



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUN 3 2011

The Honorable Michael P. Flanagan
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Michigan Department of Education
608 W. Allegan Street
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Superintendent Flanagan:

During the week of April 4 – April 8, 2011, a team from the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs (SASA) office 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.

In February 2011, SASA began its first year of monitoring of the SIG program. 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.

The MDE has 30 business days from receipt of this report to respond to all of the compliance issues contained herein. ED staff will review your response for sufficiency and will determine which areas are acceptable and which require further documentation of implementation. ED will allow 30 business days for receipt of this further documentation, if required. ED recognizes that some corrective actions may require longer than the prescribed 30 days, and in these instances, ED will work with the MDE to determine a reasonable timeline. In those instances where additional time is required to implement specific corrective actions, you must submit a request for such an extension in writing to ED, including a timeline for completion for all related actions.

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Our mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation.

Each State that participates in an onsite monitoring review and that has significant compliance findings in one or more of the programs monitored will have a condition placed on that program's grant award specifying that the State must submit (and receive approval of) documentation that all compliance issues identified in the monitoring report have been corrected. When documentation sufficient to address all compliance areas has been submitted and approved, ED will then remove the condition from your grant award.

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 you to address noncompliance occurring prior or subsequent to the onsite visit.

The ED team would like to thank Linda Forward, Director of the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation and her 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,



Patricia A. McKee
Acting Director
Student Achievement and
School Accountability Programs

Enclosure

cc: Linda Forward

Michigan
Targeted Monitoring Review of
School Improvement Grants (SIG) under section 1003(g) of the
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
April 4-8, 2011

BACKGROUND

Overview of SIG Schools in Michigan

Tier	Number of FY 2009 Eligible SIG Schools	Number of FY 2009 Served SIG Schools
Tier I	10	3
Tier II	98	25
Tier III	120	0

**Implementation of
SIG School Intervention Models**

Models	Number of Schools implementing the Model
Turnaround	9
Transformation	19
Restart	0
Closure	0

MONITORING TRIP INFORMATION

Monitoring Visits

LEA Visited	<i>Inkster Public Schools</i>
School Visited	<i>Inkster High School</i>
Model Implemented	<i>Turnaround</i>
FY 2009 Funding Awarded (over three years)	<i>LEA Award (for 1 SIG school): \$5,447,000.00 School-level funding: \$5,317,000.00</i>
LEA Visited	<i>Detroit Public Schools</i>
School Visited	<i>Dixon Educational Learning Academy</i>
Model Implemented	<i>Turnaround</i>
FY 2009 Funding Awarded (over three years)	<i>LEA Award (for 6 SIG schools): \$5,848,064.00 School-level funding: \$5,848,064.00</i>
SEA Visited	<i>Michigan Department of Education</i>
FY 2009 SIG Award	<i>\$136,000,000.00</i>

Staff Interviewed

- *Michigan Department of Education Staff*
- *Inkster Public Schools Staff*
- *Inkster High School Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, 4 Teachers, 8 Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits*
- *Detroit Public Schools Staff*
- *Dixon Educational Learning Academy Staff: Principal, School Leadership Team, 7 Teachers, 8 Parents, Students, and 8 Classroom Visits*

U.S. Department of Education Staff

Team Leader	<i>Susan Wilhelm</i>
Staff Onsite	<i>Zahreen Ghaznavi, Patrick Smith and Victoria Hammer</i>

OVERVIEW OF MONITORING REPORT

The following report is based on U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) on-site monitoring visit to Michigan from April 4-8, 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

Inkster Public Schools

In the SIG application for Inkster High School (IHS), the Inker Public Schools (IPS) cited a several factors that had created a climate not conducive to teaching and learning and resistant to positive change, despite previous efforts. Specifically, the IPS noted that the principal of IHS had been replaced each year for the past four years and that this inconsistent leadership has prevented a clear vision from taking root. While some teacher leaders emerged, they have not been effective at implementing school-wide change in the absence of a stable leader. The IPS application further noted that enrollment at the high school has increased to the point of overcrowding and that, as parents from cities surrounding Inkster can choose to place students at the school, the mix of students from in and out of the community exacerbated already existing discipline problems. As a result, staff expended more efforts addressing non-academic issues than ones directly related to teaching and learning. Parents, while involved in extracurricular activities such as athletics and performing arts, had historically been less involved in student academic achievement.

To address these issues, the IPS application for IHS proposed a “systems change” that would include polices, practices, and procedures implemented in such a way that they could be sustained regardless of staffing or other changes. A brain-based reform model to address the non-academic and academic needs of students constitutes the foundation of the IHS SIG model and key elements include increasing teacher effectiveness and using data to guide instructional decision making. In addition, IPS established a “Ninth Grade Academy” that would house all ninth grade students in a building across from the main high school to both help ninth grade students’ transition into high school and reduce the overcrowding problem at the main high school.

In interviews throughout the two days in Inkster, interviewees reported that the school needed a “drastic” change to be able to better serve the needs of all students and garner more parent involvement. School staff reported that the “can do” attitude of the new and rehired staff has positively impacted the school climate. School and district staff cited the Brain-Based reform as a strength of the SIG program in that it crosses all content areas and “helps students understand.” While interviewees reported that parental involvement has increased, the school and district continue to work on this as a reform element. Parents reported that they would be eager to see the impact of the changes brought about by SIG, and that parents were generally more involved in student academic performance than before. Interview data indicated that IHS continues to work on addressing students non-academic issues. Students reported that the school could be better organized.

Detroit Public Schools

Since 2008, in response to a decline in student populations, Detroit Public Schools (DPS) has been going through the process of “right-sizing” the district by closing and merging schools. As a result, Lessenger Elementary (K-8) School, the school identified by the state as one of the “persistently lowest achieving” (PLA) schools was merged with Dixon Elementary, a school that was not identified as a PLA school. The new school was called Dixon Education Learning Academy (Dixon). However, Lessenger’s building houses the merged schools, the new school retains Lessenger’s NCES ID number and all Lessenger students were allowed to return to the merged school. In interviews with Dixon’s school leadership, they reported that, prior to receiving the SIG award, Lessenger was an unstable school. School leadership explained that in the past few years, Lessenger had four different principals and a high number of emotionally disturbed, homeless, and foster care students. School leadership, teachers, parents, and students all expressed how violent the school was, with fights breaking out every day and rampant behavioral problems. Parents described how police officers were stationed in front of the school on a daily basis in order to deal with the high level of violence. Everyone interviewed also reported that the school building was unclean. Parents and students stated that children did not like coming to school because the facilities were not maintained and they felt unsafe. School leadership stated that, as a result, student attendance was a little above 80 percent.

In the Dixon SIG plan, the school leadership committed to analyzing attendance patterns and trends and using this data to inform interventions to increase student attendance. To deal with the behavioral problems and violence, the school leadership had planned a comprehensive behavioral management system that staff implemented from the first day of school. The principal reported that they planned to hire four resource teachers, two social workers, two counselors, and a school nurse, to deal with the social, emotional and health problems that many students have. However, the school leadership did state they were unable to hire a nurse, because the district was not allowing them to use SIG funds to provide a pay increase from the district pay scale. As a result, the principal stated that a number of students with medical conditions were getting sporadic care, which was affecting the students’ ability to learn. Dixon also planned for a range of extra-curricular activities to restore the students’ enjoyment of school.

When asked how the interventions have changed the school culture, everyone interviewed indicated how great the difference has been. Teachers and parents reported that student behavior has improved greatly. Teachers stated that they spend less time on behavioral disruptions. Students reported that the school had definitely become stricter and that there were fewer fights than before. Parents corroborated the improvement in student behavior and also stated that the facilities are better kept and cleaner. Parents also stated that their children are excited to come to school. The principal stated that students’ attitudes have changed so much about school that she has a number of students who are coming early in the morning, even waiting in the cold and rain on bad weather days, to get into school. The school leadership stated that the relationships between teachers and students and their families have been restored through

the extra attention to the whole child. The principal reported that this restoration of key relationships has been instrumental in improving the climate at Dixon.

Staffing

Inkster Public Schools

Changes in Leadership

As noted above, the IPS SIG application explained that the ongoing turnover of principals at IHS in the past four years has resulted in unstable leadership. The current principal of the school has been in place since the 2009-2010 school year. While the IPS application stated that the principal had “started the process of implementing change,” it was not clear what that entailed nor was it clear the extent that the principal has experience in successfully leading a turnaround effort. At the time of the monitoring visit in April, the principal had just been assigned a mentor to support him in IHS’ turnaround efforts.

The principal created a School Leadership Team (called the Governance Leadership Team at IHS) at IHS that includes the Turnaround Leader and several teachers. The team does not include a mathematics teacher and may benefit from the addition of one, as the student performance data from IHS showed significant deficiencies in this content area. In addition to the School Leadership Team, the school has a School Improvement Team and a Curriculum Team, with significant overlap of team members. The unique and overlapping roles of these respective teams was not clear. School and district interview data indicate that the district has and continues to strongly influence the SIG program at IHS. For example, the LEA selected the foundation for the SIG plan, brain-based instruction.¹ However, both the school and district staff reported that the principal has authority over the budget, schedule, calendar, etc. In addition, the IHS principal has direct contact with the IPS superintendent regarding SIG implementation.

The LEA selected the external provider for IHS based on meeting a representative of the provider at a conference and believing the provider to be a good match with the needs of the school. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has not approved IHS’ external provider. MDE also indicated that it does not intend to approve IHS’s main external provider, because the provider did not meet the criteria that the MDE had in place, including previous experience in working with and helping turnaround a school. Consequently, IHS cannot pay for this external provider out of its SIG funds. The Wayne Regional Educational Service Center (RESA) also provides an instructional coach in English/Language Arts and special education. The district staff did not indicate whether it would add an additional external provider to support implementation.

Changes in Staff

The needs analysis in the IPS SIG application emphasized the need for a staff at IHS that is not only “highly qualified” but of such high quality that they can identify and meet the need of their students. IPS elaborated in the IHS application that, to secure such a staff at IHS at this point, a “radical change was needed.” The turnaround model would allow IHS to rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff and hire new staff that would be effective in the turnaround environment. This constituted one of the primary reasons for selecting that model.

Regarding the hiring process, both school and LEA staff reported that staff that wanted to be rehired and those newly applying to work at IHS went through an interview process different than the standard district

¹ Brain-based instruction is also a district initiative. However, staff at IHS receives training on the initiative above and beyond what the other schools in the district receive.

interview process. For both rehires and new hires, the school and LEA developed an interview tool based on the Qualities of Effective Teachers identified by James H. Stronge (including, for example, classroom management and organization, organizing and orienting for instruction, implementing instruction, etc.). However, as the interview process did not include observation, it may have been difficult to determine the extent that a candidate possessed these qualities. In addition to these questions, the interview team asked candidates about their commitment to teaching, particularly in a “challenging environment” and reviewed resumes and reference letters.² The interview team consisted of the school principal, vice principal, and the union president. School and district staff reported that they searched broadly and hired several new staff members from outside of the district. All teachers, both those interviewed as part of the School Leadership Team and those interviewed in a separate interview, indicated their commitment to teaching and that the teaching staff work better together as a team, under the guidance of instructional leaders as opposed to department chairpersons. Monitors did not have the opportunity to speak with a regular education mathematics teacher and thus unable to determine whether changes had been made in math instruction. MDE approved IPS’ SIG application to provide a financial reward for teachers if the school makes adequate yearly progress (AYP) (only via status, not safe harbor). However, given the percent of students proficient in the 2009-2010 school year, it is unlikely that the school will make AYP via status this year. The IPS SIG application for IHS, IPS indicated that it will work with the teacher union to implement a method to reward financially staff whose students’ academic achievement has improved.

Detroit Public Schools

Changes in Leadership

In the past few years, Lessenger had been reconstituted or the principal left, resulting in the school having four different principals in a short amount of time. Teachers reported that while the former leadership of Lessenger had high expectations for the teachers and students, the leadership had a narrow approach to dealing with the many issues that Lessenger faced. Moreover, the staff stated that the prior leadership team was too small to manage the school. Parents also stated that while the former school leadership appeared to care about academics, they did not have control over students’ behavior and did not partner with families to help students learn. When deciding what schools to merge, DPS staff stated that they chose Lessenger to merge with Dixon Elementary, primarily because of the Dixon principal, who had a proven track record of success. In particular, the principal had been at Dixon Elementary for 10 years and had led the school to meet AYP for many years. This principal is now the principal of the re-constituted Dixon Educational Learning Academy.

Everyone praised the current principal at Dixon. The school leadership, teachers, and parents all agreed on the focus and vision that the principal brought with her. Everyone spoke to her dedication to the students and her consistent message about turning the school around. The principal surrounds herself with a dedicated staff, as evidenced by the fact that 99 percent of her staff requested to be placed in the reconstituted school, despite Lessenger’s reputation and the building’s condition. Staff spoke to how the principal was an instructional leader, guiding them and providing them the professional development they needed in order to master and hone their craft. Parents reported that the principal’s many family and community engagement activities were bringing more parents into the school than ever before. Both the staff and parents stated that it was easy to communicate with the principal and school leadership team, and that they felt their ideas and suggestions were being heard and taken seriously. Through both the classroom observations as well as statements from teachers and parents, it was apparent that the principal

² The IPS SIG application for IHS noted a screening rubric would be used to “determine the predicted success of staff to be rehired” and that returning staff would sign agreements indicating their commitment to the program. Interviewees did not discuss these elements of the rehiring process, though.

implements innovative strategies to address student needs. For example, the principal created an all-male 3rd grade class to focus on those students' social and emotional needs. The principal also combined two 1st grade classes in order to provide the students with teachers who had different content area strengths.

Changes in Staff

When interviewing the school leadership and teachers about the staff culture prior to receiving the SIG award, many stated that there was low morale amongst teachers, high absenteeism, and a range in the quality of instruction. When the two schools merged, school leadership and teachers reported that staff from both Lessenger and Dixon were screened, interviewed and re-hired for their positions. The principal indicated that she had an opportunity to observe her potential staff's instruction, because many of them had also taught summer school at Dixon prior to the merger. The hiring process consisted of teachers filing an application at the district office, which was then screened and moved on for an interview. The LEA staff, school leadership, and teachers stated that each candidate was interviewed by a team, consisting of the principal, union representative, and LEA staff. Both the LEA staff and school leadership described and provided the interview protocol, which touched on the competencies they were looking for in Dixon's new staff. These competencies included qualifications and experience, commitment to implementing aspects of the turnaround model, and quality of instruction based on classroom observations.

As a result of this screening process, only 5% of Lessenger's original staff were rehired. The principal did note that while she was able to screen, recruit and hire most of her staff, there were three more teachers that DPS added to her staff roster after the school year started that she was unable to screen. Parents noted that the new staff is more willing to partner with families to help students and maintain high academic and behavioral expectations for the students. Students stated that the teachers were more respectful and caring towards them. Students also reported that they were more engaged in class, because all their teachers seemed to be better at helping them understand the material.

Teaching and Learning

Inkster Public Schools

The needs analysis in the IPS SIG application for IHS described two factors that negatively impacted the quality of teaching. First, the school curriculum had not been aligned to the state learning standards which left teachers to identify and build instruction around what they believed students needed to know and be able to do in their content areas and resulted in inconsistency of expectations across the content areas. Second, the IPS SIG application indicated that teachers at IHS had not been using data to guide instructional decision making to address the needs of individual students. To address these challenges, the IPS SIG application proposed that school staff would receive professional development on the newly implemented district-wide curriculum aligned to the state standards (reflecting high expectations across content areas), brain-based instruction, use of thinking maps, and various programs to address instruction in specific content areas (e.g., mathematics). In addition, staff would receive professional development on and be accountable for using data to guide instructional decision making.

In school and district interviews, staff reported that teachers have professional development on all-district professional development days, using substitute teachers for a class period during the day³, and during after school professional development. Interview data revealed that, for some professional development

³ Although it was not clear if this was all teachers or teachers from one of the three leadership teams who then trains other teachers.

topics, all staff receives training; for other topics, the school implements a train-the-trainer model. Reported topics include brain-based instruction, differentiating instruction, thinking maps, integrating technology into instruction (e.g., interactive whiteboards), using data to guide instruction, and behavior management. Staff did not report professional development on some of the topics noted in the IPS application. Currently, the school does not have a system in place to follow-up on the extent that teachers effectively integrate the professional development into their instruction. However, the Turnaround Leader reported that she will be beginning classroom observations shortly to evaluate and support implementation of professional development.⁴ Students reported that they enjoyed the interactive white boards, specifying that “lessons go smoother” and that they like to watch movies on them.

While the interview data indicated that IHS affords teachers a variety of professional development topics through the SIG, the relationship between these topics and teaching and learning is not clear. For example, thinking maps were displayed in the classrooms monitors visited; however, it was not clear that those maps reflected high expectations for student performance. In addition, neither the plan for professional development as listed in the IPS SIG application nor as indicated in the interviews or in the list of professional development provided to monitors demonstrated a strategic, focused approach to addressing the needs common across and unique to core content areas.

Detroit Public Schools

In Lessenger/Dixon’s needs assessment, it reported that not only was the school not making AYP, the school also had male and special education subgroups that were falling well below the average performance level of those groups in the state. The needs assessment also noted that most students at Lessenger/Dixon did not have pre-school or kindergarten preparation, and thus, start school already behind. The school leadership and staff stated that teachers at Lessenger (prior to the merger) were not given professional development on how to engage at-risk students and that many teachers did not follow the district curriculum and pacing guides. The school leadership reported that not enough instructional time was allotted to the core subjects. Teachers interviewed also stated that the culture was not collaborative or focused on professional growth. As part of the turnaround model, the school SIG plan stated that it would institute 90-minute math blocks and 120-minute literacy blocks. To provide job-embedded professional development, the school planned to hire four instructional coaches, two for grades K-5 and two for grades 6-8. Dixon was partnered with an external provider, which had a number of online resources on research-based and effective instructional practices. Teachers use these resources to help target their own professional development needs. The turnaround partner also trained the school leadership team in a classroom walkthrough protocol, in order to collect qualitative data about instruction. The turnaround partner also provided the school with data coaches, who trained staff on how to analyze both quantitative and qualitative sources of data collected to drive instructional and professional development choices.

The school leadership and teachers both reported that the professional development has been immensely helpful. The principal stated that her staff has become learners again, and are constantly improving their instruction through the various professional development opportunities provided. Teachers stated the external partner provides useful professional development, both in the classroom walkthrough protocol as well as the data coaches. Staff indicated that they now have a systematic way to approach student achievement data, and that has provided them the ability to target their instruction and their interventions. Teachers also reported that they enjoyed using the online resources, which they can use at their own pace, at any time, and focus on the deficits that they have individually. Teachers explained that they also use

⁴ The Turnaround Leader was not brought on board until November of the 2010-2011 school year. She is housed at the district office and comes to the school at least one time per week.

the online resources to focus planning time with content area and grade level teams. The principal and teachers also spoke to effective professional development surrounding use of technology. However, the principal reported that they had not been able to fully implement the use of technology as she had envisioned in their SIG plan, because much of what they had ordered at the beginning of the year either came in the week before the monitoring visit, or had not coming at all. Staff reported that the longer blocks for math and literacy have been beneficial to the students, because it allows time to differentiate instruction and to provide interventions for students that are at risk. In classroom observations, appropriate use of technology and various instructional techniques had students engaged in the lesson. Instructional coaches were present, observing various teachers throughout the SIG monitoring team walkthrough.

Use of Data

Inkster Public Schools

The needs analysis in the IPS SIG application for IHS cited use of data to guide instruction as a missing element in instructional practices that led to inconsistency across grades in terms of addressing student needs. Student performance data indicated significant deficiencies in both reading and mathematics for the all students and for students with disabilities subgroups in particular. To address this issue, IPS identified data analysis for classroom and school decision making as one focus for ongoing professional development and elaborated that analyzing data would help to maximize the impact of the SIG program. Further, the application listed trainings via an external provider, weekly building team meetings (not clear what teams—the School Leadership Team, the School Improvement Team, content area team, etc), and monthly “intensive Saturday sessions” as vehicles for professional development and identified multiple purposes for data use including “student initial placement, skill need identification, and [tracking] student progress.” The IPS SIG proposal for IHS also indicated that the Turnaround Leader would use data on teacher attendance at professional development and teacher survey data on comfort with use of data to inform instruction as one way to monitor the initiative.

School and district staff reported using multiple data sources to guide their instructional decision making, including standardized assessments, the statewide assessments, and locally developed assessments. Upon reviewing the locally developed assessments in English/language arts and science, they appeared content rather than skill-based. Further, staff did not report any mechanism to evaluate the technical quality of such assessments. While various student assessment data was displayed in hallways and classrooms (rosters of students by identification number), the relationship of the data to the newly implemented curriculum and the state content standards was not clear. Staff reported using brain-based reform training to identify the “core” content matter in each subject. However, the alignment of the plethora of assessments administered at IHS with the core content matter was not clear. School and district interviews indicated a strong desire to use data, and doing so in systematic approach may maximize the benefits of this practice. Students reported that having their achievement data displayed motivated them to achieve higher grades (one student indicated that he would like to get Bs).

Detroit Public Schools

Dixon Educational Learning Academy is collecting multiple measures of student learning as well as qualitative measures of instruction and learning through the classroom walkthroughs. For student achievement, the school looks at not only the state assessment results, but also collects benchmark data on literacy and math achievement three times a year. The school leadership and teachers all expressed how much more data driven Dixon has become. The principal stated that professional development needs and student interventions are driven by data. When the principal and other members of her school leadership

would talk about implementing interventions, conducting professional development, or hiring auxiliary staff, they would cite data that supported their decisions. In classroom observations and school walkthroughs, it was clear that every teacher displayed their students' data in classrooms using a color chart. A student's placement on the color chart indicated proficiency and highlighted student growth from benchmark to benchmark. The school also had a dedicated room to displaying student performance data for all students in the school. The school leadership team stated that the room was used regularly by their team to track student and class progress in reading and math.

Technical Assistance

Inkster Public Schools

The Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) SIG application indicated that the state would monitor each Tier I and Tier II school weekly —“to evaluate local progress and provide guidance.” School and LEA staff reported that the MDE monitor comes on site at least once per week to provide feedback and technical assistance and, when appropriate, attends professional development. As a mechanism to provide feedback, the MDE has created a tool that tracks progress of implementing the requirements of each of the four models, respectively. IHS provided a copy of the tool that shows that the tool serves as ongoing documentation of IHS' progress at implementing its SIG program fully and effectively on the required timeline. In addition, LEA staff reported that the MDE provides updates primarily via email and that the MDE is accessible via phone or email. School staff further noted that the LEA provides technical assistance to ensure that software and technology work and that the facilities and transportation run smoothly. The LEA staff also noted that the State provided feedback and guidance during the writing of the grant, from the time when the state notified districts that they had a school or schools on the persistently lowest achieving school list through the application process. The LEA, while acknowledging that the SEA has supported it to the best of its abilities given the budget and resources, suggested that it would like SEA staff to come on site to observe the program and would appreciate networking opportunities with other schools, district, and states to learn about what is working well.

Detroit Public Schools

School leadership and district staff explained that the MDE had provided them with a lot of technical assistance when applying for the grant and after receiving the award through MDE's facilitator/monitors. When applying for the grant, DPS explained that MDE provided preliminary feedback on their individual schools' SIG plans, with enough time to make edits before re-submitting to the state for final review. The principal at Dixon and LEA staff expressed that not only were the facilitator/monitors focused on making sure the schools and district were complying with SIG requirements, but that they were also helping to improve the quality of implementation. The facilitator/monitors are supposed to be in the schools at least once a week, but the Dixon's principal expressed that Dixon's assigned facilitator/monitor was there more often than that. MDE has also been conducting monthly meetings with DPS, to help address the many unique problems that the district faces when implementing SIG. DPS also provides the schools with a SIG Monitor, who is at the school at least once a week. Having much the same function as the MDE facilitator/monitors, the Dixon's school leadership stated that the DPS SIG monitor has been helpful.

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 #1: Use of Data

Staff at IHS reported collecting multiple sources of student achievement data (e.g., common assessments, ACT, PLAN, EXPLORE, ITBS, benchmark assessments, etc.) but could not clearly articulate the extent that these data align with the instructional program nor how staff use these data together to differentiate instruction or guide instructional and curricular decision making and SIG implementation. In addition, it is not clear that the data collected from all of the assessments are valid and reliable.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Consult with national content centers to provide guidance on best practices about use of data to inform instructional decision making. (ED)
- Provide technical assistance, both via statewide meetings with participating LEAs and one-on-one with participating LEAs, to build on staff understanding of use of multiple sources of data to inform instructional decision making. (MDE)

Issue #2: Principal Replacement

Both at IPS and DPS, it appeared that a few principals were not replaced and these principals did not appear to meet all the criteria for the flexibility requirement, as listed in the *Guidance on Fiscal Year 2010 School Improvement Grants under Section 1003 (g) of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Those criteria are:

1. The principal has been at the school for less than two years;
2. The principal was placed at the school as part of a previous reform effort;
3. The principal had demonstrated skills and abilities to fully and effectively turnaround a school

It is not clear that the principal at IHS was brought in as part of a reform effort or that he had the requisite skill set to effectively implement the turnaround model. However, he has been at the school for less than two years. In written feedback on IPS's SIG application, MDE indicated that, "It appears that the principal [current principal at Inkster at the time that Inkster Public Schools submitted its SIG application] falls within the two year exception." When interviewed, SEA staff demonstrated an understanding of the requirement, but it was not clear that this was implemented.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Consult with national content centers to provide guidance on best practices around identifying principals with the requisite skills necessary for school turnaround. (ED)
- Modify its LEA application rubric to allow for feedback on a LEAs hiring and retaining of a given school principal. (MDE)
- Ensure that IHS principal receives necessary support for the successful implementation of the turnaround model. (MDE)

Issue #3: Incentives to Recruit, Place, and Retain Staff

IPS and DPS exhibited a lack of knowledge on how to implement incentives to recruit, place, and retain staff. Inkster referred to retaining staff via a monetary reward for the school making AYP. However, the school will likely not make AYP outright this year, though it may make it via safe harbor. IPS reported bringing teachers in as high as possible on the pay scale, but did not report that it considered hiring bonuses. At Dixon, teachers stated that they had not been told about any hiring or performance incentives.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Consult with national content centers to provide guidance on best practices for implementing incentives to recruit, place, and retain staff. (ED)
- Provide guidance to LEAs and schools regarding recruitment of teachers necessary to implement turnaround and address the needs of students (e.g., in math). (MDE)
- Modify SIG Benchmarking Tool to better assess implementation of this requirement. (MDE)

Issue #4: Job-Embedded Professional Development

Job-embedded professional development for all teachers has not yet been implemented at IHS. While IHS staff reported that teacher observations are scheduled, it is not clear what the structure and focus will be. Both IPS's SIG application and school leadership noted that professional learning communities (PLC) would be an element of the job-embedded professional development. However, when teachers were asked about the PLC initiative, they were not familiar with it and had not been trained or required to do it.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide guidance as to what constitutes job-embedded professional development is and require IPS to develop a plan for implementing job-embedded professional development, as the LEA said it would in the school's SIG application. (MDE)

Issue #5: Funds Spent and Use of Funds

As of April 7, both IPS and DPS have drawn down less than 15% of their SIG Award (IPS – 12.46%, DPS – 3.89%). Also, based on interviews at Dixon and DPS, there appears to be an issue with the DPS procurement process, in delivering equipment to the school. School leadership at Dixon indicated that it still had not received equipment that was ordered at the beginning of the year. There was also confusion at Dixon about allowable uses of SIG funds.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Add fiscal monitoring to the SIG Benchmarking Tool to ensure that schools and LEAs are drawing down funds in a timely manner and are knowledgeable about the allowable uses of SIG funds. (MDE)
- Identify issues within DPS procurement process and remediate in order to expedite requisitions for use of SIG funds. (MDE/DPS)

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))]	N/A	
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	7
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	
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	
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	
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 Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	N/A	

Monitoring Area: School Improvement Grant

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): MDE has not ensured that all staff hired or re-hired at either IPS or DPS were screened or selected using locally adopted competencies. At IPS, the LEA had locally adopted competencies, but did not use them to screen all staff at IHS. At DPS, the LEA placed three teachers at Dixon that had not been screened and selected based on the locally adopted competencies.

Citation: Section I.A.2(a)(1)(ii) of the final requirements stipulate that as part of the turnaround model an LEA must be —i) using locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of students (A) Screen all existing staff and rehire no more than 50 percent; and (B) Select new staff.” (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))

Further action required: The MDE also must develop and submit to ED a plan for how it will ensure that the LEAs funded in the FY 2010 competition to implement the turnaround model develop and use locally adopted competencies in its hiring process. The MDE must provide evidence of the development and use of these locally adopted competencies by LEAs funded in the FY 2010 competition.

Finding (2): The MDE did not provide evidence that IPS and DPS replaced principals in schools implementing the turnaround model consistent with the SIG final requirements. IPS hired the principal at Inkster High School within the two year period during which the regulations permit an LEA to continue a previously implemented intervention. However, although the principal was hired within the previous two years, there was no evidence that the principal was hired as part of a broader reform effort. DPS had hired two principals within the two year period as well, but also could not provide evidence that these principals were hired as part of a broader reform effort.

Citation: Section I.B.1 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)), states an SEA may award school improvement funds to an LEA for a Tier I or Tier II school that has implemented in whole or in part, an intervention that meets the requirements under section I.A.2(a), 2(b) or 2(d) of these requirements within the last two years so that the LEA and school can continue or complete the intervention being implemented in that school.

Further action required: The MDE must submit to ED evidence that it has reviewed the progress of all schools that received FY 2009 SIG funds to implement the transformation and turnaround model to ensure that any principal hired within the last two years who was retained, was retained consistent with the SIG requirement. The MDE also must submit to ED the results of that review and the steps the MDE will take to ensure these schools are either in compliance with the SIG requirements or indicate how it will take this into account in determining whether to continue the grant for the 2011-2012 school year.