

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 8, 2004

TO: MEMBERS, STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

FROM: Geno Flores, Deputy Superintendent
Assessment and Accountability Branch

SUBJECT: Research Questions for the Evaluation of High Priority Schools Grant Program

AB 961 established the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP) for the lowest performing schools, aiming to raise student academic achievement by offering additional resources targeted to student performance. Education Code 52055.656 mandates that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall develop, and the State Board of Education shall approve, the guidelines for a request for proposal to contract with an independent evaluator to review the HPSGP as specified in SB 508. However, SB 508 did not appropriate funds for the evaluation study. Therefore, a Budget Change Proposal was submitted and funding was appropriated in the 2003-04 Budget Act in the amount of \$600,000 annually for three years to conduct an evaluation of the program.

[Attachment 1](#): Research Questions for the Evaluation of the High Priority School Grant Program (3 Pages)

Research Questions for the Evaluation of the High Priority School Grant Program

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP) the California Department of Education (CDE) is seeking proposals from eligible bidders to conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation, impacts, costs and benefits of the High Priority School Grant Program (HPSGP) in accordance with the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (PSAA) as specified in SB 508.

Education Code Section 52055.656 mandates that the CDE develop guidelines for a RFP to contract with an independent evaluator to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the HPSGP for low performing schools. This requires the independent evaluator to prepare a multiyear evaluation of the implementation, impacts, costs, and benefits of the HPGSP and to disseminate the results of the report to the Legislature, the Governor, and other interested parties. The final report should include recommendations for modifications to the program that would increase its effectiveness.

Because SB 508 did not appropriate funds for the evaluation study, a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) was submitted in 2002. The BCP was approved, thus funding was provided in the 2003-04 Budget Act in the amount \$600,000 annually for this three-year evaluation.

Background of HPSGP

Assembly Bill 961 (Steinberg, Chapter 747, Statutes of 2001) established the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP) for the lowest performing schools in California. This program was intended to raise student achievement by offering additional resources targeted to student performance.

All schools that ranked in decile 1 according to the statewide 2000 Academic Performance Index (API) were invited to participate in the program. Participating schools have three years to implement their HPSGP Action Plan. Each year they must submit reports to the CDE with specified information regarding the academic achievement of students in participating schools.

Over 665 schools have participated in the HPSGP since its inception. Of these schools, over half receive funding only from HPSGP, the rest of them receive funds from the HPSGP and the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) or the Comprehensive School Reform Program (CSR).

Scope of Study

SB 508 specifically requires that the evaluation include the following:

1. Pupil performance data, including results of assessments used to determine whether schools have made significant progress towards meeting their growth targets.

2. Program implementation data, including a review of startup activities, community support, parental participation, staff development activities associated with implementation of the program, percentage of fully credentialed teachers, percentage of teachers who hold emergency credentials, percentage of teachers assigned outside their subject area of competence, the accreditation status of the school if appropriate, average size per grade level, and the number of pupils in a multi-tract year-round education program.
3. Pupil performance data, and its impact on the API, for each of the following subgroups:
 - a) English language learners,
 - b) Pupils with exceptional needs,
 - c) Pupils that qualify for free or reduced price meals and are enrolled in schools that receive funds under Chapter 1 of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 (P.L. 100-290).

Research Questions

1. How effectively did participating schools and districts implement the HPSGP?
 - a. Identify salient factors, patterns of practices, activities, strategies and processes used to implement the required components of the program. To what extent did these factors contribute to or detract from successful implementation the HPSGP?
 - b. Identify barriers that hindered implementation. To what extent did these barriers impede successful implementation the program?
 - c. Identify factors that influenced schools' decision to participate in HPSGP, initiated by school, district or jointly?
 - d. Analyze the extent to which each school's HPSGP Action Plan was implemented as written and evaluate its timeliness. Identify changes, if any, and under what circumstances, made to the Action Plan.
2. What are the impacts on, and benefits to, students from a school's participation in HPSGP, based on:
 - a. Results of assessments used to determine whether or not schools have made significant progress towards meeting their growth targets per the PSAA law (Education Code Section 52058[c])?
 - b. Results of disaggregated pupil's performance data for each of the following subgroups, as specified in the PSAA law (Education Code Section 2058[c])?
 - 1) English language learners,
 - 2) Pupils with disabilities,
 - 3) Pupils with socioeconomic disadvantages.

3. What has been the overall impact of participation in the HPSGP on school and district personnel, parents, the community, and on school and district organization, policies and practices, including but not limited to an examination of the following factors?
 - a. Distribution of experienced teachers,
 - b. The number of fully credentialed teachers and teachers who are assigned in their subject area of competence,
 - c. Staff development activities,
 - d. Parent participation, and strengthened partnership between the school and community,
 - e. The role of the district and the external evaluator,
 - f. Strategies, if used, to provide an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning,
 - g. Implementation data systems for student data assessment,
 - h. The use of data by district and school administrators and staff to evaluate program effectiveness.

4. What gains in student academic performance are realized from the investment of HPSGP resources?
 - a. Collect and analyze longitudinal academic performance data of schools participating in the HPSGP to identify trends.
 - b. Collect and analyze longitudinal academic performance data of schools participating in the HPSGP compared to the academic performance data of:
 - 1) prior to schools' participation in the HPSGP,
 - 2) schools that were eligible but did not participate in the program, and
 - 3) the state as a whole.
 - c. Collect and analyze growth patterns in academic performance of the following three groups of decile 1 schools:
 - 1) funded under HPSG,
 - 2) funded under both HPSG and II/USP,
 - 3) funded under HPSG and CSR.

5. What unintended consequences have resulted from the implementation of the HPSGP?