



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

October 2, 2007

The Honorable Joseph Morton
Superintendent of Education
Alabama Department of Education
Gordon Persons Office Building
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36104

Dear Superintendent Morton:

As you know, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has challenged States to close the achievement gaps between subgroups of students and ensure that all students are proficient in reading and math by 2014. The law also included comprehensive reforms that ensure all students have access to a high quality teacher, a greater focus on the use of research based instructional practices, and a new emphasis on school improvement.

After more than five years, I am pleased to report that States and local school districts have made great strides when it comes to putting these reforms in place. In fact, the most up-to-date information we have indicates that more than 70 percent of schools were able to meet State developed standards and make adequate yearly progress (AYP) last year. The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress also reveals that math scores for 4th- and 8th-graders and the reading scores for 4th-graders are at historic highs and the biggest gains were made by African American and Hispanic students.

In addition to implementing these landmark reforms, NCLB also asked States to take a greater role in developing and delivering comprehensive leadership and technical assistance when it comes to school and districts that aren't making AYP. This is why President Bush's fiscal year 2008 budget requests \$500 million for the School Improvement Grants, which support States in their efforts to build capacity and support school improvement activities.

While we are still awaiting a final fiscal year 2008 appropriation from Congress, I am pleased to inform you that the fiscal year 2007 School Improvement Fund application is now available. For fiscal year (FY) 2007, \$125 million is available for awards under the section 1003(g) School Improvement Fund of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). State educational agencies (SEAs) must apply for these formula grant funds by submitting an application to the U.S. Department of Education (Department).

Section 1003(g) of the ESEA authorizes formula grants to SEAs to assist schools identified for improvement, corrective action, and restructuring. An SEA must subgrant at least 95 percent of its allocation to local educational agencies (LEAs) with schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring to support technical assistance to such schools and to make available additional resources to develop and implement school improvement plans. The SEA may retain five percent for State-level activities.

The FY 2007 preliminary allocation for your State can be found on the enclosed chart. Under the statute, each State, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and each outlying area is entitled to receive FY 2007 School Improvement Funds in proportion to the FY 2007 funds it receives under Parts A, C, and D, Subpart 1 of Title I of the ESEA. Your School Improvement allocation is preliminary because the Department does not yet have final FY 2007 allocation data for Part C (Migrant Education).

When final Part C allocation data become available, the Department will adjust the FY 2007 School Improvement allocations accordingly. The Department hopes to make those adjustments from FY 2008 School Improvement Funds, provided such funds are appropriated; otherwise, the Department will adjust the FY 2007 allocations.

Enclosed with this notice is the application process information, which outlines the content and submission requirements for these funds. Applications should be received by the Department by November 20, 2007. The Department will conduct a review to ensure that all applications comply with all program requirements. The application will be considered an amendment to your consolidated State plan.

The Department, in cooperation with the Council of Chief State School Officers, will schedule conference calls to walk through the application process and answer any questions that you may have. We will contact you with the dates and times for these calls should you or your staff wish to participate.

If you have any questions, please contact Sheila Sjolseth at 202-260-5619 or Gary Rutkin at 202-260-4412 or by email at school.improvement.fund@ed.gov.

Sincerely,



Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.

cc: State Title I Director

Enclosures:
School Improvement Fund Application
School Improvement Grant Allocation Chart