

TENNESSEE
Targeted Monitoring Review of
School Improvement Grants (SIG) under section 1003(g) of the
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
September 12-16, 2011

BACKGROUND

Overview of SIG Schools in Tennessee

Tier	Number of FY 2009 Eligible SIG Schools	Number of FY 2009 Served SIG Schools
Tier I	10	10
Tier II	5	2
Tier III	60	60

**Implementation of
SIG School Intervention Models**

Models	Number of Schools Implementing the Model
Turnaround	6
Transformation	6
Restart	0
Closure	0

MONITORING TRIP INFORMATION

Monitoring Visits

LEA Visited	Memphis City Schools (MCS)
School Visited	Sheffield High School (SHS)
Model Implemented	Sheffield High School: Turnaround Model
FY 2009 Funding Awarded (over three years)	Memphis City Schools (for 8 Tier I and 12 Tier III schools): \$21,080,000 over 3 years Sheffield High School: \$900,000 over 3 years
LEA Visited	Maury County Public Schools (MCPS)
School Visited	Mt. Pleasant High School (MPHS)
Model Implemented	Mt. Pleasant High School: Transformation Model
FY 2009 Funding Awarded (over three years)	Maury County Schools (for 1 Tier II school): \$2,000,000 over 3 years Mt. Pleasant High School: \$2,000,000 over 3 years
SEA Visited	Tennessee Department of Education (TDE)
FY 2009 SIG Award	\$67,766,991
FY 2009 SIG Awards to 72 Schools	\$8,698,161.54 from 1003(g) and 1003(g) ARRA and \$10,363,157 from 1003(a)

Staff Interviewed

- *TDE Staff*
- *MCS Staff*
- *Sheffield High School Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, 4 Teachers, 8 Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits*
- *MCPS Staff*
- *Mt. Pleasant High School Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, 4 Teachers, 11 Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits*

U.S. Department of Education Staff	
Team Leader	Carlas McCauley
Staff Onsite	Nola Cromer, James Newkirk (consultant), David Yi (SEA interview only)

OVERVIEW OF MONITORING REPORT

The following report is based on the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) onsite monitoring visit to Tennessee from September 12-16, 2011, and review of documentation provided by the State educational agency (SEA), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools. The report consists of three sections: *Summary and Observations*, *Technical Assistance Recommendations*, and *Monitoring Findings*. The *Summary and Observations* section describes the implementation of the SIG program by the SEA, LEAs, and schools visited, initial indicators of success, and outstanding challenges being faced in implementation. This section focuses on how the SEA, LEAs, and schools visited are implementing the SIG program with respect to the following five areas: school climate, staffing, teaching and learning, use of data, and technical assistance. The *Technical Assistance Recommendations* section identifies strategies and resources for addressing technical assistance needs. The *Monitoring Findings* 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.

Please Note: The observations and descriptions included in this report reflect the specific context of the limited number of classrooms visited and interviews conducted at a small number of schools and LEAs within the State. As such, they are a snapshot of what was occurring at the LEA and school levels, and are not meant to represent a school’s, LEA’s, or State’s entire SIG program. Nor are we approving or endorsing any particular practices or approaches by citing them.

SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

Climate

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDE) did not require its LEAs to submit school climate information as part of their SIG application.

Memphis City Schools (MCS)

The Sheffield High School’s (SHS) leadership team explained that, prior to SIG implementation, the school’s culture was not focused on preparing students for college or careers. The leadership team also reported that the school was not inviting to the outside community, nor welcoming to parents. In addition, teachers stated that they did not feel empowered or that they were being held accountable.

To address these climate challenges, MCS used its SIG grant to replace staff through the Turnaround model and incorporated into its SIG plan earlier school redesign efforts implemented through the state’s High School Redesign initiative. MCS also introduced academies to create smaller learning communities and to ensure students are prepared for college and careers. MCS central office staff surveyed businesses, parents, and other community members and determined that three academies would be most beneficial to SHS students: the School of Health Science,

the School of International Business and Languages, and the School of Human Services, Technology, and Connections.

The leadership team noted several changes as a result of these efforts to improve school climate: higher enrollment, fewer discipline problems, and a cleaner school. They also reported that many alumni have commented on the positive visible changes and that parents now feel welcome in the school. According to the parents interviewed, their children now feel that what they are studying will help them get to college or a career. Students themselves reported that teachers now are encouraging them to enroll in Advanced Placement courses and are pushing all students to graduate.

Maury County Public Schools (MCPS)

The leadership team at Mt. Pleasant High School (MPHS) reported that the climate at MPHS before the SIG grant did not promote effective teaching and learning. For example, the leadership team explained that professional development was not connected to academic needs and that teachers were not required to have written lesson plans. The leadership team and teachers alike noted that teachers appeared complacent with the status quo and were not focused on improving their classroom practice.

MPHS made several changes to improve the learning climate. For example, it required teachers to develop lesson plans and tied professional development to identified academic needs. Teachers reported that, because of the professional development, faculty members are now motivated to improve their instructional practices. The leadership team explained that a telling example of renewed teacher commitment is that lights remain on at the school after 5:00 pm, in part, because many teachers are working at the school until then. Students also indicated that the teachers seem to be working harder, that they are learning a lot more, and that the MPHS staff expects them to graduate.

Through their turnaround efforts, the school took steps to improve the engagement between school staff and students, as well as the community. For example, the school required that students have the same homeroom teacher for all four years to increase adult-student engagement and that seniors sign a “Promise to Graduate” pledge to promote a culture of staying in school. The leadership team also represented that students more readily articulate their ideas and concerns and that all relationships (teacher to teacher, teacher to student, administration to teachers and students) have improved. According to the leadership team, the community has also become more involved. Some of the programs that the leadership team believes has increased involvement include the following: Destination High School; Coffee, Tea, and Conversation Event; College Planning Night; Community Safe Call-out Program; and MCPS Parent Portal.

Staffing

Memphis City Schools (MCS)

According to the MCS central office team, MCS replaced the SHS principal in July 2010. In appointing a new principal, the MCS central office team looked internally and identified those principals with a record of success in their schools, as measured by the Tennessee Value Added

Assessment System (TVAAS) scores and school climate surveys. Candidates underwent a comprehensive review and interviews were part of the selection process. The MCS's central office staff reported, however, that the principal hired for SHS for the 2010-2011 school year had not returned. An interim principal has been appointed.

Leadership team members indicated that SHS replaced 57% of the teaching staff. The leadership team and teachers reported that all teachers were required to reapply and interview for the opportunity to keep their jobs. Teachers who were new to the school for the 2010-2011 school year indicated the teaching positions were posted on MCS's website, and all candidates were interviewed by the incoming principal.

MCS used Teach Memphis for screening and hiring SHS teachers. Teach Memphis evaluated candidates using a multi-staged process. After candidates submitted their written application which included two essay responses, they were then invited to participate in a 30-minute phone interview. Using information from the application and phone interview, candidates were screened for both eligibility (Grade Point Average, criminal and professional background, previous MCS employment record, licensure, highly qualified status, etc.) and quality.

To assess the quality of the candidates, Teach Memphis assigned candidates points based on indicators that demonstrated proficiency in a series of competencies. These competencies reflect the candidates' fit for MCS, experience, ability, methods to set and meet ambitious goals for their students (as proven through a past record of achievement), and overall professionalism (as measured by a range of indicators such writing and speaking proficiency and personal responsibility).

Maury County Public Schools (MCPS)

MCPS's central office team indicated that it replaced the MPHS principal; the new principal started on July 1, 2010. MCPS sought out a "rapid improvement leader" for MPHS and rewrote the job description to reflect their needs. The selection process included an initial interview with 30 questions, as well as a second round of interview for three candidates. MCPS staff explained that they found their new principal-hiring process to be so successful that they changed the job description and interview process for all their building administrators. They also instituted a new leader's academy to train assistant principals and aspiring leaders.

The MPHS offered monetary incentives to help recruit new teachers to fill several positions. The MPHS leadership team reported that the school lost four teachers for the 2010-2011 school year: three voluntary transfer requests and one failure to meet certification requirements. The new teachers reported that they applied after seeing the jobs posted on the TDE website.

Teaching and Learning

Memphis City Schools (MCS)

SHS has adopted several strategies to improve teaching and learning. First, it is providing staff with on-going, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the

school's comprehensive instruction. The extended-year program has provided teachers with the opportunity to receive additional professional development. The leadership team indicated that administrators and teachers participated in professional development sessions including support on differentiated instruction, data analysis, advanced placement instruction, teaching at-risk students, and other topics. As a follow-up, the administrative team observed teachers on a daily basis and identified specific professional development needs.

Second, SHS made organizational and programmatic changes to help establish smaller learning communities, such as instituting three academies. The School of Health Science offers a learning environment that fosters students' interest in the field of health and/or medicine. In this academy, students participate in a college preparatory curriculum, including hands-on projects, health-science related field trips, community service projects, and internships that allow real world medical and healthcare experiences. The School of International Business and Languages incorporates international business and policy instructional modules as well as cross-cultural and language training opportunities. There is also an emphasis on innovation and new business development. The School of Human Services, Technology, and Connections offers an academic and technical program designed to allow students to pursue their interest in the fields of auto mechanics, carpentry, collision repair, cosmetology, early childhood education, air conditioning, and heating, upholstery, or military science. As part of the enrichment activities, SHS added field trips for students to expose them to more colleges and careers. SHS held several career days and arranged for service learning projects tied to the involved students' specific academy.

In addition to the academies, SHS is also attempting to strengthen adult-student relationships by instituting a year-long freshman transition program and hiring a graduation coach. The freshman transition program helps to connect students to the high school environment. Its goal is to establish a supportive relationship with caring adults who will help students develop positive habits and who will arrange community experiences that will help demonstrate how high school academics are relevant to their future lives. SHS also hired a graduation coach to assist students with scheduling, assist with the planning of college and career fairs, and recruit and monitor students in the dual enrollment classes.

Third, SHS' leadership team reported that SHS added an additional hour to the regular school day for all students. The additional hour was used to offer such activities as dual enrollment classes, intervention to students that experienced difficulty in both mathematics and reading/language arts, credit recovery, and e-learning. Both were strategies used to keep students on track for graduation. The team reported that, for the 2011-2012 school year, each SIG school was required to develop its own extended-day program. The school's program could involve students who were experiencing difficulty, as well as those students who were in need of enrichment activities.

Fourth, SHS promoted the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students. MCS collected data from each school for individual school-level Compstat reports. The Compstat report provided an analysis of formative assessments, interim assessments, summative assessments, and graduation rates. According to the SHS leadership

team, the data was used to make adjustments in teaching strategies, school-wide achievement practices.

Finally, MCS central office staff indicated that its process for selecting instructional programs includes an analysis of needs assessments by the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessments (REA). REA then identifies specific needs by school, content area, and grade level. The Academic, Operations, Technology, and Initiatives (AOTI) reviews data and then establishes priority needs. AOTI and REA then reviews research on programs and strategies that address identified needs. The final selection of instructional programs is made by AOTI leadership.

Maury County Public Schools (MCPS)

MCPS focused on several strategies to improve teaching and learning at MPHS. First, it offered a series of professional development opportunities. MPHS' administrators, faculty, and staff have participated in over 25 professional development opportunities in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), literacy, scheduling, schoolwide positive behavior support, Language Arts Pacing Guides, ACT data analysis, and test preparation. This professional development included 18 job-embedded professional development opportunities. Seven additional professional development activities are scheduled for summer 2012. Stipends are paid to MPHS faculty for professional development opportunities outside regular school hours. MPHS' focus teams are working to develop a school wide lesson plan format that ensures that instructional strategies reflect the information presented in professional development. MPHS' leadership team reported that MPHS will also be implementing common walk-through observation tools to ensure implementation.

Second, MPHS' leadership team reported that it increased learning time and redesigned how it used time during the day. MPHS extended the length of the regular school day from 450 minutes to 505 minutes as of January 2011. Normal class hours included 360 minutes of instruction, with an additional 25 minutes of mandatory remediation for students not proficient in Algebra I and an optional 120 minutes of additional instruction available before and after school. In addition, the MPHS 2010 – 2011 school year was increased for some students by a total of 3,240 minutes through the implementation of an optional STEM academy.

In addition to increasing learning time, the school also redesigned its school day and year by modifying the block schedule and by adding targeted interventions during breaks and before and after school. For example, students not successful during the first quarter were encouraged to enroll in credit recovery during fall break for any course, especially English I, English II and Algebra I. Similarly, students not successful during the first or second quarter were encouraged to enroll in credit recovery before or after school.

Third, MPHS used technology to improve instruction and offer opportunities for students to enroll in advanced coursework. For example, MPHS added a new computer lab, Promethean Boards in all instructional classrooms, one portable Promethean Board, and two portable computer labs. MPHS also created video conferencing capability for dual-enrollment courses.

During the spring semester, MPHS students participated in distance-learning courses through Columbia State Community College, TDOE's E4TN program, and the PLATO program. The school hired an educational assistant to offer support to the students in these advanced courses.

Finally, MPHS is in the process of providing additional supports to ninth graders as they transition into high school. The school leadership hired a ninth grade transition coach and is developing a ninth-grade academy to provide an easier transition for the incoming freshmen. Next summer the school will hold a one-week ninth-grade prep course, with the goal of building this program into a two-week session the following year.

Use of Data

TDE required all LEAs and schools funded under the SIG grant program to create and use data systems, which include data from formative and summative assessments, to provide continuous feedback to staff, students, parents, and community/business partners. TDE also required LEAs and schools to report annually on leadership team and milestone meeting notes.

Memphis City Schools (MCS)

MCS's central office staff indicated that administrative teams from the district's lowest-performing schools met monthly with the Chief of School Operations to share progress made toward adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals and 20-day proficiency targets. The staff also indicated that MCS developed a Compstat Report to present the data; the report provided an analysis of formative assessments, interim assessments, summative assessments, and graduation rates. The school used the data to adjust teaching strategies, differentiate instruction, and improve school-wide achievement practices.

Maury County Public Schools (MCPS)

MPHS staff indicated that they conducted periodic review of formative, summative, and standardized student performance data; they also reviewed curriculum mapping and pacing guides to ensure adequate implementation of State standards. During the 2011-12 school year, MPHS switched to Discovery Assessments and increased the number of assessments.

The districts also reviews the data. For example, MCPS central office staff indicated that they bring the elementary, middle, and high school leadership together to discuss data and that MPHS's SIG coordinator and principal meet regularly with the MCPS board and support team to present and discuss data.

Technical Assistance

At the state level, TDE's technical assistance has focused on sharing information, providing district application support, and conducting onsite visits to SIG schools. TDE provided workshops and webinars on various implementation topics including effective improvement practices, setting improvement goals, and school monitoring.

In addition, TDE provided assistance to LEAs throughout the SIG application and amendment process. TDE identified a window of time during which LEAs could amend. TDE staff indicated that it would have more than one window for the 2011-2012 school year.

TDE assigned a consultant to SIG schools to assist them in SIG implementation. During the 2010-2011 school year, SIG monitoring was limited to two school site visits and one LEA visit; SIG-awarded Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III renewal schools (schools identified for corrective action or restructuring 1) were visited. TDE hired seven independent contractors to monitor and prepare reports. The TDOE staff indicated, however, that they were unable to implement the full monitoring process due to a number of lengthy delays with a contract. Two contracts have now been approved; the TDE now has personnel providing monitoring and support in all the SIG schools.

Memphis City Schools (MCS)

At the district level, MCS convened a task force to plan for transition of SHS from traditional regional operations into the Striving School Zone, modeled after the nationally recognized “Partnership Zone” concept. It is creating the Striving School Zone with the support of outside consultants from National Academic Educational Partners, which has a track record of improving low-performing schools, and the Parthenon Group, which has partnered with multiple LEAs in successful turnaround planning efforts, MCS is targeting professional development and curriculum, among other interventions, at these low-performing schools.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

This section addresses areas where additional technical assistance may be needed to improve the quality of implementation of the SIG program.

Issue: None identified.

MONITORING FINDINGS

Summary of Monitoring Indicators

Critical Element	Requirement	Status	Page
1. Application Process	The SEA ensures that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	Finding	12
2. Implementation	The SEA ensures that the SIG intervention models are being implemented consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	Finding	12
3. Fiscal	The SEA ensures LEAs and schools are using funds consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)) ; §1114 of the ESEA; and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87]	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. [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))]	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. [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))]	N/A	N/A
6. Data Collection	The SEA ensures that data are being collected consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections II and III of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and	N/A	N/A

	Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]		
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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: TDE has not ensured that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. The TDOE allocated its SIG funding by formula rather than by a competitive process, as is required. The TDOE staff did indicate that they will be using a competitive process to award any future SIG grants.

Citation: Sections 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 ED for approval an application that contains such information as the Secretary may reasonably require. The FY 2009 SIG application required States to describe their process for reviewing LEA applications.

Further action required: TDE must ensure that its application process has been carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. TDE must provide ED with documentation demonstrating that it has used a competitive process prior to awarding SIG grants for its cohort II competition. TDE must provide to ED evidence that it administered its competition consistent with its approved FY 2010 SIG application. The evidence must include the number of reviews conducted and the specific criteria used to determine individual school budgets.

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

Finding 1: TDE has not ensured that MCS and MCPS have established schedules and implemented strategies that increase learning time for all students. Although SHS had implemented an extended-day program for all students for the 2010-2011 school year, MCS is requiring each SIG school to develop its own extended-day plan for the 2011-2012 school year. The increased learning time activities are used as interventions for a portion of the school's population and are not available to all students consistent with the SIG requirements. Although MCPS had provided extended learning time, this time was not mandatory for all students.

Citation: Section I.A.2(d)(3)(A) of the final requirements stipulates, as part of the transformation model, that an LEA must “establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time.” Section I.A.2 (a)(viii) 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 an LEA implementing the turnaround model to establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time (as defined in the final requirements.) 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: TDE must work with MCS to ensure that all schools implementing the turnaround or transformation models have significantly increased the number of school hours and that the additional time is being consistently used for instructional purposes for all students. In addition, TDE must submit evidence to ED that it has reviewed each LEA that received FY 2009 SIG funds that implement the transformation model to determine if extended learning time is actually being provided consistent with the SIG final requirements. Additionally, TDE must submit to ED a timeline for implementation of extended learning for any school it determines is not currently doing so.

For each school implementing the turnaround or transformation model, TDE must submit to ED documentation demonstrating the increase in learning time under the school intervention model and evidence that the time is being consistently used in accordance with the definition of “increased learning time” in the final requirements.