



State of New Jersey  
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*Acting Commissioner*

December 21, 2010

TO: Chief School Administrators of Title I Districts  
Charter School Lead Persons of Title I Districts

FROM: Barbara Gantwerk, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Student Services

SUBJECT: Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) Waivers – Notification and Request for  
Comments

School Improvement Grants (SIG), authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Title I or ESEA), are grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) that SEAs use to make competitive subgrants to local educational agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools. The SIG project period for approved schools begins on September 1, 2011.

School improvement funds are to be focused on each state's "Tier 1" and "Tier II" schools. Tier I schools are a state's persistently lowest-achieving Title I schools in improvement. Tier II schools are a state's persistently lowest-achieving secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I, Part A funds. The state may also identify other Title I schools in need of improvement under Tier III.

Each state is eligible to apply and receive a School Improvement Grant. As part of its FFY2010 application for a School Improvement Grant under section 1003(g) of the ESEA, New Jersey is applying for the following waivers. The state believes that the requested waivers will increase its ability to implement the SIG program effectively. The waivers below are those for which the state is applying.

Waiver of SEA Requirement

Waiver #1: Tier II waiver

- ✓ In order to enable the state to generate new lists of Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III schools for its FY 2010 competition, waive 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 adequate yearly progress (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.

## Waiver of LEA Requirements

### Waiver #4: School improvement timeline waiver ("start over")

- ✓ Waive 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.

### Waiver #5: Schoolwide program waiver

- ✓ Waive 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.

### Waiver #6: Period of availability of FY 2009 carryover funds waiver

- ✓ Waive 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.

More information about School Improvement Resources can be found at these Web sites:

- ✓ Federal Guidance on School Improvement Grants under Section 1003(g)  
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance11012010.pdf>
- ✓ SEA School Improvement Grants Application: <http://ed.gov/programs/sif/applicant.html>
- ✓ Final Requirements for SIG 1003(g) Federal Register *updated 10/28/10*  
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-10-28/pdf/2010-27313.pdf>
- ✓ USDE School Improvement Fund Website: <http://ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>

New Jersey intends to apply for these four waivers. The state must submit its request to the USDE and provide all interested LEAs in the state with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request. The state must submit all comments it receives from those LEAs. The USDE will consider these comments when determining whether to grant the waiver requests. The state must also provide notice and information regarding the waiver request to the public in the manner in which the state customarily provides such notice and information to the public, such as through a public website.

As such, New Jersey is asking for your comments regarding School Improvement Grants (SIG), authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. A Web page is available to view the waiver request information:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/program/siapg.shtml>

Please submit your comments to the Title I email account: [titleone@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:titleone@doe.state.nj.us), or, if you prefer, you may mail a letter to: Office of Student Achievement and Accountability, New Jersey Department of Education, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500. Comments will be accepted until Friday, January 14, 2011. All public comments submitted during the comment period will be promptly read, taken into consideration and submitted to the USDE.

Thank you for your feedback. If you have additional questions, email the NJDOE Title I email helpline:  
[titleone@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:titleone@doe.state.nj.us)

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