

State of California

Department of Education

# INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 16, 2004

**TO:** MEMBERS, STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**FROM:** Sue Stickel, Deputy Superintendent  
Curriculum and Instruction Branch

**SUBJECT:** High Priority Schools Grant Program: Definition of “significant growth”

At its July 2004 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) will be called upon to establish the definition of “significant growth” for purposes of the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP). Established by Assembly Bill 961 (Chapter 749, Statutes of 2001), the HPSGP provides extra funding to schools that have the lowest achievement in the state. HPSGP schools that do not demonstrate significant growth are subject to sanctions, as explained below. This information memorandum presents three options for the definition of significant growth.

## Background

In September 2003, the SBE approved the definition of significant growth as directed by *Education Code* Section 52055.5(a) for schools participating in Cohorts II and III of the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). The approved definition is:

“Making positive growth on the schoolwide Academic Performance Index (API) in either of the two funded implementation years and each year thereafter until the school exits the program.”

The SBE also approved what was termed the “traffic light system” to designate whether II/USP schools had met their growth targets. The traffic light system assigns colors to schools based on their API growth progress:

- Schools demonstrating negative growth in any given year are designated with a red light.
- Schools demonstrating some growth, but not meeting their schoolwide and/or subgroup growth targets in any given year are designated with a yellow light.
- Schools meeting all their growth targets (school and subgroups) in any given year are designated with a green light.

These significant growth criteria apply only to II/USP schools.

With respect to the HPSGP, *Education Code* Section 52055.650 describes more fully the impact of school achievement as measured by the API over the course of three implementation years:

- Schools making growth targets each year get an additional year of funding.

- Schools not making growth targets each year, but demonstrating significant growth, as determined by the SBE, receive an additional year of funding and continue to participate in the program.
- Schools not making growth targets within the three implementation years and failing to make significant growth are subject to immediate accountability provisions and do not receive additional implementation funds.

The definition of significant growth is left to the SBE's discretion. Consequently, the SBE needs to adopt a definition of annual significant growth for HPSGP schools.

#### Significant Growth for HPSGP Schools

Significant growth is calculated each year and is independent of, and not influenced by, any other year's result. The following are three possible definitions of significant growth:

Option 1. When a school achieves positive growth on its schoolwide API.

This definition of significant growth parallels the definition established for II/USP schools. Other options would make the definition more rigorous. This option is most closely aligned with current II/USP language, and it parallels the current SBE threshold for significant growth.

Option 2. When a school achieves between 50 percent and 100 percent of its schoolwide API growth target.

This is a more rigorous definition, because instead of just "any positive growth," it requires at a minimum that the school gain half its schoolwide API growth target.

Option 3. When a school meets the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements.

This definition changes the metric that measures school progress. It makes the requirement parallel to federal Program Improvement requirements. Setting the requirement, this high would likely put most of the HPSGP schools into sanction. The fiscal consequences are unknown but could be significant.