

## Michigan Department of Education School Improvement Grant (SIG) Frequently Asked Questions

**1. *What is a School Improvement Grant?***

A: A School Improvement Grant (SIG) is a federal grant administered by the state to dramatically increase the academic achievement of students in Michigan's Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) schools.

SIG grants are authorized under section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

**2. *How much funding did Michigan receive to assist schools indentified for the SIG grant in June?***

A: Michigan received \$115 million in first-round competitive SIG funds for local schools to improve teaching and learning for all students.

Using federal rules, only \$86.25 million was available for immediate grant awards, with the remainder rolling into a second round of funding later this year.

**3. *How many schools were eligible to apply for a SIG grant?***

A: The schools eligible for the School Improvement Grant were identified by student achievement and academic growth based on state testing data from the 2007-09 school years.

In June, 108 schools were identified as being eligible to apply for up to \$2 million each year, over a three-year period to increase student achievement.

**4. *How many schools sent in applications?***

A: Out of the 108 schools eligible to apply in the first round, 84 sent in applications.

**5. *How many schools will receive funding?***

A: Twenty-eight schools will receive grants in this first-round based upon meeting the federal grant requirements and having the highest quality applications. They are located in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout Michigan.

Funding is for the 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years.

**6. *What grant criteria was used to select schools?***

A: The award of a grant was based primarily on the merit of the grant application. Other factors included the percent of students proficient, showing improvement, and in poverty.

**7. *When does the model that schools adopt have to be implemented?***

A: Schools awarded this grant will begin implementation with the opening of school this Fall. These schools submitted a detailed school improvement plan using one of four improvement models required by the U.S. Department of Education. SIG funds must be used to provide federal Title I allowable school programming and activities.

**8. *What are the four federally-required school improvement models from which the schools had to select?***

A: **Transformation Model** – Districts would address four specific areas: 1) developing teacher and school leader effectiveness, which includes replacing the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformational model; 2) implementing comprehensive instructional reform strategies; 3) extending learning and teacher planning time and creating community-oriented schools; and 4) providing operating flexibility and sustained support.

**Turnaround Model** – This would include among other actions, replacing the principal and at least 50 percent of the school's staff, adopting a new governance structure and implementing a new or revised instructional program.

**Restart Model** – School districts would close the school and reopen it under the management of a charter school operator; a charter management organization; or an educational management organization selected through a rigorous review process. A restart school would be required to enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend.

**Close/Consolidate Model** – The district would close the low-achieving school and enroll the students who attended that school in other high-achieving schools in the district.

**9. *Can eligible schools who did not receive the SIG award re-apply?***

A: All schools that qualified for a SIG grant in both June and August may submit an application for second round of funding in the fall of 2010.

**10. What happens if schools receiving the grant do not follow through on their approved plans?**

A: Funding may be revoked.

**11. Does the grant void the union contract?**

A: No. It is recognized that negotiations may be required to implement all or portions of a given option. (For further discussion of this topic, please see question F-7 of the Federal SIG Grant Frequently Asked Questions document at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/faq.html>.)

**12. In the transformation and turnaround models, the principal has to be replaced. What role can they still play in the decision making process?**

A: It is the intent of the grant that new leadership be put in place at the school.

**13. What is the criterion for replacing the principal?**

A: The principal must be replaced in the Turnaround and Transformation models. There is a two year rule that stipulates, if a principal has been replaced within the last two full years (going back to the school year 2007/2008) and that replacement was a documented effort at a turnaround model.

**14. Can there be a waiver on leadership requirements with rationale? What if the principal has been there for four or more years but the building made AYP last year?**

A: There are no federal waivers for the leadership requirement.

**15. What are the assessments schools must use?**

A: For the purposes of state law and the federal grant the school must use Michigan Merit Exam (MME) and Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) data. The School Improvement Grant application also requires schools to use the Plan and Explore tests for high schools. A well rounded assessment system should also consider formative assessment and assessments that give information about instructional practices.