

Maryland 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 22-26, 2013

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG) MONITORING REPORT FOR MARYLAND

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	2		N/A		
Transformation	0	0		N/A		
Restart	5	3		N/A		
Closure	0	0		N/A		
Tier	SIG-eligible Schools	SIG-funded Schools	SIG-eligible Schools	SIG-funded Schools	SIG-eligible Schools	SIG-funded Schools
Tier I	5	5	5	1	N/A	N/A
Tier II	11	6	14	4	N/A	N/A
Tier III	56	0	73	0	N/A	N/A

MONITORING TRIP INFORMATION	
Monitoring Visits and Award Amounts	
SEA Visited	Maryland State Department of Education
Total FY 2009 SIG Allocation	\$7,264,292 (regular) \$39,983,479 (ARRA)
Total FY 2010 SIG Allocation	\$6,759,365
Total FY 2011 SIG Allocation	\$6,768,474
Total FY 2012 SIG Allocation	\$6,824,576
LEA Visited	Baltimore City Public Schools
LEA Information	Cohort 1: 7 schools awarded \$19,295,858 (over 3 years) Cohort 2: 3 schools awarded Year 1 \$4,702,475 (\$15,504,861 over 3 years) Cohort 3: N/A
School Visited	Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School
School Information	Model: Restart Cohort: 2 School-Level Award: \$3,924,418 (over 3 years)
LEA Visited	Prince Georges County Public Schools
LEA Information	Cohort 1: 4 schools awarded \$ 29,831,369 Cohort 2: 2 schools awarded Year 1 \$3,578,697 (\$10,288,575 over 3 years) Cohort 3: N/A
School Visited	Benjamin Stoddert Middle School
School Information	Model: Turnaround Cohort: 1 School-Level Award: \$2,590,401 (over 3 years)

Staff Interviewed	
➤	Maryland State Department of Education Staff
➤	Baltimore City Public Schools Staff
➤	Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, Teachers, Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits
➤	Prince Georges County Public Schools Staff
➤	Benjamin Stoddert Middle School Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, Teachers, Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits
U.S. Department of Education Staff	
Team Leader	Carlas McCauley
Staff Onsite	Kimberly Light, Janine Rudder (OST), Angela Tanner-Dean, Melissa Turner, and Gregg Corr (OSEP)

OVERVIEW OF MONITORING PROCESS

The following report is based on the U.S. Department of Education’s (Department) on-site monitoring visit to Maryland from April 22-24, 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 Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) 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 MSDE’s implementation of the SIG grant. This section also includes a brief overview of the MSDE’s structure and vision for SIG implementation.
- **Summary of MSDE’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 22-26, 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 Maryland's Implementation of SIG

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Highlights

- The MSDE integrated SIG with other education reform efforts including Race to the Top and Maryland's approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver. The MSDE has aligned its organizational structure with these efforts, implementing a cross-functional team, a comprehensive needs assessment, technical assistance and monitoring process, and ongoing coordination with District Turnaround Offices and LEA Central Office Support Teams.
- The MSDE's Breakthrough Center serves as the vehicle to integrate MSDE's system of support, helping to better coordinate services to schools in the areas of instruction, leadership, and student services. The Center began by piloting services in a few districts to develop a coherent state service delivery model, and subsequent SIG and Race to Top funds allowed the state to bring this service delivery model to scale.

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS)/Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School Highlights

- Baltimore City Public Schools uses a process for vetting external partners that was expanded under SIG to include the input of a cross-functional district team established under the LEA's Expanding Great Options school reform initiative. Providers are selected and re-evaluated every three years and the evaluation of existing partners is integrated with SIG monitoring.
- Baltimore City Public Schools requires cross-department representation in all aspects of its work, including planning, data analysis, decision making, implementation, and evaluation. Cross-department teams provide support, feedback, and recommendations to SIG schools through meetings, monitoring visits, technical assistance and professional development to ensure that the needs of all students are met. This integrated approach to improving outcomes for all students was also described at Cherry Hill Elementary Middle School. Staff reported no longer working in silos and have incorporated collaborative meetings involving general education and special education personnel to review data and implement interventions for students.

Prince Georges County Public Schools (PGCPS)/Benjamin Stoddert Middle School Highlights

- During the first year of SIG, intensive technical assistance and support provided by the MSDE staff and the MSDE's Breakthrough Center led to a revision in the original SIG plan with a stronger focus on the improvement of culture and climate through parent and student engagement, community partnerships, enhanced teacher supports, classroom management training, and collaborative planning.
- Prince Georges County Public Schools has developed an Aspiring Leader program and a New Leader Residents program to help build a pipeline of turnaround-competent leaders. In addition, the LEA changed its human resources strategy after the first year of SIG to include a more robust interviewing process, ensure that turnaround schools have

recruiting and staffing priority with no forced placement of teachers, and provide a range of teacher incentives, including hiring bonuses, stipends, ongoing teacher supports, and professional development opportunities.

SEA Structure

SEA administration of SIG is housed in the Program Improvement and Family Support Branch of the MSDE. Several staff positions serve as leads for monitoring and technical assistance activities for the SIG schools in the first and second Cohorts. In addition, SIG schools receive services through the Breakthrough Center, which brings together a cross-functional team of staff across the MSDE in instruction, student services, Title I, Race to the Top, special education, career and technology education, and other state offices and programs relevant to SIG.

SUMMARY OF SEA IMPLEMENTATION OF SIG CRITICAL ELEMENTS

Application Process

The SEA assisted LEAs in applying for SIG by developing a template for each SIG model which provided a structure for developing a comprehensive twelve-component LEA needs assessment. SEA staff reported working closely with LEAs on the development of applications if the needs assessments weren't rigorous enough. Specific guidelines were added for the Restart Model to assist LEAs in holding Restart partners accountable for deliverables.

Implementation

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS)/Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School

Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School partnered with Friendship Schools in the second SIG Cohort to implement the Restart Model to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) across all subject areas, with increased emphasis on hands-on projects and use of technology. Additionally, BCPS identified school climate, student attendance, and student achievement as major areas of concern in Cherry Hill's needs assessment.

In its application, Cherry Hill indicated that it would address school climate by conducting monthly parent and community meetings, creating a part-time Community Engagement Director position, and implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), a mentoring program, a new behavior management model, and a school-wide expectation matrix with a hierarchy of consequences. During interviews, the school leadership team, teachers, parents, and students stated that school climate has improved dramatically. In addition, although the number of suspensions rose slightly in the first year of SIG, the leadership team reported that suspensions have decreased in school year (SY) 2012-13.

To increase student attendance, Cherry Hill planned to place students with significant attendance issues on an intervention plan to include home visits, parent phone calls, coordination with social service agencies, and increased incentives for student attendance and engagement. The school leadership team reported that although the school's SY 2011-12 attendance rate of 91.8 percent

did not meet its SIG attendance target (92.4 percent), the attendance rate increased from the prior school year and the school met its Annual Measureable Objective (AMO) for attendance.

Finally, to increase student achievement, the LEA and school proposed a variety of strategies, including increased learning time, new formative assessments, hiring for a new Director of Instruction position, and integrating STEM into the overall curriculum. In addition, the application proposed better alignment and use of data, including use of interim assessments aligned to district benchmark and state assessments, and annual curriculum maps for the entire school year in each subject area to reflect state standards and serve as a framework for unit or lesson plans. The school leadership team reported that Cherry Hill did not meet its SY 2011-12 SIG targets in Reading and Math, but the school did meet its AMOs and experienced growth of 15 percent from SY 2010-11. In SY 2011-12, 47 percent of students met goals for Reading (the target was 51.7 percent), and 48.2 percent met goals for Math (the target was 53.9 percent). Approximately 34 percent of students with disabilities met Reading and Math goals.

In addition to addressing the major areas of concern in the needs assessment, Cherry Hill retained the principal that was hired as part of a turnaround effort prior to the implementation of SIG, and approximately fifty percent of the staff were replaced. The LEA ensured that during the district's voluntary transfer process, schools implementing the restart and turnaround models would have first access to the strongest teacher candidates. In addition, a strong focus has been placed on providing on-going, job-embedded professional development for staff, including a two-week summer institute on use of data, high-impact instructional practices, and creating a college-going culture and classroom environments conducive to learning. Two instructional performance coaches work with teachers who need assistance throughout the year, classroom observations ensure that data analysis is translating into classroom practice, and weekly collaborative planning has been implemented to provide the opportunity for staff to discuss data and differentiated instruction.

Prince Georges County Public Schools (PGCPS)/Benjamin Stoddert Middle School

Benjamin Stoddert Middle School is one of four middle schools served by PGCPS in the first Cohort of SIG schools. All four middle schools are implementing the Turnaround Model. Moreover, PGCPS identified governance, academic rigor, and school climate as major areas of concern in all the schools' needs assessments, including Benjamin Stoddert.

In its application, the LEA and school indicated that it would address governance by creating a district Turnaround Director and a multi-disciplinary team. At the school level, an Assistant Principal would serve as a School Operation Manager, two Assistant Principal positions would be reclassified as Academic Deans, and school leadership teams would be given increased autonomy by the district. During interviews, LEA and school staff confirmed that this new governance structure was in place.

To address academic rigor, the LEA and school proposed to improve the instructional program through adding an additional period to the school day, implementing research-based instructional practices, including collaborative planning, data inquiry, professional development, and differentiated instruction, and increasing the use of technology. The school leadership team reported that the schedule includes seventy-five-minute instructional blocks with increased time

for collaborative planning and a tiered system of support for teachers. Professional development has included training on Response to Intervention (RTI), co-teaching, and instructional strategies for teaching students with disabilities. According to school staff, student data is now collected by teachers in accountability notebooks and provided to both students and parents through an on-line data tool and a student profile sheet. School staff reported that increased learning time was not addressed during the initial year of SIG implementation due to union issues; however, during the third year of SIG implementation, the school increased the school day by an additional forty-five minutes. LEA staff reported that this increased learning time is now in place in all the district's middle schools.

Finally, to address school climate, the LEA and school proposed a range of strategies, including the use of PBIS, monthly parent meetings and increased parent engagement activities, and a full-time social worker. The school leadership team reported that in the first year of SIG implementation, the LEA and school staff faced significant challenges related to school climate and culture, including a merger of Benjamin Stoddert with another school in the year prior to SIG that added 300 new students. School staff reported that there was no transition process in place for the merger of the two schools, and that the first year of SIG required a primary focus on establishing safety and order in the school environment prior to focusing on instruction. Staff reported that increased involvement of community partners has helped strengthen support services to both students and families. A summer institute on PBIS was held and the school leadership team reported that discipline incidents have decreased dramatically.

Benjamin Stoddert hired a new principal for the first year of SIG implementation and screened and replaced the majority of the staff. The school leadership team reported that only four original teachers remained. In addition, staff reported that the school had a large number of new teachers (seventy-five percent) with only one or two years of experience. The leadership team also stated that the school experienced seven forced placements of teachers into the school during the initial year of SIG. In preparation for the second year of SIG implementation, the LEA addressed issues of teacher recruitment by changing hiring policies and procedures to allow for greater recruiting and staffing flexibilities. In addition, all content teachers participate in a performance incentive-based program which rewards teachers for effective teaching if the school meets its targets.

Fiscal

The SEA reserves five percent of the State's SIG allocation and uses its reservation for SEA staffing costs related to SIG. The SEA ensures that SIG funds are spent on allowable activities through their internal accounting and reimbursement procedures and their ongoing program monitoring which incorporates fiscal monitoring.

Technical Assistance

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

In its application, the MSDE identified its Restructuring Implementation Technical Assistance (RITA) initiative and Breakthrough Center as the primary vehicles for the technical assistance provided to support LEAs in implementing the SIG models. The RITA process is designed to

assist Restructuring Implementation schools in identifying programs and systems that are effective and those that need to be eliminated or improved to advance student achievement. Through the Breakthrough Center, the SEA either brokers or directly provides services to LEAs related to instruction, leadership development, and student supports. LEA and school staff reported that the SEA's assistance through RITA and the Breakthrough Center have been instrumental in helping advance reform efforts in SIG schools.

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS)

In its application, BCPS proposed to support schools in implementing SIG by monitoring interventions and school-level data at each school through its district turnaround office and its cross-functional district team. The LEA also proposed to provide several specialist and coordinator positions to assist with SIG implementation. These positions include Reading, Math and Student Support Specialists, as well as a Coordinator of Academic Supports and a Student Support Services Coordinator. District and school staff reported that individualized monthly meetings are held with SIG principals and walkthroughs are conducted by the LEA's Central Office Support Team.

Prince Georges County Public Schools (PGCPS)

In its application, PGCPS proposed to support schools in implementing SIG by providing staffing supports in addition to ongoing professional development on team building, whole-child development, behavior management, de-escalation strategies, PBIS, and effective parent, family and community engagement. During interviews, school staff reported that the district Turnaround Director is often in the school and works closely with the school leadership team.

Monitoring

In its approved application, the SEA described its process for SIG monitoring, which includes three onsite monitoring visits each year. These visits entail an introductory or start-up visit, an interim (mid-year) visit, and an end-of-year visit, each with a specific purpose tailored to each SIG school. The primary function of the onsite visits is to review and analyze all aspects of a school's implementation of the SIG model. LEAs also submit quarterly reports outlining the progress that has been made toward achieving SIG goals. Moreover, LEA and school staff reported that the SEA's monitoring process has aligned both support and accountability and has assisted the districts and schools in making more effective, strategic decisions about uses of SIG funds.

Data Collection

The SEA collects data on both academic achievement and SIG leading indicators from LEAs and schools, and, according to EDfacts records, the SEA has submitted all required achievement and leading indicator data to the Department. The SEA uses the data it collects to analyze school progress as part of its monitoring efforts, and to identify needs to be addressed through technical assistance.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue 1: Implementation. Conversations held with school, district and state staff indicated that retention of teachers has been a challenge for both school districts. Staff described difficulties with retaining new teachers (for example, those hired through Teach for America) as well as with recruiting and retaining experienced teachers.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide the SEA with resources related to recruiting and retaining teachers in a turnaround environment, including opportunities to connect with other states that may be implementing effective recruitment and retention strategies. (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 LEAs and schools to support development of a strategic plan for recruiting and retaining teachers in turnaround schools. (Responsibility: MSDE)

Issue 2: Implementation. The school leadership team reported that due to other schools in the area closing, Cherry Hill will be absorbing an estimated 140 students in the next school year, the last year of their SIG grant.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Connect the SEA and LEA with districts that have SIG schools that can share lessons learned and strategies related to preparing for and implementing a consolidation of schools with resulting increases in student population. (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 and school to support a successful transition during the consolidation process in order to ensure continued implementation of SIG reforms. (Responsibility: MSDE)

Issue 3: Implementation. Conversations with parents at Benjamin Stoddert Middle School indicated that many positive changes had taken place at the school since SIG efforts began. Parents also had many suggestions for improved parent engagement, including use of a social networking site to increase communication between parents and the school, being more strategic and creative about marketing of school events and meetings, increasing parent technology access through donations, and offering more school-based sports opportunities as an incentive for getting fathers more involved at school.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Facilitate opportunities for parents to share and discuss these and other ideas with LEA and school staff. (Responsibility: MSDE, LEA, school)

- Provide the LEA and school with resources and technical assistance related to parent and family engagement. (Responsibility: MSDE)

Issue 4: Implementation. Conversations held with Prince Georges County Public Schools staff indicated that professional development for special education teachers may not be adequately integrated with professional development for general education teachers.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Facilitate opportunities for collaboration between PGCPS and BCPS to ensure that PGCPS can learn more about strategies that BCPS is implementing to integrate professional development across all staff. (Responsibility: MSDE, LEAs)
- Participate in technical assistance calls between the LEAs and SEA as needed by the SEA. (Responsibility: ED)

MONITORING FINDINGS

Summary of Monitoring Indicators

Critical Element	Requirement	Status	Page
1. Application Process	The SEA ensures that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. <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>	N/A	N/A
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>	N/A	N/A
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 (October 28, 2010))]</i>	N/A	N/A
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>	N/A	N/A

Monitoring Area: School Improvement Grant

No findings identified.