

District Applicant Questions March 18-25, 2010

Reviewer Name: _____

District: _____ Date: _____

Scoring Guide		
0 points	3 points	5 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Response failed to answer the question -Response did not speak to any of the look fors -Response was vague or inconsistent with the SIG requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Response did not clearly demonstrate an understanding of the SIG requirements -Response addressed none or some of the look fors and district expressed an openness to new ideas -Response demonstrated some commitment to the SIG requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Response met or exceeded expectations -Responses were bold -Evidence of most of the look fors -Evidence the district is committed to the success of the grant -District was eager to learn how they can improve application and explore new approaches

Existing/prior efforts:

1. What are the previous actions the district has undertaken to address the academic achievement of the Tier I or Tier II school(s) identified in the SIG grant application? What evidence do you have that these efforts were or were not successful and how did that inform the development of your application?

Look fors: History of taking action to intervene in low performing schools; practices for monitoring implementation and impact of interventions; evidence of differences in their new proposal that reflect learning from past experience; evidence of effectiveness exists for those practices the district is planning to continue.

Bold/Disruptive change:

2. The SIG funding provides an extraordinary opportunity for bold and disruptive change in schools identified as persistently failing. Beyond replacing the principal, describe how your proposal is bold and disruptive?

Look fors: Challenges existing assumptions about schooling; includes ambitious, far-reaching goals; explores schedules and processes for teaching and learning that are different than the status quo; changes structures and relationships among those responsible for student learning; exploration of rewards for performance.

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3. This is an opportunity to create a school to meet the unique needs of the students you have. Imagine three years from now, your district is presenting to the USDOE on the effectiveness and impact of the model you put in place. What will you say about the boldness and effectiveness of your plan at ensuring the college and career readiness of your students?

Look fors: District leaders own responsibility for educating the children of their community and demonstrate a strong belief they can do so; plans respond to identified barriers to learning that exist currently; ambitious goals are expressed and realized with measurable indicators identified;

4. How are district leaders and local school board members leading the effort to challenge the status quo among your lowest performing schools?

Look fors: Evidence of intellectual engagement and research on rapid improvement; evidence of performance management – like work to identify and intervene in low performing schools; examples of leaders communicating with broad stakeholder groups to own the problem, express high expectations for all adults/students, and to generate shared understanding of a new vision for these schools; initial steps already taken to establish the necessary context and identify necessary personnel for challenging the status quo; stepping up to identified barriers; making clear change is not optional.

5. In the schools for which you've applied, what will be different for staff, students, parents and the community in the first week, month and quarter of next school year? What would be an expected "early win"?

Look fors: District leaders have staged the planning and implementation processes to consider necessary early wins; clear signaling of change for all stakeholder groups; high visibility and confidence of leaders; focus on a few, achievable priorities for year one; considerable staff time in summer preparation, high level of collaboration in the school year; orientation of students and families, possible summer entry activities to reset expectations and prepare students for success; strategies to monitor, sense of urgency signaling change; immediate implementation of monitoring activities; scheduled opportunities to celebrate successes at each of these marks.

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Central Office Changes

6. How will roles, actions and accountability of district central office personnel be aligned and differentiated to address the needs of each Tier I or Tier II school?

Look fors: Accountability for central office personnel established; restructuring of central office responsibilities to provide an increased ratio/amount of support to SIG schools; increased amount of time in SIG schools for central staff, including supervisors and assistance providers (coaches, directors, TOSAs, etc.); recognition of different needs between schools if the district has more than one eligible school; schedules and processes established for reporting monitoring and reporting progress.

7. To what extent will you require all faculty participation in the required actions of the selected model?

Look fors: Extended time, professional development, formative assessment, new evaluation system

Teacher and Principal Effectiveness/Assignment:

8. What competencies, skills and experiences will you seek in teachers for placement in the Tier I or Tier II schools? How will the district ensure that highly effective teachers are placed in persistently low-achieving schools?

Look fors: Belief in all students; strong desire, persistence, and planning to achieve outstanding student learning results; uses teaming and interpersonal influence to positively influence other faculty; applies problem solving strategies to overcoming student learning challenges; strong self-confidence, sense of self-efficacy, flexibility; potential use of NBCTs as teachers and leader; use of tiered evaluation system as an ongoing measure of effectiveness; work with the local education association to renegotiate collective bargaining agreements; use of nationally available resources to plan for this process, such as Public Impact turn-around competencies and selection guides.

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9. If you are not replacing the currently assigned principal, describe how this principal has already undertaken, in whole or in part, the required elements of the chosen intervention model. Elaborate on the principal's experience and success in turning around a low performing school.

Look fors: District's determination to not change the principal based on evidence beyond time in the job; required elements of the intervention model evident in new work of the last two years; measurable evidence of the principal's preparation and experience for turning around a low performing school.

10. In selecting a new principal, what competencies, skills and experiences will you seek that are different from those you typically seek in principal selection? How will you construct a selection process to best assess these competencies and skills?

Look fors: Results-driven orientation; ability to engage and motivating personnel; ability to use multiple forms of data to inform decisions, including data round instructional practices and classroom learning; ability to develop logical plans people can follow; ensures strong connection between learning goals and school activities; positive and creative orientation to ongoing problem-solving, willing to break norms; confidence, resilience and visibility. Selection process requires demonstration of skills through simulation activities, targeted questions that require applicants to detail their actions and thinking in past settings, and reference checks specific to the attributes noted; recognizes that evaluation of what candidates 'have done' is a stronger predictor of success than hearing what they 'will do'; input from participants around 'likeability' is mediated by an effective process focused on evidence with full central office oversight; use of nationally available resources to plan for this process, such as Public Impact turn-around competencies and selection guides.

11. The Turnaround and Transformation models require principal operational flexibility and principals in SIG schools will have significantly more resources, personnel and higher expectations. Given this, how will his/her support be different and discernable from his/her colleagues? What flexibility will you permit around personnel decisions, financial management, educational program, governance and operation?

Look fors: Recognition of needs particular to SIG principals as they relate to the demands of the job at the school site and internal district politics/culture; attention to how the district will mitigate the differentiated level of funding and supports available to tier I/II schools v. non-funded schools; acknowledgement of flexibility, autonomy in staffing, budget, calendar provided to principals and recognition of necessary training, coaching, and access to central office supports for a principal to be successful under these conditions; willingness to support dramatic change; hiring and firing, management, performance standards, curriculum instructional approaches, discipline policies, professional development and parental involvement calendar, length of the school day.

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Capacity/External Support:

12. Describe how the implementation and impact of your plan will be monitored.

Look fors: Recognition of both leading and trailing indicators of progress; attention to monitoring both implementation (Did we do it and to what extent?) and impact (What is the effect on staff and students?); formative, interim, and summative measures for reading and mathematics progress; calendar for ongoing review with frequent engagement of staff and students in analyzing progress; transparency of results through reporting progress to local board and others; thought toward how successes and shortcomings will be managed.

13. The State's task is to select districts that can demonstrate dramatic success in creating effective schools for high poverty, high ELL student populations. Why should your proposal be funded over others?

Look fors: Passion for a new level of success for the students of the school community; high sense of efficacy and energy to get going, building on steps already underway.