



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

December 10, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

Today, the Center on School Turnaround and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes are releasing case studies of three schools that have used School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds, with the support of their districts, to implement early learning strategies as part of their turnaround models. A significant body of research shows that achievement gaps in persistently low-performing schools manifest, in many instances, prior to children entering kindergarten. High-quality preschool programs have proven to help close these gaps both for individual student subgroups in a school and for the school as a whole.

The SIG program has provided more than \$5 billion in formula-based federal funds to States that then competitively awarded these funds to districts to implement reforms in over 1,500 of the country's lowest-performing elementary and secondary schools. A permissible activity under the transformation or turnaround model is expanding the school program to offer full-day kindergarten or prekindergarten.

In the fall of 2014, the U.S. Department of Education proposed new requirements for the SIG program that would, among other things, enable school districts to explicitly use SIG funds to implement a new early learning model in an elementary school. Under the proposed requirements, a local educational agency (LEA) implementing the early learning model would be required to, among other things, offer full-day kindergarten; establish or expand a high-quality preschool program; and provide staff opportunities for joint planning across grades and ongoing professional development such as coaching and mentoring. These requirements, once final, will apply to the competitions for SIG funding that States will conduct for implementation in the 2015-2016 school year.

The practices described in these featured elementary schools in Massachusetts, Missouri, and Nebraska were gathered through school data reviews and interviews with school, district, and state leaders from both early learning and school improvement offices. Whether or not you are a SIG school or a community that is committed to achieving improved outcomes for your students, I hope you find this resource helpful in your efforts to provide all children with opportunities for success beginning with a high-quality early education. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of all students across America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deborah S. Delisle".

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education