



Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
State Superintendent of Schools

DATE: September 21, 2010

SUBJECT: Approval to Change the School Improvement Status of Tier II schools from Baltimore City Public School System and Prince George's County Public Schools, as identified in Maryland's Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG)

PURPOSE:

As part of Maryland's Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG), the purpose of this action is to seek approval of the following waiver requests for the five **non-Title I** schools identified as Tier II Maryland Public Schools:

1. To allow the schools below to "start over" in the school improvement timeline; and
2. To allow the schools below to be exempt as "receiving schools" under the Title I Public School Choice Option.

Tier II Maryland Public Schools identified are:

- Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts High School (BCPSS);
- Benjamin Stoddert Middle School (PGCPS);
- Drew Freeman Middle School (PGCPS);
- G. James Gholson Middle School (PGCPS); and
- Thurgood Marshall Middle School (PGCPS).

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The United States Education Department (USED) has allowed states to apply for certain waivers for schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that participate in the Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG), under section 1003(g). In response, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) applied for a waiver of section 1115(b)(12) of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) to permit **Title I** Tier I and Tier II SIG schools that implement a turnaround or restart intervention model to "start over" in the school improvement timeline. Both BCPSS and PGCPS indicated in their SIG applications that they wish to apply this waiver to their **Title I** Tier I and Tier II schools.



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According to USED SIG guidance, only Title I schools are eligible for the federal waiver to change its school improvement status. In order for BCPSS and PGCPS to allow their **non-Title I** Tier II schools to avail themselves of the same waiver benefit as the **Title I** Tier I and Tier II schools, BCPSS and PGCPS made a formal written request to the State Superintendent of Schools to petition the State Board of Education on their behalf to waive COMAR Section 13A.01.04.07.

In addition each LEA was encouraged to submit a waiver request to exempt the same **non-Title I** Tier II SIG schools from becoming “receiving schools” for the Public School Choice Transfer Option under Title I, Part A of ESEA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The United States Education Department’s School Improvement Grant allows only **Title I** schools to request a federal waiver to change its school improvement status. Maryland’s **Title I** Tier I and Tier II schools have been granted this waiver. LEAs with **non-Title I** Tier II schools are requesting the same waiver from the State Board of Education to allow them to begin implementing their comprehensive reforms without the stigma of the school improvement label. In addition, by allowing **non-Title I** Tier II schools to be exempt from becoming a “receiving school” for Public School Choice, these schools will be able to focus their efforts on the student populations that were addressed in their application.

ACTION:

The State Board of Education is requested to approve the following waivers:

- To “start over” in the school improvement timeline for Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts High School in BCPSS; and Benjamin Stoddert Middle School, Drew Freeman Middle School, G. James Gholson Middle School, and Thurgood Marshall Middle School in PGCPS; and
- To exempt as “receiving schools” under the Title I Public School Choice Option Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts High School in BCPSS; and Benjamin Stoddert Middle School, Drew Freeman Middle School, G. James Gholson Middle School, and Thurgood Marshall Middle School in PGCPS.

NSG:AEC:MEL:jen:ya

Attachments



Prince George's County Public Schools
14201 School Lane • Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772 • www.pgcps.org

William R. Hite, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

August 16, 2010

RECEIVED

AUG 24 2010

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Dr. Grasmick:

On behalf of the four Tier II middle schools implementing a turnaround model in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), I am requesting that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) grant the following *waiver requests*:

1. To "start over" in the school improvement timeline; and
2. To be exempt as receiving schools under the Title I Public School Choice provision.

The 2010-2013 School Improvement Grant (SIG) under Title I 1003(g) affords PGCPS an opportunity to create an innovative structure that will ensure student achievement and success. The comprehensive plan, as approved by MSDE, allows the four middle schools to significantly focus on the following priorities:

1. Governance
2. Attraction and selection of highly qualified staff
3. Focus on academic rigor and not on intervention
4. School climate

PGCPS fully leveraged the opportunity presented by the SIG 1003(g) grant by constructing a bold plan that looks and feels different than any plan previously created. The guiding principles of the plan will allow the district to attract the best people and empower them to control and monitor the collaborative planning process within the four turnaround schools. A Turnaround Director will provide leadership in the implementation of the 1003(g) school improvement grant program and will ensure that funds are used in a timely, effective, and efficient manner as outlined in the plan.

Coaching support will be internally based and monitored at each Tier II school. Tier II principals will have the autonomy to structure the master schedule to support rigorous coursework. A multi-disciplinary steering committee will provide support to engage district staff in reflective and collaborative conversation to plan, modify, and improve the activities funded under the grant. Finally, parent and community groups representing each school will participate with stakeholder groups to explore strategies for success and sustainability of improvement once funding ends.



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PGCPS feels that this innovative plan presents the greatest likelihood of improving student achievement in the four schools. For this reason, I am asking that you grant the waiver request. Thank you for your favorable consideration of this request as we work together for the students of Prince George's County Public Schools.

Sincerely,



William R. Hite
Superintendent of Schools

c: Members, Board of Education
Members, Executive Cabinet
Dr. Duane Aborgast
Mrs. Debra Mahone
Mrs. Judy Jefferson
Mrs. Betty Parker-Joseph

BALTIMORE CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Neil E. Duke, Esq.
Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners

Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

August 25, 2010

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Dr. Grasmick:

Please accept this letter as a request for waiver from its school improvement status for Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts (#430), a non-Title I, Tier II school participating in the Title I 1003G School Improvement Grant (ARRA). I understand that as a condition of this waiver, Augusta Fells Savage would not participate as a "Receiving School" for the Public School Choice Transfer Option under Title I Part A. Please note that Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) does not serve high schools; as a result, Augusta Fells Savage would not be among the list of "Receiving Schools" for our Public School Choice (locally known as the Title I Transfer Option) initiative.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Dr. Tasha Johnson, Director of the Office of Federal Programs/Title I at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

C: Dr. Tasha Johnson, Director of the Office of Federal programs/Title I

