

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

SURVEY OF STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES ON THE USE OF STATE PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUNDS

Issue

The State Personnel Development Grants (SPDGs, formerly known as SIG grants*) have been zero-funded in the President's FY 08 budget. The SIG grants were also zero-funded in the FY 07 budget with the argument that the grants were forward-funded with FY 06 monies so the money wasn't needed for FY 07. That may have been true, but now, with no forward-funding left, they have again been zero-funded.

In order to document the importance of the programs supported by the SPIGs, NASDSE asked its members to describe how the SPDG funds are being used in their states. Twenty-seven states responded to this survey, which was conducted at the beginning of April 2007.

The survey results include feedback from the following states and the state responses follow. At the end of the state-by-state summary is a table summarizes the uses of the funds by state.

Alabama
Alaska
Arkansas
Arizona
Connecticut
District of Columbia
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Indiana
Louisiana
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Rhode Island
Utah
Wisconsin

* This document uses the terms "SIG" and "SPDG" interchangeably.

Alabama

Over the past year, we have used our SIG funds in the following ways:

- Designing and promoting the *Seamless Instructional Support Model*, which implements a tiered approach to instruction. The Seamless Instructional Support Model (SISM) is an intensive professional development model designed to increase academic performance of adolescents at-risk for academic failure in grades 8-12. The model is designed to enable teachers to employ pedagogy that is scientific research-based (SRB) and that has proven effectiveness in reducing the achievement gap of low-achieving students. The SISM focuses on the use of a systematic framework, called “Seamless Framework” (SF), for making instructional decisions and selecting interventions that support students at risk for academic failure.
- The *Models of Collaboration* DVD Project showcases three Alabama public school elementary collaborative teams. The project depicts general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraeducators working in a collaborative elementary school environment. The DVD concludes with interviews from three LEA administrators discussing critical features for creating, supporting and sustaining a collaborative school community. This training DVD is appropriate for the following audiences:
 - pre-service teacher candidates;
 - local education agency superintendents;
 - local education agency administrators;
 - local education agency curriculum and instructional support staff;
 - local education agency special education coordinators;
 - collaborative general education teachers; and
 - collaborative special education teachers.

DVD distribution includes higher education, colleges of education and more than half of the states’ local education agencies.

- The AL SIG staff is currently working on a *Models of Collaboration* DVD depicting middle and high school collaborative teams.
- Technical assistance and professional development for implementing *Makes Sense Strategies* (MSS) has been an on-going activity of the AL SIG. *Makes Sense Strategies* is a differentiated instructional model that focuses on four critical areas of academic success: reading, vocabulary, content-mastery, and writing. MSS addresses needs in inclusive education classrooms, grades K-12. The MSS software offers over 400 interactive think-sheets and/or instructional routines for differentiating instruction and 100 Power Point Presentations. The software also contains data and impact results from MSS research conducted over the past seven years in the state of Alabama.

We work hard to connect and sustain our SIG projects through scientifically-based researched practices, professional development based on the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) standards, team training, mentoring, technical assistance, data interpretation/evaluation, agency connections, and capacity building infrastructure.

Alaska

Funds are used to support Alaska's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). As one of its goals, the CSPD identifies the implementation of innovative strategies and activities for the recruitment and retention of early education service providers.

The *Special Educators for Alaska* Project addresses the need for highly qualified special education teachers in Alaska through two innovative approaches: (1) the hiring and training of full-release mentor special education teachers to work with newly hired special education teachers in the state; and (2) the development of video conference technology to work with teachers, paraeducators, families and students in rural and remote locations where frequent travel is hindered by inclement weather.

Arizona

SIG funds are used to provide technical assistance for charter schools to bring them into compliance; recruitment and retention of special education personnel; meeting HQT requirements; and for our Response to Intervention (RtI) initiative.

RtI is just getting off the ground in Arizona. We now have 50 districts, 75 schools and 45,000 students in the process K-8. The RtI project teaches schools how to screen and monitor reading, math and writing through a three-tiered model. We are adding behavior, developing a secondary model and adding pre-school. This year Arizona had its first RtI conference, bringing in national speakers. We were expecting 200 and had 400 attendees. None of this could be possible without SIG funds. Schools are excited about their data. All have improved in reading and math and students have moved up in AIMS (our state test) testing. Teachers are empowered with the data and some veteran teachers who were thinking of retiring have gotten a new "wind" to keep teaching. One building went from 77 referrals to special education two years ago to six this past year with RTI in place. SIG funds are used to create good staff development in Arizona. All of these teams are followed and supported outside of the training itself and given what assistance they need to be successful. Personnel development is on-going in the RTI project. Refresher training is provided to all teams. SIG monies in Arizona are well spent.

The SIG has been essential to our state in reaching teachers and students in remote areas and smaller schools in our reading initiative. Our goal has been to enhance teacher skills, collaboration between special education and general education and improve student achievement in reading. Due to the SIG, we have been able to train teachers throughout the state to assess student needs with curriculum-based measurements. This allows teachers to identify specific deficits in every individual. Over the past two years, we have developed a team approach to systemic change in reading with tremendous success. Teams must consist of at least one administrator, one special education teacher and one general education teacher. Teams receive national-level professional development throughout the year in the following areas: team building, systemic change, action planning, utilizing data to drive instruction and intervention, strategies for the five critical areas of reading and differentiated instruction. From these SIG trainings, team members are able to learn new skills to take back to their schools and share with the rest of their staffs. SIG coordinators make site visits throughout the year to provide technical assistance and guidance in following their action plans.

Through these efforts made possible by our SIG, we have been able to service over 7,975 students and 877 school staff in all areas of our state, including Native American reservations.

Students with and without disabilities are showing improvement through their benchmark scores in curriculum-based measurement and standardized proficiency testing scores in reading. Students with disabilities are finding inclusion success. Students at-risk are accessing strategies to improve their skills corresponding to a reduction in special education referrals. We are making a huge impact in improving reading achievement, and we need to continue the momentum with funding from the SPDG.

Arkansas

- Goal 1. Improving early literacy, reading and language skills of students with disabilities in grades K-12.
 - In a partnership with the state's Arkansas Reading First Program, the state education agency (SEA) provided on-site training and consultation to 15 schools, helping them to implement early literacy, reading and language interventions by integrating special education consultants and general education coaches in a school-based team approach.
 - Provided two summers of intensive training to 175 general education and special education teachers across the state at a series of five-day Summer Reading Camps and two-day special education follow-up trainings with the Arkansas Reading First Program to train participants in a systematic and explicit literacy program of assessment and intervention for at-risk students.
 - Created and published a Literacy Interventions website that provides interventions from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in the five nationally-identified areas of literacy across five tiers of intervention need. See www.literacymatrix.com.
 - With Sopris West Educational Services, we developed another Reading Intervention Tool with 100 tactics and more than 35 video examples of scientifically-based literacy strategies being modeled by master teachers to accompany core tactics. The tool is web-based and includes a problem-solving component with probes to assist teachers in identifying appropriate interventions.
 - Sponsoring state-wide literacy training at the secondary level, in the Strategic Intervention Model (SIM) from the University of Kansas. We are now training approximately 40 educators with some committed to becoming SIM professional development trainers over time.
 - Developed a Home-Based Literacy Module and a Parent Discipline Module. Sent The Stop and Think Program for Good Parenting to every Head Start, ABC and preschool program in the state. Have now provided over 75 school-based trainings in these modules to schools and parents across the state.
- Goal 2. Implementation of school-wide prevention/intervention programs and school based mental health services.
 - Have trained over 50 school leadership teams from districts across the state in developing and implementing positive behavioral support systems and Response to Intervention approaches in their schools. In total, this training has impacted over 750

educators across the state.

- Have provide training and on-site consultation and technical assistance to over 40 schools over three years helping them to implement positive behavioral support systems and Response to Intervention approaches.
- Developed and distributed across the state (also available on our website: www.arstateimprovementgrant.com) a software program to track and analyze school discipline problems so that strategic interventions can be identified and implemented to resolve them over time.
- Developed a 12-DVD training series, *Building Strong Schools to Strengthen Student Outcomes*, with over 12 hours and 1,000 pages of technical support materials (in the accompanying CD) to support the Positive Behavioral Support System initiative. This series was sent to every elementary and middle school in the state, along with other special education and related service professionals.
- Awarded stipends to five school psychology students during their internship years to facilitate their continuing training in comprehensive, intervention-focused skills and strategies.
- Awarded five school-based mental health grants to school district/community mental health center partnerships to implement comprehensive behavioral and mental health programs from the positive behavioral support level through the intensive therapy and continuum of care services. Three grants went to school districts, and the other two grants went to the Arkansas School for the Deaf and School for the Blind, respectively, to help better serve those students with low incident disabilities.
- Goal 3. Implementation of aggressive recruitment and retention strategies to increase the numbers of fully licensed special education teachers.
 - Provided the teacher recruitment services of Teacher-Teacher.com to every school district in the state. As of the end of Year 3 of the grant, all but one (99%) of Arkansas school districts are using this website to recruit special education teachers and other educators as needed.
 - Provided financial support and professional development outreach to over 100 new special education teachers in the state through the Pathwise Mentoring Program. This Program was expanded to include more specialized training and supervision for special education novice teachers such that every special education participant in the program received full-year (minimally) supervision from a special education veteran teacher.
 - Awarded over 75 stipends to paraprofessionals across the state to support their work toward Associate of Arts Degrees.
 - Awarded university training stipends to over 150 teachers to offset expenses related to their coursework in special education in exchange for their agreeing to teach in special education classrooms in Arkansas for at least one year for each year of support received.

Connecticut

We have four major projects under this grant:

- **Paraprofessional Recruitment:** Establishing a teacher licensure program which will recruit, enroll, support and assist paraprofessionals currently employed in Connecticut school districts to meet state certification requirements.
- **Early Intervention:** With a panel of national early intervention experts, developing, field testing, and nationally disseminating a video, training manual and self-study guide for early intervention providers, care givers and parents on strategies for supporting infants and toddlers with disabilities through natural routines in natural environments.
- **Scaling-up Evidence-based Practices:** Providing the statewide, targeted professional development required to scale-up effective practices system-wide, providing general and special education teachers and administrators with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs, and improve the performance and achievement of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children with disabilities.
- **Parental Involvement:** Increasing parent-school collaboration in selected school districts by providing training, information and support to parents and school staff, particularly with regard to parent involvement in the development of the IEP and ongoing involvement in the child's program.

We have also worked very closely with our state university to develop a program recruiting bilingual speech and language students; an inter-state cooperative project with University of Massachusetts to recruit and train teachers of the visually impaired; and a unification of teacher preparation programs with two other universities in Connecticut. All of these programs have proven successful on different levels and our hope would be to continue and sustain these programs in the future.

District of Columbia

The DC-SIG focuses on school-wide approaches that support the academic and behavioral needs of learners resulting in increased student achievement and decreased need for special education services. A major focus of the DC-SIG's work is to increase the capacity of special and general education staff to support the academic and behavioral needs of all students. The DC-SIG has four major initiatives:

- **Student Support Teams (SSTs).** In 2004, the DC-SIG began training schools on academic and behavioral interventions using an evidenced-based process called Student Support Teams (SSTs). SSTs are designed to facilitate increased collaboration at the school level resulting in increased support for students at-risk for special education referral.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).** PBIS is a nationally recognized program that focuses on creating safe school environments that are conducive to learning and building the capacity of schools to proactively address challenging behaviors. PBIS can help schools: reduce episodes of violent or disruptive behavior; decrease office referrals, suspensions and expulsions; and increase school attendance.
- **Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).** The DC-SIG provides training to schools on the implementation of this formative assessment tool to monitor student progress. Results of the assessment formulate the data that schools used to plan their literacy programs for grades K-3. The DC-SIG Instructional team works with

teachers to plan differentiated instruction. Schools are also provided with demonstration lessons for grades K-3 that highlight strategies for using DIBELS results to guide instruction. Year end DIBELS results for DC-SIG schools in 2004-2005 indicated significant reading progress for students in 1st grade. The number of students at low risk increased from 16% to 60% by year end. Further, the number of students at risk for reading failure decreased from 46% at the beginning of the year to only 7% by year end.

- Family Engagement. The DC-SIG collaborates with Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE), the Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia, on the parental involvement component of the grant. AJE provides training to parents on various topics and conducts outreach in the community and in specific schools in the District of Columbia. AJE also conducts free workshops in both English and Spanish for parents and professionals.

Delaware

SIG funds have been vital to a small state like Delaware to provide the technical assistance to local school districts (LEAs). We have developed literacy training modules for early childhood that are now permanently available to the early care and education community, worked closely with our Reading First initiative to supplement and align with that work to expand it beyond Reading First schools and have developed reading initiatives for secondary struggling readers. We have done a considerable amount of training around effective Instructional Support Teams (IST) which will position some districts to be in a better place around Response to Intervention. We have applied for a SPDG hoping to build on the good work that has been done around reading, but also focus on math with the same intensity. We will continue our work around IST as we expand training around RtI.

Florida

Florida's SIG was used to improve results for students with disabilities by increasing the state's capacity to recruit, prepare and retain sufficient numbers of qualified personnel to provide effective instructional and related services. Florida SIG activities were implemented through nine Regional Personnel Development Partnerships (PDPs).

Listed below are several of the activities implemented as a part of Florida's SIG:

- Goal 1: Ensure sufficient numbers of qualified personnel are available in all regions of the state to provide effective instructional and related services.
 - Minority Recruitment/Preparation: Historically, the PDPs have supported 492 under-represented personnel to participate in various alternative and/or continuing education programs leading to special education and related services certification/licensure.
 - Tuition Support Programs:
 - PDPs supported students in various degree programs during 2004-2005, including 129 in Associate's, 114 in Bachelor's and 21 in Master's Degree programs. During 2005-2006, PDPs supported students in 108 in Associate's, 122 in Bachelor's and 20 in Master's degree programs.
 - During 2004-2005, 39 (10%) of the 388 degree program students graduated. During 2005-2006, 97 (38.8%) of the 250 degree program students graduated.

- The total number of teachers employed or contracted out-of-field to provide education and related services to students with disabilities during the period 2000-02 through 2004-05 decreased by 1,392 representing a 46% decrease during the five year period.
- **Goal 2:** Enhance the capacity of colleges of education and departments of special education to increase the quality of personnel preparation programs through the development and implementation of Faculty Innovation Institutes.
 - Funding was provided to higher education faculty teams to design instructional modules that facilitate team training among pre-service students from school psychology and at least one of the following disciplines: school counseling, social work and speech pathology. The modules focused on skill training in using the problem solving method to assess and monitor response to intervention (RtI).

Georgia

- Expanded Reading First: Training for general and special education teachers who teach struggling readers with low incidence disabilities. Two professional development courses were delivered by the 17 Georgia Learning Resource Centers to 491 individuals. Of that number, 132 participants were teachers of the visually impaired who reported that 82% of their students met their individualized instructional goals due to the instructional strategies implemented as a result of the professional development goals.
- Speech/language pathologists and primary school teachers participated in a pilot professional development activity to learn to co-teach classes to increase students' language and reading skills.
- Student achievement in the least restrictive environment (SALRE) is a collaborative effort with Georgia State University and the first District Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) to increase the academic achievement of students with disabilities by increasing the percentage of students with disabilities who are educated in general education classes with appropriate supports and accommodations. Teams from schools attend multiple days of training spread over the school year. A coaching mechanism provides support at the local school level. Data reflects an increase in the percent of students with disabilities who are removed from general education classes for less than 21% of the day.
- A bilingual (Spanish and English) Parent Outreach Specialist has been conducting outreach activities with teams in North Georgia to increase collaboration between educators and parents.

Indiana

The Indiana State Improvement Grant (IN-SIG) is proud to highlight initiatives that are making a difference for Indiana's children and youth. We have just begun the fourth year of our initial five-year grant. Indiana has invited six very different school districts to participate in school improvement initiatives. We are partnering with a number of state agencies, universities and private consultants to assist this endeavor. Activities include the following:

- The Indiana Education Leadership Initiative: Increasing student achievement through leadership and change

IN-SIG provides on-going leadership academies and capacity-building sessions that focus on “Instructional Improvement and Knowledge of the Change Process”. These academies develop the instructional leadership skills of central office administrators, principals, assistant principals and teacher and parent leaders serving on school leadership teams. The overall design will deepen knowledge and build skills across the following areas: effective team-based instructional leadership; professional learning communities; professional learning; change management; school improvement; and applying leadership skills to implement school improvement initiatives.

- The Indiana Task Force on Increasing Student Achievement Through Family, School and Community Partnerships

IN-SIG, in collaboration with the Indiana Partnerships Center, a Parent Information Resource Center, sponsored the Indiana Task Force on Increasing Student Achievement Through Family, School and Community Partnerships. The Task Force has developed a vision for family, school and community partnerships in Indiana.

- The Indiana Positive Behavior Support Initiative

The Positive Behavior Support Initiative is a comprehensive, data-driven and research based initiative designed to positively influence the school culture, student behavior and ultimately, academic achievement in participating sites. IN-SIG’s support for sites participating in this initiative will include training and technical assistance at the building, district, regional and state levels while coordinating efforts to build local capacity and sustainability. Eleven school teams have developed data-based school-wide behavior support plans and have implemented their behavior support plan and continue to collect and analyze behavior related data trends. Nine more school-based teams are beginning training in Positive Behavior Support this year.

- The Indiana Transition Initiative

- Part I: The Indiana Post School Follow-Up System

The goal of this initiative is to provide timely, reliable and valid data concerning the disposition of special needs students upon leaving high school. This system aligns with the State Performance Plan indicator number 14 to determine the percent of students who had IEPs who have been competitively employed and/or who are enrolled in postsecondary schooling within one year of leaving school and provides similar data for three and five years post leaving school. This is a collaborative project with the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners and Ball State University. This year Indiana will fund a full time Project Coordinator/Training Manager who will be responsible for training, facilitation, coaching, program development, coordination of resources and data analysis during the statewide scaling up process.

- Part II: The Indiana Employability Skills Assessment & Reporting Initiative

The goal of this initiative is to facilitate an effective transition from school instruction to successful employment for students who are challenged by disabilities, academic deficiencies, environmental or other at-risk factors. This collaborative effort is being jointly planned and developed by representatives from the Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Development, the Department of Correction and educators from around the state. A standardized employability skills database has been

identified and will be incorporated into the ISTAR platform (ISTAR is the alternate assessment system for students in Indiana.)

- The Indiana Early Childhood Initiative

- Part 1: The Early Childhood Transition Video

The IN-SIG, in collaboration with the Division of Exceptional Learners, Indiana Department of Education and Ball State University, supported the design, production and dissemination of a video on effective early transition practices. The objective is to improve community-wide transition systems to ensure positive and effective transition experiences for families and students. This resource provides consistent transition information statewide. The video's primary audience is families of children with disabilities moving from First Steps, Indiana's Part C program, to Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, or other options at age three.

The DVD, *Steps to Success – Transition at Age 3*, has been completed and is now ready for statewide dissemination. Copies are available in both Spanish and English. A transition resource card in both languages is included with the DVD. Copies are being distributed through agency networks from First Steps, Division of Exceptional Learners, the Head Start Association, parent organizations, the State Transition Initiative and the public library system.

- Part 2: The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)

The IN-SIG, in collaboration with the Division of Exceptional Learners, Indiana Department of Education, supports training which will lead to statewide implementation of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS). The use of this evidence-based rating scale will improve the quality of public school preschool special education classes. IN-SIG will fund an additional lead observer and a full time coordinator/trainer for 2006-07. The expanded ECERS team will provide training and technical assistance to participating school districts throughout the school year.

- The Indiana Curriculum and Instruction Initiative

This initiative is designed to allow six participating Indiana school districts, using a leadership team model, to identify 3-5 schools to develop curriculum and instruction initiatives. These initiatives are to be based on data analysis to identify targeted areas for personnel development. IN-SIG site coordinators will work with school staff to provide staff development, ensure implementation and evaluate results. Projects focus on staff development in the areas of literacy, differentiated instruction, co-teaching and collaboration, and increasing access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. This project, coupled with the Indiana PBIS initiative, will increase the capacity for teachers to better meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations.

Louisiana

Over the past five years, Louisiana's State Improvement Grant (LaSIG) funds have been used to:

- Pay stipends for teachers to engage in collaborative planning and attend professional development sessions.

- Pay for substitute teachers while teachers engage in job-embedded professional development.
- Pay for Family Facilitators in each educational region to identify and support family members on the school improvement teams. These facilitators act as "Goodwill Ambassadors" to the schools they serve.
- Pay for stipends for family members to participate on school improvement teams.
- Pay for ongoing leadership development opportunities for family members to build capacity as partners in education. These opportunities included topics such as IDEA, conflict resolution, and effective communication.
- Host bi-annual statewide professional development for all SIG participants. These days supported lateral capacity building and sharing of best practices.
- Leverage costs of statewide professional development initiatives.
- Support school level improvement teams to engage in best practices to improve outcomes for students

Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, the SIG/SPDG has been a pivotal and central reason why we have been able to maintain a cohesive focus on personnel development. The work we have done has been significant and impact is well beyond the grants received because the work we do with the SIG money is only the central impetus; we always get more "bang for our buck" than we feel we pay for. Example: our current grant funds an activity we call Project FOCUS Academy (PFA). We have developed our capacity to provide professional development within a web-based environment and are building a selection of coursework that is owned by us and thus, once developed, can be made readily available across the state for little or no cost. We have developed coursework on universal design (with CAST), transition planning, positive behavioral supports at the secondary level, developing relationships with families at the secondary level, and more is being developed. We have piloted the courses with high schools, providers and families and have had EXCELLENT feedback on the impact they are having on the work we do. It's the first time we have felt we are not only providing sustained professional development (which research shows makes the most impact) in a topic, but also building the capacity to have that same high quality professional development available at any time for other users. As we seem to be moving into a belt-tightening time, it is critically important to have systemic capacity to continue to respond to growing demands for high quality, sustained professional development in high need areas. Some of our work in PFA is state-of-the-art.

Michigan

The focus of Michigan's SIG-2 (2004-2007) is to increase adequate yearly program (AYP) proficiency rates for Michigan's middle school students with disabilities. It is specifically targeted to serve middle schools that failed to make AYP for the special education subgroup in two content areas -- Mathematics and English Language Arts.

The work engages general educators and special educators in sustained professional development (PD) activities, both as designers and participants. The objectives align with Michigan's State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator 3, "participation and performance of children with disabilities on statewide assessments" and SPP Indicator 5, "Least Restrictive Environment," by helping general educators to expand their repertoire of instructional strategies to engage students with diverse learning abilities.

The Mathematics initiative includes: (1) instructional sequences aligned to the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations; (2) diagnostic inventories which identify student knowledge and understanding relative to the instructional sequences; and (3) instructional planning strategies that relate specifically to the student's individualized educational plan.

The English Language Arts (ELA) initiative centers around factors that "inhibit the attainment of English Language Arts proficiency among Michigan's middle schools that have students with disabilities." Among the strong themes that have emerged:

- Emphasize that there is one curriculum for all students with high expectations for all students.
- Develop school-wide collaboration with all staff to address the needs of all students.
- Ensure that all PD has built in follow-up and on-site support.

Teams, including some from Detroit Public Schools, participated in a "Training of Trainers." These teams were charged with returning to their respective schools and training other ELA teachers.

With this background about the current Michigan SIG, it seems important to remind policy-makers of the need to sustain initiatives long enough for them to take root.

Michigan's Integrated Improvement Initiative Schools have accomplished the following as a result of participating in the project for three years:

- Increased the percent of students meeting or exceeding reading benchmark levels:
 - Kindergarten from 39% to 67%
 - First grade from 43% to 60%
 - Second Grade 42% to 56%
 - Third grade 42% to 47%
- Reduced the percent of students needing intensive reading support:
 - Kindergarten from 38% to 18%
 - First Grade from 24% to 16%
 - Second Grade from 35% to 27%
 - Third Grade from 26% to 19%
- Reduced the rate of major discipline problems by 22%.

By scaling up the Michigan's Integrated Improvement Initiative with SPDG funding, outcomes over the next five years will include:

- school-wide positive behavior and reading supports in 580 elementary, middle, and high schools, including Detroit Public Schools;
- at least eight technical assistance partners providing support and technical assistance to schools;
- 80-100 state trainers and 250 coaches representing 70% of all intermediate school districts (ISDs) and five large urban school districts sustaining implementation of school-wide positive behavior and reading support;
- university coursework on school-wide positive behavior and reading supports for administrators and specialists;and

- parents' and principals' awareness about Response to Intervention (Rtl) as a model for eligibility and program design to address the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Minnesota

“The State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) has enabled the formation of a special education teacher training cohort with a Native American focus. The foundations of the cohort will be based on the success of the Gekinoo’imaagejig – “The Ones Who Teach” - program at the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD). This group is part of the Teacher Corps program that uses a curriculum rooted in the core values or mino-bimaadizi-win (the good path) of the Anishinaabeg or Ojibwe. The program is a collaboration between UMD and the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC) to recruit, train and retain American Indian students interested in becoming teachers. Gekinoo’imaagejig is a program, unique not only in Minnesota but in the nation as well. This new cohort will also offer a wealth of resources to new teachers and continue to promote the shared vision of optimal educational opportunities we have for all the children we teach.

Missouri

Missouri uses its SPDG money to support a number of initiatives across the state. Twenty-three districts receive targeted funding. The initiatives are individually designed so as to better meet the unique needs and challenges of each district. Listed below are the most commonly occurring initiatives across Missouri:

- Reading First
- Differentiated Instruction
- Wilson Reading
- Collaborative Coaching Model
- Corrective Reading
- DIEBELS Curriculum

Montana

In Montana, these federal dollars are a primary source of supporting a sustained professional development focus on key areas that improve services and supports for students with disabilities. The primary initiatives supported include:

- *We Teach All*—This professional development initiative focused on creating more responsive instructional environments in the regular education classrooms in which a majority of students with disabilities spend their time. The initiative utilizes a team structure, bringing together general and special educators, to learn strategies designed to be scaled up within a building and district. Various forms of support are available, including information sessions, online resources and on-site support. More than 80 school teams have been involved in the project. Some of these teams are now serving as resources to other districts within the state.
- *Response to Intervention (Rtl) Pilot Projects*—The current SPDG supports pilot efforts to implement a carefully designed Rtl program in a sample of schools in Montana. The experience and outcomes associated with these pilot efforts will inform the development of both policy and technical assistance documents that will be available to districts

statewide. The SPDG also funds regional training for districts who have begun developing RtI programs within the district.

- *Collaborate with Reading First*—Reading First is the major statewide initiative focused on improved outcomes in this area for students in the early elementary grades. The SPDG funds support the work of a special education reading specialist who provides leadership and training in intervention strategies for Reading First special education teachers in order to reduce the gap between students with disabilities and their peers in reading. Specific activities and outcomes to date include:
 - providing on-site support for special education teachers at Reading First schools 20-25 times a year;
 - providing intervention strategies support to schools as needed;
 - developing and coordinating special education strand of the Statewide Montana Reading Institute;
 - providing an average of 25 trainings to early childhood personnel, general and special education teachers, on teaching reading and instructional strategies throughout the state; and
 - developing professional development online modules on research-based reading practices for general and special education teachers.
- Recruitment and retention of special education teachers is a challenge in Montana, particularly in the most rural areas of the state. Federal dollars from the SIG/SPDG have supported a Statewide Mentor Taskforce that oversees activities designed to increase the availability of this important form of support for new teachers. To date, the taskforce has accomplished the following:
 - developed goals for teacher mentoring in Montana;
 - refined learning objectives for the annual Mentor Institute;
 - assisted in planning the annual Mentor Institute; and
 - developed the "Teacher Mentor Program Development Template."

The Teacher Mentor Program Development Template was developed and distributed using grant funds. The template defines best practices in developing a teacher mentor program and provides concrete examples and resources to develop a teacher mentor program. It was originally disseminated via CD and will be on the Montana Office of Public Instruction website in the near future.

- *Teacher Mentor Institute*—The grant partially funds a teacher mentor institute every year. The institute focuses on developing mentoring skills for teacher mentors and working with participating districts in developing a local teacher mentor program that is modeled on best practices.
- *Highly Qualified Special Education Teachers*—The Office of Public Instruction collaborates with MSU-Billings in developing and piloting procedures, training and associated policies that use structured training and supervised co-teaching experiences as one way for special educators to become highly qualified in core content curriculum areas.
- *Early Childhood Preservice Training*—The grant funds training programs that produce high quality personnel to provide services to children served under Part C. The grant is

the only funding source for this project that prepares personnel in research-based early intervention practices.

Nebraska

Nebraska has had the opportunity to have SIG grants for the past seven years. During this time, the state implemented Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) using personnel funds in two of our largest school districts, Omaha and Lincoln, as well as in several smaller districts. This process has made a huge impact with Omaha going to scale in all elementary schools with PBIS and Lincoln going through the process this year. All schools going through this process have seen benefits through lower office referrals, suspensions and expulsions. Many of the original schools were in high poverty areas and test scores went up as behavior issues decreased.

This opportunity to use personnel improvement funds has generated an expansion of PBIS which includes early childhood providers, parents and family members, and before and after school personnel, which assists with developing positive expectations and a common language. The SPDG project in Nebraska will expand the Positive Behavior Supports statewide starting this year. Without these funds, it would not have been possible to implement one of the most outstanding changes to support Nebraska's public schools in over a decade. Many school personnel have said they would not have continued in education without this grant. The state has been fortunate to receive this funding to assist schools in changing school climate, and if funding were not available in the future, this would interrupt schools progress in PBIS and the strong connection to Response to Intervention which will assist all students with disabilities.

Nevada

Below are two descriptions that highlight some of the most essential work that Nevada has conducted with SIG funding.

- Establishing and coordinating a statewide Teaching Quality Task Force (TQTF) to bring together representatives of the Nevada Department of Education, institutions of higher education, school districts, parents, state policy levels and federally funded Technical Assistance Centers. The purpose of the TQTF has been to identify priorities in teacher preparation, licensure and professional development in order to create an action plan that ensures that every Nevada student receives instruction from highly qualified and effective teachers. With continued funding under the SPDG, the Task Force will support statewide reform for Nevada's system of teacher development to link and align pre-service licensure and professional development to sustain the delivery of high quality instruction and rigorous content for all Nevada students. This work is supported in part through the technical assistance of federal centers such as the Southwest Comprehensive Center and CCSSO's Center for Improving Teacher Quality (CTQ). It has provided a foundation for systems change in the state to increase teacher performance with students who have disabilities.
- Developing a statewide cohort of schools to engage in a pilot project to establish and sustain the Instructional Consultation (IC) Model, which provides a platform for the identification of students with disabilities under a Response to Intervention (RTI) system, and which also serves to ensure the provision of high quality instruction for every student. Each year a new cohort is established and over the time, the state will have created internal capacity to sustain the effective implementation of this evidence-based model across Nevada school districts. Preliminary data lead us to anticipate reduced

inappropriate referrals for special education, a strong correlation between referral and eligibility when referral does occur, increased student achievement for struggling learners including students with disabilities, and increased understanding by parents and policy makers regarding parents' rights. Again, this initiative creates an opportunity for lasting systems change in the state. Future dollars are absolutely essential to continue to move forward with this initiative.

New York

New York's SPDG goal is to improve outcomes for students with disabilities by increasing the skill of educators in low performing districts in research/evidence-based effective practices in literacy, behavioral and academic supports, delivery of effective special education services and to replicate successful strategies statewide. The New York State SPDG:

- identifies local educational agencies (LEAs) with effective instructional practices for students with disabilities;
- identifies and documents key components and implementation strategies for these practices for replication;
- provides professional development and technical assistance to targeted LEAs identified as needing assistance through the State Performance Plan (SPP) to implement, evaluate and maintain the key components of the identified strategies;
- supports mentor relationships between Effective Practice LEAs and Targeted LEAs;
- establishes a statewide Clearinghouse of Effective Practices; and
- infuses these effective practices into teacher/administrator preservice education.

Funded regional special education and general education technical assistance networks assist in the identification of effective practice and targeted LEAs. Other partners include state, regional and local agencies and institutions of higher education with expertise related to project goals. Consultants with expertise in the identified areas support professional development needs of project personnel as needed.

North Carolina

North Carolina has been involved with the State Improvement Grant since 2000. In less than seven years, the percent of students with disabilities scoring at or above grade level on the NC End of Grade reading tests, has increased at a rate almost three times greater than that of students without disabilities. Also, we currently have 60 of 115 LEAs involved with our reading /writing SIG project. With this grant, we developed a 30-hour reading foundation training and have provided quality professional development to over 1,200 educators.

Our Positive Behavior Support program is being successfully implemented in over 12% of our schools with a plan to scale up the next five years. The schools implementing Positive Behavior Support have shown dramatic decreases in suspensions and office referrals and increases in achievement and attendance.

The impact of the SIG is far reaching. We are not only building capacity across NC for research-based instruction, but are also building a network of support with all grant beneficiaries-parents, educators, administrators, professors and most importantly, students with disabilities, who are now achieving at levels never before imagined.

North Dakota

Our state really profited from our former SIG and we're already experiencing the benefits of our current SPDG. A primary use of those funds in our state was for enhancing our "resident teacher program." The funding has allowed us to provide predictable support and an expansion of this program to other institutions of higher education. The program is a collaborative effort to recruit, mentor and retain special education teachers in rural areas of ND. Our universities work with local school districts so that resident teachers can get on-the-job experience and earn a graduate credential in special education. We've also used our personnel development funding to explore more effective school improvement planning with local school districts.

Ohio

Ohio's SIG is a three-year systems change effort designed to provide an integrated model for addressing both the academic and behavioral issues of students with disabilities and other at-risk learners. The SIG provides a model for working with district and building teams in the development of meaningful improvement plans as well as a technical assistance model for regional providers to use in working with districts to promote high expectations for student learning; apply standards to all students to meet these high standards; effectively use student performance and accountability data to drive educational decisions at all levels; and deliver professional development focused on targeted improvement strategies.

Ohio has partnered with 11 organizations and universities and many school districts in connection with its SIG grant.

During the first year of implementation, we selected 17 level III sites and 57 level II sites. During year 2, we began to phase out our original level system and began implementing our model school-wide. We are currently working with 140 buildings and expanding to district-wide implementation. Our regional centers (SERRCs) are scaling up regionally as they increase their capacity for implementation.

The SIG is being used in Ohio as a vehicle for restructuring existing systems in ways that can be sustained after the project ends. As mentioned above, the work scope of Ohio's regional resource center (SERRC) network has been significantly altered to align with the work outlined in our SIG project. Specifically, SERRC personnel are now providing professional development and technical assistance to principal-led teams in the implementation of the three-tiered model of prevention and intervention. This model requires building teams to address the academic (reading) and behavioral needs of students with disabilities and students at risk of being identified as disabled in an integrated way. Not only has the SERRC work changed, but the way in which professional development is delivered is dramatically different from past years. SERRC coaches/liaisons provide ongoing and regular follow-up technical assistance to SIG building teams for the purpose of verifying accuracy of implementation of the concepts and strategies learned during initial professional development activities.

In addition to transforming the SERRC network, the SIG is being used as the framework for issuing the Office for Exceptional Children's (OEC) competitive discretionary grants to improve the capacity of school districts and buildings to improve access to and progress in attaining grade-level content for students with disabilities. A third of Ohio's 600 school districts applied for this grant which is a strong indicator for the level of interest and support for the structure and communication of the three- tiered prevention model.

Ohio's system of general supervision has also been affected by Ohio's SIG. For example, corrective action issued by OEC as a result of formal complaint investigation and/or focused monitoring often requires district/building personnel to access their area SERRC for professional development and technical assistance in specified areas related to findings of noncompliance. The ways in which OEC issues corrective action is being reviewed and revised to align with the work of the SIG and the ways in which SERRCs are now delivering high-quality professional development.

Ohio's 51 institutions of higher education (IHEs) are being affected by Ohio's SIG model through work being done in conjunction with other ODE offices, through the State Superintendent's Task Force for Preparing Special Education Personnel, and through the work of IHEs serving as local evaluators for SIG evaluation purposes.

Oklahoma

We were awarded a SPDG in the fall of 2006. We have four focus areas/goals: helping special education teachers become highly qualified in a core content area; implementing positive behavioral interventions and supports; recruiting and retaining special educators; and improving secondary transition programs and practices.

We are using our funds for the following activities:

- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS):
 - Bring in National PBIS consultants to provide an overview to 82 LEAs, demonstrating a disproportionate rate of suspensions and expulsions for students with disabilities.
 - Identify pilot sites (9 in Year I; 15 in Year II; adding 12 new schools each year by region for Year III, IV, and V for a total of 60 sites).
 - Identify staff from select school sites to receive coach and School-Wide Information System (SWIS) training.
 - Support the implementation of pilot site plans through subgrants (part of the money will be designated for purchasing a site license to use SWIS software and a stipend for the person doing the data entry).
 - Fully fund a contracted statewide coordinator for four years (beginning Year II).
- Highly Qualified Teachers:
 - Provide tuition reimbursement, certification exam fee reimbursement, and
 - a stipend for secondary special education teachers (grades 6-12) who want to become highly qualified and obtain certification in one of the three core content areas (i.e., mathematics, English, and science) and are willing to take a college course, attend a review session, take the exam, and continue teaching special education for at least one year after obtaining certification.
 - Contract with qualified trainers to provide certification exam review sessions for the core subject areas.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of college coursework and certification review sessions.
 - Host booths at job fairs and conferences to disseminate information about the program.

- Recruitment and Retention:
 - Provide tuition reimbursement, certification exam fee reimbursement and a stipend for regular education and alternatively certified teachers who want to become certified in special education and are willing to take a college course, attend a review session, take the exam and teach special education for at least one year after obtaining certification.
 - Contract with qualified trainers to provide certification exam review sessions for the special education certification exam.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of college coursework and certification review sessions.
 - Host booths at job fairs and conferences to disseminate information about the program.
 - Contract with Teachers-Teachers.Com to continue recruiting highly qualified candidates.
 - Maintain www.oklahomateachingjobs.org to continue posting vacancies in our state.
 - Sustain the First-Year Teacher Academies.
 - Provide a speaker at one of the meetings at the Academy; this speaker will present scientific-/evidence-based instructional/behavioral practices.
 - Provide travel, trainings, resources and technical assistance through 2nd and 3rd years of teaching.
 - Provide a stipend to mentors.
 - Provide three trainings per year for administrators on topics that will help support and retain special education teachers and related service providers.
 - Provide support for new special education directors by pairing them with veteran directors and holding three meetings per year in conjunction with the Oklahoma Directors of Special Services (ODSS) meetings.
 - Support a committee in the development and distribution of a handbook for special education directors.

- Secondary Transition:
 - Support the development and distribution of a secondary transition handbook to be given to all special education teachers, students, parents, special education directors, administrators and related service providers.
 - Contracted with the OU Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment to provide direct support to regional teams who attended the Oklahoma Transition Institute May 1-3, 2006; this includes technical assistance, resources, six trainings and evaluation of 16 team plans yearly; provide a report to SPDG staff.
 - Partner with NSTTAC to provide site-based technical assistance to at least two teams/sites toward building capacity to implement the transition plan developed at the Oklahoma Transition Institute (OTI).
 - Support a Master Teacher in the area of secondary transition: provide financial support for the master teacher to attend trainings, conduct trainings, and to receive an annual stipend at completion of activities.

Oregon

SIG funds have allowed us to scale up the best practice information to general education in an effort to reduce the numbers of students referred to special education particularly in the areas

relative to instruction such as reading, etc. In addition, these activities have allowed us to see improvement in performance on statewide assessments for students with disabilities as the frame of reference and expectations increase through actual direct instruction using the best research based strategies. These funds have been successful in our state for recruiting and retaining the highest quality special education staff, particularly in the rural and out state areas where the need is so great.

Rhode Island

The Rhode Island State Improvement Grant (RISIG) was developed in response to the needs identified in the self-assessment phase of the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP), completed by Rhode Island in December 2001. The goals and activities of the RISIG are rooted in the RI Comprehensive Educational Strategy (CES) and the IDEA mandate that all students will participate and perform in the general curriculum. The partners in CIMP identified three primary needs: First, increase the number of “highly qualified teachers” and paraprofessionals to provide effective instruction for children with disabilities in the general curriculum. Second, 20 local school districts in Rhode Island have been identified, through the RI School Accountability for Learning and Teaching process, as having “low performing, not improving” schools. These schools have been targeted to expand the staff’s capacity to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum, and to improve their performance with effective instructional strategies. Third, leaders with the knowledge and strategies to facilitate students’ with disabilities increased participation and performance in the general curriculum are lacking. The three goals of the SIG project are:

- Goal 1 – to insure that all students with disabilities are taught by highly qualified teachers.
- Goal 2 – to expand the opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum and to improve their performance on state assessments and other outcome measures.
- Goal 3 – to develop and inform educational leaders who will facilitate the participation and progress of children with disabilities in the general curriculum.

Systems change is evident through:

- increased collaboration between special education and general education higher education faculty;
- identification of student teacher placements co-taught by general and special education cooperating teachers;
- ongoing professional development for all higher education faculty, especially in the area of universal design for learning (UDL);
- development of a statewide recruitment plan, with special emphasis on minority recruitment;
- increased percentage of fully-certified special education teachers and reduced percentage of emergency-certified special education teachers;
- progress toward meeting recruitment targets for specified categories;
- improved special education student performance on statewide assessments and increased use of assessment accommodations;
- increased time for special education students in general education classes and decreased rates of disciplinary actions;
- increased number of new administrators and a decreased attrition rate; and

- increased number of parent leaders and development of a statewide special education parent local advisory committee network.

Utah

Good teaching and quality teacher preparation are more important than ever to reach the promise of all students succeeding in school. Over the last three years, the SIG has provided resources to enhance collaboration with the SEA, LEAs and institutions of higher education to recruit and retain special education teachers. The ten largest districts in Utah are now implementing high quality induction programs for beginning special education teachers. Induction initiatives include summer preparation institutes with a literacy focus, in classroom mentoring and support, mid-year state-wide new teacher institute and training for mentor teachers. Five year retention rates have improved from below 50% to 66% (2005/06). Evaluation efforts of professional staff development activities are supported through the SIG. These results and outcomes are shared statewide with a focus on closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities.

Wisconsin

One of the three main goals of Wisconsin's SIG is to break down the silos of work between special education providers by fostering collaboration among all key stakeholder groups. Evaluation data provides evidence Wisconsin is moving towards achieving full collaboration among SIG-funded special education providers/partners.

The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative, through Wisconsin SIG grant, awarded 12 mini-grants to four types of early childhood programs; birth to 3; child care reference and referral centers; Head Start; and community-based child care programs. One school-based program served 17 community preschools, five Head Start programs and one child care reference and referral. Each program successfully facilitated meaningful interactions between young children with disabilities and those without disabilities by implementing picture-supported environments. Through grant-supported training, they learned low tech strategies to increase communication between the child, peers, parents and adults in the classroom. Many increased communication with children who were deaf and hard of hearing through pictures of sign language and with children who had English as a second language.

Funds have been used in a variety of ways:

- to build a collaborative partnership and shared vision with all stakeholders providing services to children and youth with disabilities birth to 21;
- to build the skills and capacity of families and schools to support and work collaboratively to address the academic and behavioral needs of students with disabilities;
- providing training and leadership opportunities, especially to minority and ELL parents and increasing staff understanding of the value parents bring to the entire special education process;
- to implement new ideas and practices, monitor these practices and by using various forms of data, find what works and scale it up. (design, develop and implement guides, documents, a variety of materials in many forms);

In a "nut shell," our Wisconsin SIG has been used to build collaborative relationships, provide research based sustained professional development opportunities and dissemination of best

practices to improve the academic and behavioral outcomes of children with disabilities birth to 21.

State Usage of State Personnel Improvement Grants by Category

State	Literacy	Teacher/ Para- Professional Recruitment	Mentoring	Professional Development	Pedagogy	Collaboration	Early Intervention	Parental Involvement
Alabama	X			X	X	X	X	
Alaska		X	X			X		X
Arizona	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Arkansas	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Connecticut		X		X	X		X	X
DC	X			X	X	X	X	X
Delaware	X			X	X			X
Florida		X		X		X		
Georgia	X			X	X	X		X
Indiana	X			X		X	X	X
Louisiana				X		X		X
Massachusetts				X			X	X
Michigan	X			X		X	X	X
Minnesota		X		X	X			
Missouri	X					X	X	X
Montana	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Nebraska				X			X	X
Nevada	X			X			X	X
New York	X		X	X	X			X
N. Carolina	X			X				
N. Dakota		X	X					
Ohio	X			X		X	X	X
Oklahoma		X	X	X				
Oregon	X	X					X	
Rhode Island		X		X		X		X
Utah	X	X	X	X				
Wisconsin						X		X