



Appendix A. Key Provisions of School Improvement Grants and ESEA Waivers

School Improvement Grants (SIGs)

Eligibility

Three “tiers” of schools are eligible for grants but priority is given to Tier I:

- **Tier I:** The lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state or the lowest-performing five Title I schools, whichever is greater; and Title I high schools with graduation rates of less than 60% over a number of years
- **Tier II:** Secondary schools that are eligible for but do not receive Title I funds and are the lowest-performing 5% of secondary schools in the state or the lowest-performing five secondary schools, whichever is greater; or are high schools with graduation rates of less than 60% over a number of years
- **Tier III:** All other Title I schools that are in the school improvement, corrective action, or school restructuring stages of No Child Left Behind Act interventions.

Funding

Total federal appropriations for SIGs received an enormous boost in fiscal year 2009 due to the additional funding for this program provided by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). Following that one-time infusion of economic stimulus money, the regular appropriations for SIGs have gradually decreased.

FY 2007: \$125 million

FY 2008: \$491 million

FY 2009: \$3.5 billion

FY 2010: \$546 million

FY 2011: \$535 million

FY 2012: \$523 million

FY 2013: \$506 million

Federal SIG appropriations are allocated to states as formula grants. States then distribute the funds to school districts through a grant competition. Originally grants to school districts were for three years, but as of school year 2014-15 they can be extended to five years. Subgrants for schools were originally capped at \$500,000, but for 2009 and 2010, the period when the additional ARRA funding was available, the maximum school subgrant was \$2 million.

Required actions

A school receiving a SIG must adopt one of four reform models described in the 2010 federal SIG guidance (ED, 2012a):

- **Turnaround:** Replacing the school principal and implementing numerous other reforms, including a requirement to “*establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time*”

- **Transformation:** Replacing the principal and half of the school staff and implementing numerous other reforms, including a requirement to “*establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time*”
- **Restart:** Converting the school to charter school or one run by a rigorously selected education management organization; these schools are not required to implement expanded learning time (ELT) but may implement activities described for the turnaround and transformation models.
- **Closure:** Closing the school

As a result of a provision in the 2014 U.S. appropriations bill (Pub. L. 113-76), schools with SIGs, as of 2014-15, may also implement a “whole-school reform strategy” or an “alternative State-determined school improvement strategy (Stat. 389).”

In September of 2014, the U.S. Department of Education proposed revisions to the SIG requirements that would add three new reform models, which schools may adopt with SIG funds. These include the two models mentioned in the 2014 appropriations bill, plus a new “early learning model” (ED, 2014). One of these proposed models would allow districts to use SIG funds to implement a state-determined intervention model that has been approved by the Secretary of Education; would be aligned with the turnaround principles approved under the state’s waiver of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provisions; *and* would include “increased learning time” as already defined in federal SIG guidance.

ELT definition

According to the federal 2010 SIG guidance, increased learning time means “increasing the length of the school day, week, or year to significantly increase the total number of school hours so as 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 provision of enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, such as physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects” (ED 2012a, A-31).

The SIG guidance also cites research supporting “the effectiveness of well-designed programs that expand learning time by a minimum of 300 hours per school year” (A-32).

ESEA Waivers

Eligibility

States with approved ESEA waivers must publicly identify two mutually exclusive categories of their lowest-performing schools—“priority” and “focus” schools. School districts with one or more schools in either category must implement interventions to turn around the academic performance of these schools. (States must also identify a third category of high-achieving “reward” schools.)

- **Priority schools:** The total number of “priority schools” must be equal to 5% of all Title I schools in the state. Priority schools must include the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state based on the performance of the “all students” group; Title I high schools or Title I eligible high

schools with graduation rates of less than 60% over a number of years; and SIG Tier I and II schools implementing one of the four school reform models even if they are not among the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools.

- **Focus schools:** The total number of “focus schools” must be equal to 10% of all Title I schools in the state. Focus schools must include the Title I schools with the large achievement gaps between student subgroups or the large graduation gaps in high schools; Title I schools with a subgroup or subgroups of students with low achievement or low graduation rates; and Title I participating high schools that are not priority schools but have graduation rates of less than 60% over a number of years.

Funding

Funding for priority and focus schools (as well as reward schools) may come from other federal grants, most notably Title I, ESEA. For example, funds appropriated for the SIG program can be used for priority schools, even those that have not been otherwise classified as SIG schools. In addition, the 4% of a state’s Title I allocation that is set aside for school improvement (section 1003(a) funds) can also support priority and focus schools.

In states with ESEA waivers, schools may support activities, including ELT, designed to improve student achievement with the 20% of Title I funds they were previously required to set aside for public school choice transportation and supplemental educational services (tutoring), and with the 10% they previously had to set aside for professional development.

Furthermore, states had the option to request particular kinds of spending flexibility in their waivers. Pertinent to this ELT study is the option to use federal 21st Century Community Learning Center funds to support ELT during the school day, rather than for this program’s traditional purpose of supporting academic learning and enrichment during non-school hours.

Required actions

States with approved waivers must adopt a strategy for the interventions to be implemented by school districts in their priority schools. The strategy must be consistent with several “turnaround principles” described in federal guidance. These principles address strong school leadership, effective teachers, rigorous instructional programs, a safe and supportive school environment, and other areas. One principle relates specifically to expanded learning time: “redesign the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration” (ED 2012b, p. 7).

Districts may comply with the turnaround principles by applying for a SIG grant on behalf of a priority school and implementing one of the four SIG reform models, even if that school would not otherwise be eligible for a SIG under the ESEA accountability requirements (ED 2012c, B-23).

ELT definition

The FAQs for ESEA flexibility define expanded learning time as “time that an LEA or school extends its normal school day, week, or year to provide additional instruction or educational programs for all students beyond the State-mandated requirements for the minimum number of hours in a school day,

days in a school week, or days or weeks in a school year” (ED 2012c, p. 30).

In addition, the FAQs describe high-quality expanded learning time as having these characteristics (B-25):

- Adding significantly more time to the school day, week or year for all students
- Using additional time for academics and enrichment
- More teacher collaboration
- Partnering with an outside organization that has been shown to increase student achievement

Sources

Pub. L. 113-76. Division H, Title III, Department of Education, Education for disadvantaged children.

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U.S. Department of Education. (2012a, March 1). *Guidance on fiscal year 2010 school improvement grants under section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/legislation.html>

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