

SIG – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Applying for a School Improvement Grant (SIG) is not a guarantee that a district will be awarded a grant and receive SIG funds. There is significant accountability built into the process to ensure that only high quality applications are funded. The school must be able to demonstrate that they can meet the SIG requirements and provide documentation of a high quality plan that will produce results.
- The local school board must understand the requirements pertaining to revising staff evaluation policies. The SIG requires districts and schools to use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor as well as other factors, such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduation rates. The board and school must be prepared to publicly share this information.

It also requires districts to implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation model.

Meeting these two key requirements will obligate the district to review and most likely revise its current district policies and procedures.

- Districts interested in applying for SIG funds must have the capacity and be willing to make significant changes in the school building. Proposals to continue funding the “status quo” will not be approved. Implementing a SIG is a huge undertaking which requires commitment from the school board, district, and school for dramatic system changes.
- All four intervention models require the district to replace the building principal. However, the guidance states that an exception can be made if the principal was hired within the past two years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years).
- The USDE ARRA School Improvement Grant (SIG) regulations do not override state law. It is not allowable to reference the SIG requirement as a reason for replacing principals or teachers. North Dakota state law must be followed when non-renewing principal and teacher contracts.
- Districts have an obligation to involve all staff in the process of revising policies and practices. The SIG application requires applicants to thoroughly address how all staff were included in the development of revised policies and practices.