

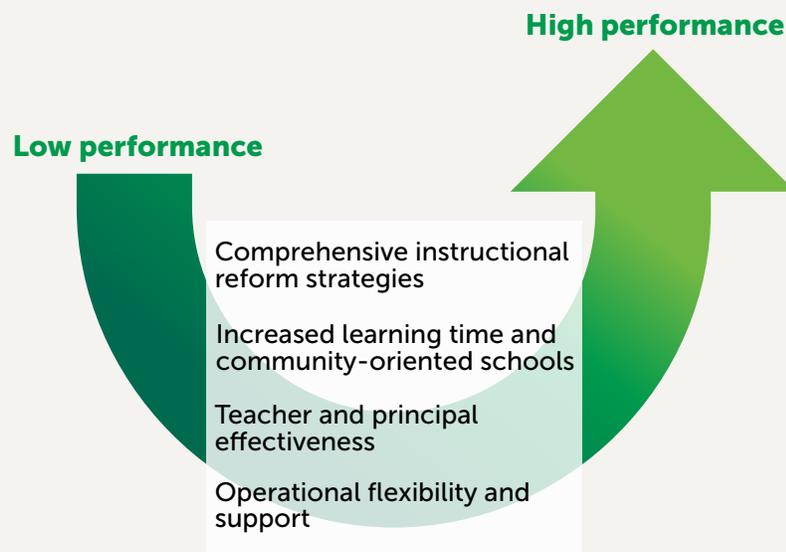
# InFOCUS

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## Examining Schools' Use of Practices Promoted by School Improvement Grants

The School Improvement Grants (SIG) program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) aimed to improve student outcomes in the nation's lowest-performing schools. Schools receiving SIG funds agreed to implement a school intervention model and associated school improvement practices. SIG received \$3 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to fund the grants, in addition to \$546 million already appropriated for SIG that year.

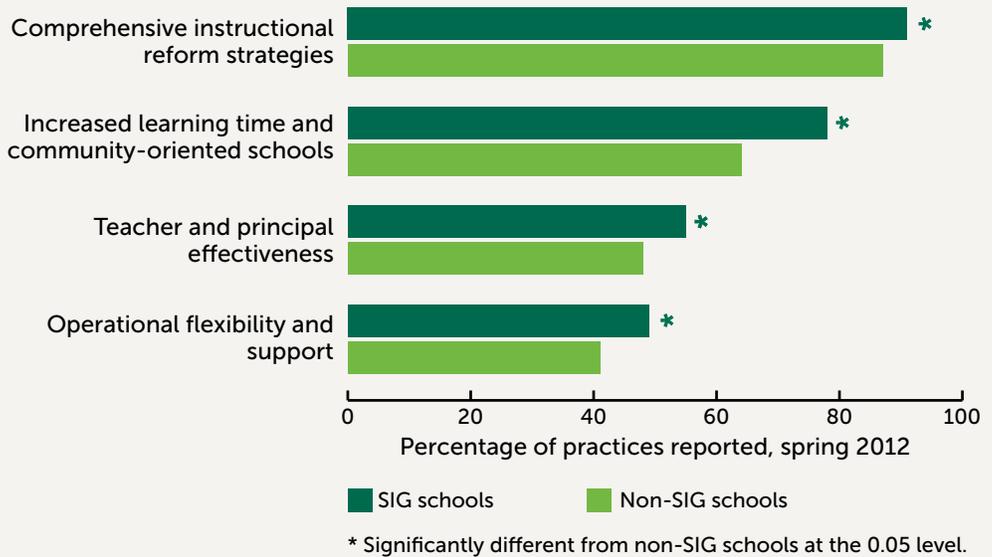
**The SIG program aimed to turn around low-performing schools by encouraging them to implement practices in 4 areas.**



Given the sizeable investment in SIG, it is of policy interest to know (1) if schools that received grants are actually using the practices promoted by SIG and (2) if they are more likely to use them than schools that did not receive grants. Comprehensive evidence on these questions has been limited to date.

A new report from Mathematica's multi-year evaluation of SIG for ED's Institute of Education Sciences describes the practices schools reported using in spring 2012. The evaluation examines whether schools that implemented a SIG-funded intervention model (SIG schools) were more likely to use the practices promoted by SIG than schools that did not implement such a model (non-SIG schools).

**SIG schools reported using more SIG-promoted practices than non-SIG schools in all 4 areas.**



**KEY FINDINGS**

• **SIG schools reported using more SIG-promoted practices than non-SIG schools in all four areas examined:**

(1) implementing comprehensive instructional reform strategies, (2) increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools, (3) improving teacher and principal effectiveness, and (4) having operational flexibility and receiving support.

• **Across all schools, use of SIG-promoted practices was highest in the comprehensive instructional reform strategies area and lowest in the operational flexibility and support area.**

On average, schools reported using 90 percent of the practices promoted by SIG in the comprehensive instructional reform strategies area and 46 percent of the practices in the operational flexibility and support area.

• **Across the four areas, there were no differences between SIG and non-SIG schools in use of SIG-promoted practices that focused on English language learners (ELLs).** SIG and non-SIG schools reported using, on average, about half of the ELL-focused policies and practices promoted by SIG.

**SAMPLE AND METHODS**

Data for this report came from surveys of school administrators conducted in spring 2012. The sample included 470 schools (290 SIG schools and 180 non-SIG schools), located in 60 districts from 22 states. Each state and district included a mix of low-performing schools that either were or were not implementing a SIG-funded model. The sample was purposively selected to support estimation of the impact of SIG on student outcomes; a future report will present these findings. Although these results do not necessarily apply to SIG schools nationwide, they are nonetheless important because they add to the limited knowledge base about the implementation of SIG.

**ABOUT THE REPORT**

This report, written by Mathematica and the American Institutes for Research, describes the practices promoted by SIG that schools reported using in spring 2012. The full report is available at [http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/rtt\\_sig\\_rpt\\_sig.pdf](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~media/publications/pdfs/education/rtt_sig_rpt_sig.pdf). A future report will update the findings for spring 2013 and examine the impact of SIG on student outcomes.

