

Background Information on School Improvement Grants

- When announcing the availability of the School Improvement Funds, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said: “States and school districts have an opportunity to put unprecedented resources toward reforms that would increase graduation rates, reduce dropout rates and improve teacher quality for all students, and particularly for children who most need good teaching in order to catch up.”
- The Department of Education is required to create and publish a list of Missouri schools and charter schools that are “persistently lowest-achieving.” The State Board of Education approved a definition and procedure for identifying Missouri schools, and the definition was subsequently approved by the U.S. Department of Education.
- States were required to identify their lowest-achieving schools in order to receive stimulus funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and to be eligible for consideration in the Race to the Top initiative.
- Some of the schools on the list have made significant gains in student achievement on the state mathematics and reading assessments over the past few years; however, due to the way of calculating the list of schools, they are considered persistently lowest achieving.
- Missouri schools identified as persistently lowest-achieving will be eligible to benefit from approximately \$50 million in Title I and ARRA funding over the next three years. Funds will be made available to school districts and schools through “school improvement grants” (SIG).
- School DISTRICTS must apply for SIG funding and must decide which schools they will focus on for improvement efforts. Districts that commit to the SIG process are eligible for grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$2 million per building.
- Identified buildings that participate in the SIG process must commit to adopting one of the following approaches: (1) turnaround model; (2) restart model; (3) school closure; or (4) transformational model. Each approach includes certain mandatory and optional activities.
- The 52 identified Missouri schools are divided into two groups:
 - “Tier I Schools” are selected from all schools that are receiving federal Title I funds in 2009-10 and have already been identified as being in improvement, corrective action or restructuring status. The identified schools are the lowest-achieving five percent of all these schools over the past three years, based on state reading and math assessments.

- “Tier II Schools” were selected from middle and high schools that are *eligible* to receive Title I funds, regardless of whether the schools actually receive such funds. From this pool, the state identified the lowest-achieving five percent of the buildings for the past three years, based on state reading and math assessments; or buildings which have graduation rates below 60 percent (regardless of their scores on reading and math assessments).
- The Department of Education has issued a request for proposals with the intent of contracting with one or more technical assistance providers that will be able to assist Missouri’s schools in developing and implementing their plans for school improvement.

[Schools Eligible for School Improvement Grants \(SIG\)](#)