



Chris L. Nicastro, Ph.D. • Commissioner of Education

205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 400 • Jefferson City, MO 65102-0400 • dese.mo.gov

May 27, 2011

Thelma Meléndez, Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Assistant Secretary Meléndez:

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is requesting a waiver that would allow the state of Missouri to delay the award of 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG) Federal Fiscal Year 2010 funds. This delay would allow for better alignment of building-level implementation to the over-arching goals of the 1003(g) SIG and intended use of these funds.

If approved, the Local Education Agency (LEA) Request for Proposal (RFP) competition will be opened in November of 2011 to the schools identified in our recently approved application. We would award grants in February of 2012. LEAs would then be able to utilize the pre-implementation period in the spring of 2012 and fully implement in the 2012-2013 school year. LEAs that receive funding would be eligible to receive funding in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

The approval date of May 8, 2011 for our SIG application creates a timing barrier for our LEAs as they consider replacing staff as required by the most commonly selected school intervention models. This timing does not afford the LEAs ability to attract high quality leaders and teachers due to the window for contract renewal for both classroom teachers and administrators being essentially completed for the upcoming school year. Removing teachers and administrators in July is challenging if we want to ensure that an LEA selects both teachers and administrators who are committed to and capable of doing this work.

Moving the application window to November will allow the LEA to conduct a thorough needs assessment, make well thought out determinations about which model to implement, and make intentional and well thought out hiring decisions related to both classroom teachers and administrators. Missouri assures that, if it is granted this waiver, it will conduct a competition and make awards in time for awardees to fully implement 1003(g) SIG for a three-year period.

Please feel free to contact Craig Rector at 573-526-1594/craig.rector@dese.mo.gov or Jocelyn Strand at 573-751-1014/jocelyn.strand@dese.mo.gov if you have any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris L. Nicastro
Commissioner of Education

c: Carlas McCauley
Margie Vandeven
Craig Rector
Jocelyn Strand