

## **Public Comment Request Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant Waivers**

The United States Department of Education (USED) has released the application for the second round of School Improvement Grants (SIG) under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The grants, through state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) are for use in Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. These schools must demonstrate the greatest need for, and the strongest commitment to the use of the funds in providing adequate resources that will substantially raise student achievement, and enable the schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and exit identification/improvement status.

Eligible schools are placed in a tier system. Tier I schools are the lowest-achieving 5 percent of the State's Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, or are Title I secondary schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring with graduation rates below 60 percent over a number of years. Tier II schools are the lowest-achieving 5 percent of a state's secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I, Part A funds, or are secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I, Part A funds with graduation rates below 60 percent over a number of years. Tier III schools are Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not identified as Tier I or Tier II schools. In the Tier I and Tier II schools an LEA chooses to serve, the LEA must implement one of four school intervention models: turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model.

The USED is allowing SEAs to apply for waivers of certain requirements in the School Improvement Grants (SIGs). On or before December 3, 2010, The Michigan Department of Education will submit to the USED an application for the Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grants that includes a request to waive the following requirements for all LEAs in Michigan that are awarded these funds:

- a) Paragraph (a)(2) of the definition of "persistently lowest-achieving schools" in Section I.A.3 of the SIG final requirements and incorporation of that definition in identifying Tier II schools under Section I.A.1(b) of those requirements to permit the State to include, in the pool of secondary schools from which it determines those that are the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State, secondary schools participating under Title I, Part A of the ESEA that have not made AYP for at least two consecutive years or are in the State's lowest quintile of performance based on proficiency rates on the State's assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics combined. To summarize, a waiver of this requirement will allow more schools to be included in Tier II of this grant.

- b) Section I.A.3 of the SIG final requirements and the use of that definition in Section I.A.1(a) and (b) of those requirements to permit the State to exclude, from the pool of schools from which it identifies the persistently lowest-achieving schools for Tier I and Tier II, any school in which the total number of students in the “all students” group in the grades assessed is less than 30. To summarize, a waiver of this requirement will allow the State to exclude “small schools” that test a low number of students (less than 30) from the persistently low achieving lists.
- c) Section 1116(b)(12) of the ESEA to permit LEAs to allow their Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III Title I participating schools that will fully implement a turnaround or restart model beginning in the 2011–2012 school year to “start over” in the school improvement timeline. To summarize, a school that chooses either of these reform models will no longer be identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the ESEA.
- d) The 40 percent poverty eligibility threshold in section 1114(a)(1) of the ESEA to permit LEAs to implement a schoolwide program in a Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III Title I participating school that does not meet the poverty threshold and is fully implementing one of the four school intervention models. To summarize, schools receiving this grant will not have to meet the Federal guidelines that establish a minimum number of low income students enrolled before the school can choose “schoolwide” Title I status.
- e) Section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. § 1225(b)) to extend the period of availability of FY 2009 carryover school improvement funds for the SEA and all of its LEAs to September 30, 2014. To summarize, schools will have a longer period than normally allowed to utilize these funds.

Please visit <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-10-28/pdf/2010-27313.pdf> for more information on the School Improvement Grant and explanation of the “tier” system referenced above.

Individuals wishing to comment on the SIG waiver request should submit comments to [ARRAWaiverResponse@michigan.gov](mailto:ARRAWaiverResponse@michigan.gov) by November 30, 2010. Please include the phrase “SIG waiver comments” in the subject line. Comments should be specific to waiver requests a) through e) outlined above.

Questions may be directed to Bill Witt at 517-335-4733 or by email at [ARRAWaiverResponse@michigan.gov](mailto:ARRAWaiverResponse@michigan.gov).