



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AUG 21 2014

The Honorable Michael Flanagan
State Superintendent of Education
Michigan Department of Education
608 W. Allen Street
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Superintendent Flanagan:

During the week of April 14-18, 2014 a team from the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of School Turnaround (OST) reviewed the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) administration of Title I, section 1003(g) (School Improvement Grants (SIG)) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended. As part of its review, the ED team interviewed staff at the State educational agency (SEA) and two local educational agencies (LEAs). The ED team also conducted site visits to two schools implementing the SIG intervention models, where they visited classes and interviewed school leadership, teachers, parents, and students. Enclosed you will find ED's final monitoring report based upon this review.

The primary purpose of monitoring is to ensure that the SEA carries out the SIG program consistent with the final requirements. Additionally, ED is using its monitoring review to observe how LEAs and schools are implementing the selected intervention models and identify areas where technical assistance may be needed to support effective program implementation.

In line with these aims, the enclosed monitoring report is organized in three sections: (1) *Summary and Observation*, (2) *Technical Assistance Recommendations*, and (3) *Monitoring Findings*. The *Summary and Observations* section describes the SIG implementation occurring in the schools and districts visited, initial indicators of success, and any outstanding challenges relating to implementation. The *Technical Assistance Recommendations* section contains strategies and resources for addressing technical assistance needs identified during ED's visit. Finally, the *Monitoring Findings* section identifies any compliance issues within the six indicator areas reviewed and corrective actions that the SEA is required to take.

With regards to the *Technical Assistance Recommendations* provided, we encourage you to employ these strategies to further support the effective implementation of the SIG program. ED staff will follow up with your staff over the next few months to see how the MDE is working to address these issues and make use of this technical assistance.

Please be aware that the observations reported, issues identified, and findings made in the enclosed report are based on written documentation or information provided to ED by SEA, LEA, or school staff during interviews. They also reflect the status of compliance in Michigan at the time and locations of ED's onsite review. The MDE may receive further communication

from ED that will require it to address noncompliance occurring prior or subsequent to the onsite visit.

The ED team would like to thank Linda Forward, Bill Witt and their staff for their hard work and the assistance they provided prior to and during the review in gathering materials and providing access to information in a timely manner.

We look forward to working further with your staff to resolve the issues contained in this report and to improve the quality of the SIG program in Michigan.

Sincerely,



Scott Sargrad
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Strategic
Initiatives
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: State SIG Coordinator

MICHIGAN 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 14-18, 2014

AUG 21 2014

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS (SIG) MONITORING REPORT FOR
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND				
Models	Number of SIG Schools Implementing the Model - Cohort I		Number of SIG Schools Implementing the Model - Cohort II	
Turnaround	9		7	
Transformation	19		15	
Restart	0		0	
Closure	0		0	
Tier	SIG-eligible Schools	SIG-funded Schools	SIG-eligible Schools	SIG-funded Schools
Tier I	10	2	6	1
Tier II	98	23	70	21
Tier III	120	0	122	0

MONITORING TRIP INFORMATION	
Monitoring Visits and Award Amounts	
SEA Visited	Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
Total FY 2009 SIG Allocation	\$135,976,075
Total FY 2010 SIG Allocation	\$19,650,049
Total FY 2011 SIG Allocation	\$19,711,550
Total FY 2012 SIG Allocation	\$18,597,302
LEA Visited	Detroit Public Schools (DPS)
LEA Information	Cohort 1: 2 schools awarded \$5,165,968 Cohort 2: 4 schools awarded \$32,114,537
School Visited	Western International High School
School Information	Model: Turnaround Cohort: 2 School-Level Award: \$2,714,739
LEA Visited	Lincoln Park Public Schools
LEA Information	Cohort 1: 0 schools awarded Cohort 2: 1 school awarded \$4,070,617
School Visited	Lincoln Park Middle School
School Information	Model: Transformation Cohort: 2 School-Level Award: \$4,070,617
Staff Interviewed	
<p>➤ MDE Staff: Linda Forward (Director, Office of Education Improvement and Innovation (OEII)), Bill Witt (Supervisor, School Improvement Support, OEII), Kris Davidson (Education</p>	

Consultant, OEII)	
➤	DPS Staff: Superintendent, finance, human resources, academic improvement staff
➤	Western International High School Staff: Principal, school leadership team, 5 teachers, 3 parents, and students (<i>no classroom visits*</i>)
➤	Lincoln Park School District Staff: Superintendent and other district staff
➤	Lincoln Park Middle School Staff: Principal, school leadership team, 6 teachers, 2 parents, students, and 5 classroom visits
U.S. Department of Education Staff	
Team Leader	Michael Wells
Staff Onsite	Christina Weeter, Janine Rudder

**During the first round of interviews at Western International High School, strong winds caused a brown out that caused the school to be closed for the two days the Department was in Detroit. Parent, teacher, and student interviews were able to be rescheduled for a later date but classroom observations were not conducted due to the school closure.*

OVERVIEW OF MONITORING PROCESS

The following report is based on U.S. Department of Education’s (Department) on-site monitoring visit to Michigan from April 14-18, 2014 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 Michigan Department of Education (MDE) 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 MDE’s implementation of the SIG grant. This section also includes a brief overview of the MDE’s structure and vision for SIG implementation.
- **Summary of MDE’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 14-18, 2014 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 MDE's Implementation of SIG

MDE Highlights

- MDE's SIG team is working to align its work with the State Reform Office's work with Priority schools to provide coordinated monitoring of intervention models, as well as integrating supports to SIG schools through the Title I Statewide System of Support to make the transition from Priority to SIG status less challenging for schools.

Western International High School/Detroit Public Schools (DPS) Highlights

- Western has focused on changing the culture of the school from reportedly being unsafe and overrun by gang members to one that feels safe, secure, and welcoming, while simultaneously creating a school culture that is unified in using data-driven instruction to increase achievement for all students including English learners and students with disabilities.
- While additional safeguards have been put in place to avoid the financial troubles DPS has experienced in recent years, DPS has essentially implemented its own district "turnaround" that required all staff to re-interview for their positions and reorganized itself to be able to prioritize the fiscal needs of Priority and SIG schools.

Lincoln Park Middle School/Lincoln Park Public Schools Highlights

- Staff has fully bought into the program implemented to improve school climate, Capturing Kids Hearts, and are seeing declines in discipline incidents and a positive change in attitude among students.

MDE Structure

MDE has three full-time staff dedicated to working on SIG implementation. These positions include a Director, a Supervisor of School Improvement Support, and an Education Consultant, who are part of the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation (OEII). MDE has changed its structure as a result of SIG implementation to add the Education Consultant position and to hire Facilitators/Monitors who make frequent visits to SIG schools for simultaneous monitoring and technical assistance.

According to the MDE, its goal for reform is to work more closely with the School Reform Office to coordinate implementation supports for SIG and Priority schools through OEII's Statewide System of Support as well as align the monitoring processes for both.

SUMMARY OF MDE'S IMPLEMENTATION OF SIG CRITICAL ELEMENTS

Application Process

During the FY 2010 competition, the MDE made awards to LEAs in October 2011 in accordance with the timeline in its approved SIG application.

In accordance with its approved application, the MDE notified LEAs with SIG-eligible schools by sending electronic notification to the entire education community along with official notice to district superintendents and principals about the opportunity. Eligible schools were invited to attend a technical assistance meeting and received a follow-up memo when the LEA application was released. In interviews, LEA staff stated that the MDE supported LEAs through the application process by holding a webinar detailing the application process, holding meetings in Lansing for eligible schools on the SIG requirements, and holding an external provider fair for schools to meet with approximately 20 providers. The state also provided guidance on what to include in a high quality application and provided the scoring rubric to applicants in advance to facilitate applicants addressing application elements thoroughly.

Since awarding the grants, the MDE has received three requests from LEAs to amend their SIG application, particularly related to grade level changes. For example, Lincoln Park Middle School served grades 7 and 8 when the LEA applied and amended its application once the school added 6th grade. Other requested amendments have been minor adjustments to the original plan (for example, adjusting the frequency of data coaches), but do not result in programmatic changes. Each year schools are also invited to amend their budget in January and April.

Implementation

Detroit Public Schools/Western International High School

DPS identified supports for staff quality, use of data, and school culture as the major areas of concern in Western's needs assessment.

In its application, Western indicated that it would address staff quality by engaging every staff member in ongoing, job-embedded professional development. In interviews, staff stated that SIG implementation had a unifying effect on how they approached school improvement. Teachers cited the use of uniform assessments as helping them to provide data-driven instruction and found that opportunities to collaborate with other teachers were helpful in creating more uniform instruction. They also noted the change in school culture, both in terms of school safety as well as the principal's leadership style, as something both new and veteran teachers appreciated.

To improve the use of data, Western planned to provide data-informed continuous professional development to all teachers and monitor the progress of implementation of strategies in the classroom. Teachers expressed that the workshops training them how to interpret data by reviewing monthly assessments to determine which content areas need further instruction has enabled them to be truly data-driven throughout the school. As a result, instruction is no longer

siloed. Teachers also described helping students think about how to recognize an incorrect answer on an assessment that looks like it could be a correct one. They also noted that in other schools where they had taught previously the school improvement plan was just a document, whereas at Western the whole plan was being implemented. Additionally, all general education teachers have received training in understanding the needs of English learners and students with disabilities to help them differentiate instruction through the use of assessment data.

Finally, to address school climate the school has implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) System, engaged parents and the community as resources, and implemented professional development for staff to create a supportive school culture. School leadership and teachers alike said that changing the expectations so that students and the outside community understand that bad behavior will not be tolerated has reduced the violence and behavior incidents in the school. Previously, gang activity reportedly permeated the community as well as the school. Now teachers/administration/staff noted that any gang-affiliated students attending Western comport themselves like all other well-behaved enrolled students. Western brought in a community-based organization, Esperanza, to address school culture, which reduced the presence of gang-related activity in the school and increased safety perceptions among staff, students, and parents. The principal also invited police officers to bring their friends and families to play basketball at the school to encourage their investment in making the school a safe place.

In addition to addressing the major areas of concern in the needs assessment, Western retained the principal that was hired as part of a turnaround effort prior to the implementation of SIG; screened and replaced more than 50% of the staff; provided on-going, job-embedded professional development for staff; used data to inform and differentiate instruction; provided social-emotional and community-oriented services such as those provided by Esperanza; implemented strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff; and increased learning time by 30 minutes each day.

Lincoln Park Public Schools /Lincoln Park Middle School

Lincoln Park Public Schools (LPPS) identified supports for struggling students, math and English/Language Arts (ELA) achievement, and data-driven instruction as the major areas of concern in the Lincoln Park Middle School's (LPMS) needs assessment.

In its application, LPMS indicated that it would support struggling students by implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI). In interviews, school staff reported that in addition to implementing PBIS and RTI, they had been working with the Flippen Group to implement Capturing Kids Hearts, a program that provides tools for administrators, faculty and staff to build positive, productive, trusting relationships with students as well as other staff members. The impact of Capturing Kids Hearts was echoed by multiple staff and school leaders throughout the interviews as being a very effective way to improve school culture and reduce discipline incidents, which dropped from 1.22 discipline referrals per student to 0.6 referrals per student after one year of implementation. Students who need additional behavior supports work with a social worker and may also have a teacher assigned to mentor them. To support students with disabilities, the school has added an

additional staff member to coordinate special education services and ensure that each student's needs are being met, as well as enhanced instructional practices.

To address reading and math achievement, the school planned to implement an ELA and Math Essentials class; use curricular coaches, literacy specialists, and math specialists to aid tiered instruction; and implement Reading Apprenticeship and Guided Reading strategies to support individual student growth. In addition to the specific ELA and math interventions being implemented the school staff also mentioned that lengthening the school day by 30 minutes, summer academies for remediation and enrichment, aligning the curriculum vertically and horizontally, and converting the advisory class to one that incorporates academics combined with character building and advocacy have helped improve student outcomes.

Finally, to improve data-driven instruction the school hired a full-time onsite data coach and purchased a data analysis program. School staff said that in the past department meetings and Professional Learning Communities would meet but were not data-driven as they are now. Additionally they use non-evaluative "data walks" to conduct classroom observations and provide feedback. They have found the data analyst to be so helpful that they are currently working with the district to keep this position beyond SIG.

In addition to addressing the major areas of concern in the needs assessment, LPMS retained the principal that was hired as part of a turnaround effort prior to the implementation of SIG; implemented a new teacher and principal evaluation system that incorporates data on student growth; instituted a system of rewards for staff that have increased student achievement; provided on-going, job-embedded professional development for staff; used data to inform and differentiate instruction; implemented strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff; and increased learning time.

In interviews, the school staff indicated that the school implemented, but struggled with providing opportunities for family and community engagement, such as academic nights, Common Core conversations, and parent orientation.

Fiscal

MDE reserves five percent of the State's SIG allocation and uses its reservation for state SIG staff salaries, the contracted Facilitator-Monitors, and to fund the SIG evaluation by WestEd.

MDE ensures that SIG funds are spent on allowable activities by using an electronic grant system that incorporates the SIG plan and budget. Financial audits are conducted once a year using Title I rules for allowability. The SIG Facilitator-Monitors are the "eyes and ears" for MDE as their presence in the schools enables them to ensure the activities are part of the approved SIG plan and then communicate that to MDE.

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, MDE reviews LEA records of staff sign-in sheets, payroll documentation, logs of the students the staff are working with, and

inventory lists, as well as conducts a physical verification of equipment and materials purchased with SIG funds.

Technical Assistance

Michigan Department of Education

In interviews, MDE stated that it is providing technical assistance to support LEAs with implementing SIG by hosting 4-6 networking meetings per year focused on the state's understanding of the schools' needs, although MDE staff reported that the schools cannot always articulate their own needs, in which case the state supports schools based on what it has observed during onsite visits through the work of the facilitator/monitors. MDE uses the facilitator/monitors to conduct both monitoring and technical assistance simultaneously. MDE responds to specific technical assistance requests from districts and holds monthly meetings with the larger districts. Moving forward, MDE intends to have schools and districts formally engaged alongside Priority schools through the Statewide System of Support.

Detroit Public Schools

In an attempt to better support schools in implementing SIG, DPS provided an Assistant Superintendent for Priority Schools to monitor, evaluate, and support all Priority and SIG schools; provided Priority School Coaches responsible for onsite professional development and support for principals, leadership teams and teachers in implementing the chosen reform model; created a Priority School Budget Implementation/Compliance Officer position to act as a liaison between each Priority and SIG school to ensure that District processes and procedures are expedited; and assigned each Priority and SIG school a partner provider.

In interviews Western's school leadership described the technical assistance it receives from DPS as inadequate and, at times, a barrier to full implementation of the SIG plan due to its bureaucracy and lack of communication with the school and within the district. School leadership specifically cited substantial delays in the approval of expenditures included in the SIG application. For example, sometimes it would take three or four months for external providers to be paid for their services and budget amendments might take six months before approval by DPS was granted. Such delays have forced Western to be creative in their implementation, for example, by using Title I funds to pay for professional development that was supposed to be covered by SIG.

While Western reported receiving little support from DPS, they did express the current State Facilitator-Monitor was a strong source of support despite having a prior Facilitator-Monitor who provided less support. School leadership did acknowledge that the district assistant superintendent overseeing SIG may have good intentions but may not have the capacity to respond to the school's needs and communicate those to others at DPS.

Despite the fact that DPS has created a system by which SIG and Priority schools' fiscal issues would be essentially "fast-tracked" through an approval process, it appears that this was a recent change that did not occur quickly enough to avoid the bureaucratic challenges reported by Western and a designated Priority School Budget Implementation/Compliance Officer was not

hired. DPS staff reported that it has a SIG team that meets weekly, including representation from Accounts Payable, which fills the role of the Priority School Budget Implementation/Compliance Officer.

Lincoln Park Public Schools

LPPS proposed to support schools in implementing SIG by ensuring additional instructional hours were included in the collective bargaining agreement for Lincoln Park Middle School and by granting the school flexibility in time, budget and staffing. School staff reported that 30 minutes has been added to the school day since the start of SIG implementation.

In interviews school staff described the technical assistance it receives from the district as supportive as far as being available if needed but more reactive and “hands-off”. This was consistent with reports from district staff that their monitoring and technical assistance is conducted informally on an as-needed basis.

Monitoring

In its approved application MDE identified a tiered approach to monitoring, including frequent site visits and quarterly reports created by MDE facilitator-monitors, participation in a facilitated peer accountability network, and submission of annual reports on goals and leading indicators as how it proposed to monitor SIG implementation. In interviews, LEA staff reported that state monitoring occurs directly with the schools rather than with the LEA and starts out with more frequent on-site visits at the beginning of the grant, with less frequent visits as time went on. There were some discrepancies between the reports from the two LEAs interviewed in terms of the frequency, intensity, and usefulness of the Facilitator-Monitors. For example, Western reported initial visits from the state Facilitator-Monitor taking place twice a month then tapering to once a month for the first year of the grant, but when a different Facilitator-Monitor was assigned to Western in Year 2 the visits were sporadic and often didn’t occur at all. In Year 3 the original Facilitator-Monitor is working with Western again and provided regular monthly visits. Likewise, Lincoln Park staff reported having three different Facilitator-Monitors who differed in the frequency, structure, and manner of feedback provided. Additionally, both schools reported more structured monitoring processes at the beginning of the grant, but have since become more informal in the process with feedback provided verbally.

Data Collection

The MDE uses Excel spreadsheets rather than a data system to collect data on SIG achievement and leading indicators from LEAs and schools. The facilitator-monitors work with school leadership to complete the spreadsheets and submit data to the SEA on an annual basis.

According to EDFacts records, MDE has submitted all required achievement and leading indicator data to the Department. MDE uses the data it collects to determine if a school is meeting its goals and factors this into continuation decisions. A new monitoring system and tool will provide opportunities to capture additional data points beyond the leading indicator data.

MDE is still determining how best to align data collection for SIG schools with the reports collected by the State Reform Office, but will likely continue to be in the spreadsheet format currently in use.

MONITORING FINDINGS

Summary of Monitoring Indicators

Critical Element	Requirement	Status	Page
<p>1. Application Process</p>	<p>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></p>	<p>NA</p>	
<p>2. Implementation</p>	<p>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></p>	<p>NA</p>	
<p>3. Fiscal</p>	<p>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></p>	<p>NA</p>	
<p>4. Technical Assistance</p>	<p>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></p>	<p>NA</p>	
<p>5. Monitoring</p>	<p>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></p>	<p>NA</p>	

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Issue:** The role of the Facilitator-Monitors is to be the “eyes and ears” for MDE when working in the schools to monitor and provide onsite technical assistance. However, MDE does not have a formalized feedback loop for the work done by the contracted Facilitator-Monitors as feedback to the school staff occurs verbally and feedback to MDE is a short, unstructured written summary of the school visit. Additionally, MDE staff report that SIG schools are not always able to articulate their needs.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Create a formalized feedback process that includes continuous assessment of school and district technical assistance needs as well as a clear timeline for schools to resolve identified issues. MDE should use a standardized process that also captures strategies and activities identified in the LEA application and school turnaround plan. (Responsibility: MDE)*
- *Connect with other SEAs to serve as a resource for the development of the feedback and SEA-level technical assistance process. (Responsibility: ED, MDE)*

2. **Issue:** MDE’s method of data collection is to use spreadsheets to collect data, including leading and lagging indicators, from SIG schools.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Consider creating a method for collecting data that will allow for analysis of implementation and outcome data that can be used to guide MDE’s support of SIG at the school and district levels. (Responsibility: MDE)*
- *Connect with other states and the Comprehensive Centers to determine what has worked will for them and what might be a good fit for the context of SIG in Michigan (Responsibility: ED, MDE, Center on School Turnaround, Center on Building State Capacity and Productivity)*

3. **Issue:** In both districts visited by ED there was limited district-level capacity to support SIG. At best, the district was “hands-off” unless specific support was requested and at worst the district was a barrier to effective SIG implementation. Additionally, DPS reported requesting funds to support the implementation of district SIG schools but this request was denied by MDE.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *Consider allowing the district to retain a portion of SIG funds to support multiple SIG schools within the district, as appropriate. (Responsibility: MDE)*
- *Work with districts to help them build capacity to serve the active SIG schools and be positioned to support future SIG schools. Consider the ways the work of the School Reform Office can be leveraged to this end. (Responsibility: MDE)*

- *Connect with other states and the Comprehensive Centers to determine what has worked will for them and what might be a good fit for the context of SIG in Michigan (Responsibility: ED, MDE, Center on School Turnaround, Center on Building State Capacity and Productivity)*

4. **Issue:** It is unclear how principal evaluations are currently incorporating student growth.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- *There is new legislation being implemented statewide that mandates how student growth will be incorporated into principal evaluations. The SEA should ensure that districts understand and are appropriately implementing these guidelines and provide technical assistance to districts encountering challenges. (Responsibility: MDE)*