



## School Improvement Grants

It has been well documented that schools serving low-income children have additional challenges in making educational progress. Recognizing this, the federal government wants “to put an end to stubborn cycles of poverty and social failure,” as U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said this past summer.

To achieve that goal, the Department of Education is offering Title I School Improvement grants to states. Each state will select its five percent “persistently lowest-achieving schools.” If those schools agree to use one of four federally approved models to improve student achievement, they will be eligible to apply for federal money.

### **Money to be awarded**

The federal government is awarding \$3.5 billion for 2009-11. For fiscal year 2010-11, Washington state expects to receive about \$17 million. Schools will receive between \$50,000 and \$2 million per grant per year for three years.

### **Who is eligible**

Priority is given to the persistently lowest-achieving schools in each state. Those schools fit into one of three categories: “Tier I,” “Tier II” and “Tier III.” Washington state has defined those categories as follows:

#### **Tier I**

- (a) Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action or restructuring (as defined by Adequate Yearly Progress) that:
  - (i) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent in the “all students” group in reading and mathematics combined for the past three consecutive years; or
  - (ii) Is a high school that has a weighted-average graduation rate that is less than 60 percent based on the past three years of data.
- (b) Any Title I elementary school that:
  - (i) Has not made AYP for at least the past two consecutive years; and
  - (ii) Is no higher achieving than the highest-achieving school identified in (a)(i) of this section

## Tier II

- (a) Any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds and that:
  - (i) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools in the “all students” group in reading and mathematics combined for the past three consecutive years; or
  - (ii) Is a high school that has a weighted-average graduation rate that is less than 60 percent based on the past three years of data.
- (b) Any Title I eligible secondary school that:
  - (i) Has not made AYP for at least the past two consecutive years;
  - (ii) Is no higher achieving than the highest-achieving school identified in (a)(i) of this section; and
  - (iii) Is in Step 5 of Improvement with a decreasing performance trend.

**Tier III** schools are those that are not identified in the Tier I or Tier II categories but are Title I schools in improvement, corrective action or restructuring, as defined by Adequate Yearly Progress. Tier III also includes schools that were removed from Tier I because the total number of students in the tested grades was less than 30. This is consistent with Washington State’s Accountability Workbook for calculating AYP. Additionally, Tier III includes schools that didn’t qualify as Tier I or Tier II under the definition of “newly eligible.” Newly eligible refers to schools described in Tier I (b) and Tier II (b) above.

## How schools were selected

To determine Tier I schools, OSPI first eliminated schools in the state that had a total tested student population of less than 30 in grades 3-8 and 10, as defined by Adequate Yearly Progress. When applied, this resulted in the removal of 13 schools which were then added to Tier III per the federal guidelines. To determine Tier II schools, Washington eliminated all schools that do not serve students in grades 7-10 . Schools in the two resulting lists were ranked using a variety of criteria, including state test scores for 2007-09 in math and reading, using a combined proficiency index and identifying improvement trends greater than or less than the State.

## Intervention models

Districts participating in the grant program will be required to follow one of four school intervention models:

- 1. Turnaround model.** Replace the principal, rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff and grant the new principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- 2. Restart model.** Convert the school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been

selected through a rigorous review process. (Note: charter operators and organizations are not authorized in Washington.)

3. **School closure.** Close the school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.
4. **Transformation model.** Replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; institute comprehensive instructional reforms; increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

### **The application process**

Schools that have been identified as a persistently lowest-achieving school were invited to apply for grant money through the state. The application included for each school and its tier, the intervention model, achievement and graduation goals (if applicable), and specific questions for Tier I and Tier II schools summarizing the district's plan and timeline to implement one of the four intervention models. Districts were also required to submit a three-year budget for each school and sign assurances of its agreements to implement the models with fidelity.

### **For schools not participating**

Eligible schools that decline to apply for the grant program may be subject to future required action. Washington's State Board of Education proposed legislation in January 2010 to require districts to intervene in their Tier I and Tier II schools if the grants are not pursued and the school remains in the lowest five percent in the subsequent year. Those districts will be responsible for intervening in their schools using one of the four federal intervention models for the 2011-12 school year, depending on available funds.

### **Background/History**

The program, officially known as the "Title I School Improvement Grant Program," is found in section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. ESEA was reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2009, President Obama placed the program under his American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In December 2009, Obama signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which increased the amount of money schools received and allowed for "newly eligible schools" to be included.

## Definitions

**Title I:** Refers to Title I, Parts A and G, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It provides financial assistance to those districts and schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children so that they can meet state academic standards. In Washington state, a school is eligible for Title I funds if the poverty percentage of its students is at least 35 percent or the school's poverty percentage is equal to or greater than the district's poverty average.

**Adequate Yearly Progress:** A measure of yearly student achievement on our state assessments in reading and mathematics. (Until 2009, our state assessments were known as the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. Starting in 2010, they became the Measurements of Student Progress and High School Proficiency Exam.) Each year states must "raise the bar" in gradual increments, so that by 2013-2014, all students will achieve proficiency in math and science.

## For more information

The Department of Education's Title I School Improvement Grants program:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:

<http://www.recovery.gov/Pages/home.aspx>

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind):

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>

Adequate Yearly Progress:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/AdequateYearlyProgress.aspx>

The State Board of Education's accountability program:

<http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2010.01.04%20Final%20Accountability%20Memo.pdf>