the 2011-2012 school year to EDFacts. The CSDE must submit evidence that it has submitted the missing data to ED within 35 days of receiving a copy of this report.