

UNISIG APPLICATION

20 - Gadsden



Roger Milton, Superintendent

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Purpose and Outline of the UniSIG Proposal

Under section 1003 of Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act, Public Law No. 114-95, each state educational agency (SEAs) shall reserve funds for school improvement, no less than 95 percent of which shall be used to make grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) on a formula or competitive basis, to serve schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities or targeted support and improvement activities under section 1111(d).

For 2017-18, Unified School Improvement Grants (UniSIG) will be awarded on a formula basis. Eligible applicants are local educational agencies (LEAs) with funded Title I schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement, as well as LEAs with high schools, Title I or non-Title I, that have a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate of 67 percent or less, regardless of the school grade earned.

Part I: Eligibility and Program Requirements

The district reviews the list of eligible schools and allocations and ensures the requirements of UniSIG are met by providing assurances and summaries as applicable.

Part II: Needs Assessment

For each eligible school, the district demonstrates it has completed a thorough analysis of state-, district-, and school-level data (qualitative and quantitative) in order to identify points of strength and opportunities for growth to inform strategic goal formulation.

Part III: District Problem Solving

The district documents one or more strategic goals for improving the identified schools, anticipates barriers to the goals, identifies strategies to reduce or eliminate the barriers, and creates an implementation plan for each strategy to include both action steps and monitoring activities.

Part IV: Budget

The district incorporates a budget that indicates the amount of UniSIG funds the district will use in each eligible school. Each budget line item, except indirect costs, is directly tied to an action step identified in Part III.

LEA Eligibility and Program Requirements

Eligible LEA and Allocations

LEA Assurances

Request for Applications

We have read the Request for Applications (RFA) in its entirety and understand the intent and requirements of the Unified School Improvement Grant (UniSIG) program.

YES

General Terms, Assurances, and Conditions

We understand the LEA must have a signed statement by the agency head certifying applicant adherence to FDOE's General Terms, Assurances, and Conditions for Participation in Federal and State Programs.

YES

Risk Analysis

We understand the LEA must have a Risk Analysis (DOE 610) on file with the Florida Department of Education in order to apply for UniSIG.

YES

Supplement, not Supplant

We understand that each school the LEA will serve must receive all of the state and local funds it would have received in the absence of UniSIG funds.

YES

Allocation to Schools

We understand the LEA must allocate 100 percent of funds (less indirect costs) generated under UniSIG to the eligible schools.

YES

Alignment of Strategies

We understand strategies to be implemented under this program must be aligned with Florida's State Board of Education Strategic Plan.

YES

Alignment of School Improvement Plans (SIP)

We understand each strategy to be funded under this program must be identified as an **Activity** (within the Standard SIP) or an **Area of Focus** (within the Pilot SIP), with associated budget lines for each school to be served.

YES

Greatest Need

We understand programs, activities, or strategies to be implemented must specifically address the academic achievement of schools and students that demonstrate the greatest need.

YES

Instructional Programs

We understand evidence-based instructional programs must be implemented.

YES

Extended Learning Time

We understand that extended learning time activities required of an elementary school designated as one of Florida's lowest performing must not be funded through UniSIG.

YES

Deilverables and Monitoring

We understand deliverables will be monitored quarterly by the LEA for each school site funded through UniSIG. The LEA must monitor deliverables and be prepared to submit them to the Bureau of School Improvement (BSI) upon request. BSI reserves the right to do desktop or on-site monitoring of each school site and LEA.

YES

Supports for School Improvement

Improvement Planning

Describe how the LEA will support each school identified as comprehensive support and improvement (CS&I) and/or targeted support and improvement (TS&I) in developing and implementing a school improvement plan (SIP).

Gadsden County School Board fully supports and will continue to support all of its schools and students but will extend even more support to the CS&I and/or TS&I schools in order to shape them into higher performing schools. The district targets support that focuses on student success in climate, culture, and academics. It reviews staffing plans closely and provides additional supplemental interventionists as needed at each school based on school improvement plans to improve the school and student's chances for future success in all key areas. As school improvement plans are being developed, Area Directors of Education and an external principal mentor meet regularly with school leadership assisting each leadership team in a deep review of their 2017-1018 school improvement plans to identify which barriers were crossed, which strategies were implemented, and which action steps resulted in improvement. The review also identified which strategies and action steps did not result in any appreciable improvement so those were eliminated and replaced with plans designed to better effect positive outcomes. As new barriers were identified in the review process, new strategies were developed to cross those barriers. New principals to a school brought new thoughts and views to the review process and added their own individual perspectives about which strategies they thought would be best implemented under their new leadership. Together, the schools and district leadership have developed what we feel are plans that will bring about school reform that is sustainable without program fragmentation and duplication of effort.

Alignment of Resources

Describe the process through which the LEA identifies and aligns all district resources (e.g., personnel, instructional, curricular, policy) in order to meet the needs of all students and maximize desired student outcomes. Include the methodology for coordinating and supplementing federal, state and local funds, services and programs to align to interventions in comprehensive support and improvement (CS&I) and targeted support and improvement (TS&I) schools. Provide the person(s) responsible, frequency of meetings, how an inventory of resources is maintained, and any problem-solving activities used to determine how to apply resources for the highest impact.

The process is to provide forums (groups of stakeholders using mechanisms that evaluate needs) that ensure there is open communication at all times between different departments through regular meetings with all stakeholder groups to review funding sources and data, including funding from state, federal and local sources, district mission/vision/goals, and the goals/deliverables of all state and federally funded

projects to prioritize dollars to the needs of students in the district. These forums, include but are not limited to:

- Budget Meetings
- Staffing Meetings with individual school leaders
- Executive Management Meetings
- Instructional Leadership Meetings
- District Leadership Meetings
- Interdepartmental Meetings
- Federal Program Collaboration Meetings
- Assessment/Data Review Meetings

Include the methodology for coordinating and supplementing federal, state and local funds, services and programs to align to interventions in Priority and Focus schools.

After analysis of needs assessment data, the methodology used is the integration of all district activities with financially informed project strategies to provide clarity and blend important metrics such as start-up costs, time needed, funding status, stakeholders involved, strategies, products, implementation of strategies, and identifying schedules for timely delivery of financially feasible projects designed to raise student proficiency and develop college and career ready graduates.

Provide the person(s) responsible:

- Area Director of Business and Finance
- Area Directors of Education
- Area Director for Support Services
- Area Director of Federal Programs
- Director of Professional Learning
- Director of ESE Services
- Director of MIS-IT Technology
- Coordinator of Parent Services
- Coordinator of Early Learning
- Coordinator of Assessment
- District Instructional Specialists
- Principal Consultant
- Other district staff

Frequency of meetings: Monthly, or sooner as needed.

How inventories of resources are maintained:

- Capitalized resources (over \$750 per single item and useful life of over 1 year) are documented and lists maintained by district inventory specialist.
- Annual reviews of capitalized inventory are conducted with department heads and site leaders verifying location and/or transfer of property.
- Non-capitalized resources (under \$750 per single item and useful life of less than 1 year) that are consumable are not documented, except through review of purchase orders
- Non-capitalized resources (under \$750 per single item and useful life of more than 1 year) purchased through federal funding and are not consumable are kept track of through inventory records in federal programs office and shipment records to sites.
- Inventories of textbook resources are kept by the K-12 department and are tracked through transfer forms and purchase orders; collection of older texts are also tracked and submitted for return to companies and/or disposal.
- Inventories of smaller digital devices purchased with local funding are kept with MIS department and regular review and recall of items is done to update and re-inventory equipment.

- Records of employee assets and their credentials are kept in the district Personnel Office.

Any problem-solving activities used to determine how to apply resources for the highest impact:

- Funding, staffing, and instructional decisions are all driven by data analyses to ensure that the resources are prioritized based on student needs
- Schools identified as focus and priority by the Florida Department of Education are provided extra resources specifically targeted to achievement gaps and student accommodations to close gaps and raise student achievement. The K-12 department provides ongoing daily, weekly, and monthly services for progress monitoring, teacher modeling, and other technical assistance to these schools. Instructional Specialists are assigned to priority and focused schools and targeted assistance is provided,
- All school staffs are provided ongoing professional development to build teacher quality, ensure highly qualified teaching staff, and to enhance their personal development for retention and sustainability of reform efforts.

District Policies and Practices

Identify specific policies and practices the LEA shall seek to add, modify, or remove in order to establish or strengthen systems that support school-based leadership teams to implement interventions. Provide the rationale for the proposed changes and the steps required to make the modifications, including person(s) responsible for implementation and follow-up.

The School Board of Gadsden County has reviewed, revised and/or adopted and approved the following policies as of June 25, 2013:

2120 - SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The School Board supports the concept of school improvement as established by the State Board of Education and will seek to create and/or maintain effective schools as defined by Florida statute. The Board shall annually approve and require implementation of a school improvement plan for each school in the District and shall provide funds to schools for developing and implementing school improvement plans. In addition to adopting a mission statement and educational philosophy for the District, the Board shall create, as needed, policies which support the school improvement process. The Superintendent shall establish administrative procedures which will provide for:

- A. School improvement plans which are developed and implemented by school-based teams, working collaboratively, so that both building level and District level goals for students can be identified and correlated, and then achieved through effective planning, problem-solving, and assessment.
- B. A District-wide, school-improvement plan which provides for building-level decision-making regarding program assessment, curriculum review, determination of performance standards, budgetary review, staff development, and the monitoring and assessment of student outcomes.
- C. Collaboration at both the building and District levels with parents, relevant institutions and groups, especially those in the community, who can support and facilitate school improvement in the District.
- D. A system of school reports and dissemination of information regarding the performance of students and educational programs as required by Florida statute and State Board of Education rule.

In order to enhance school improvement, the Superintendent is authorized to waive any policy that has been enacted in order to comply with the following Federal statutes/regulations and to request waivers from these laws/regulations from the Superintendent of Public Instruction:

Titles I, II, IV, VI, and Part C of Title VII of the ESEA Act of 1965
The Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act
The General Education Provisions Act
Parts of Education Department General Administrative Regulations

2700 - ACADEMICALLY HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The School Board believes that a goal of any public school system should be to enable each student to achieve to the best of his/her ability. That end, is best achieved through continuous development of the

curriculum, the selection, development, and retention of high quality staff members, and the motivation of each individual student, instructional staff member, support staff member, and administrator in the District. Earning designation as an academically high-performing school district must not be viewed as an end unto itself, but rather as the standard for which the District strives each year. Florida statute provides school districts that demonstrate the ability to consistently maintain or improve their high-performing status with exemptions from many requirements set forth in statute and in the rules adopted by the State Board of Education to implement State law.

2111 - PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

The School Board recognizes and values parents and families as student's first teachers and decision-makers in education. The Board believes that student learning is more likely to occur when there is an effective partnership between the school and the student's parents and family. In cultivating partnerships with families and communities, the Board is committed to the following:

A. Relationships with Families

1. establishing school environments that are welcoming, supportive, and student-centered;
2. providing professional development for school staff that helps build partnerships between families and schools;
3. providing family activities that relate to various cultures, languages, practices, and customs, and bridge economic and cultural barriers;
4. providing coordination, technical support and other support to assist schools in planning and implementing family involvement activities.

B. Effective Communication

1. providing information to families to support the proper health, safety, and well-being of their students;
2. providing information to families about school policies, procedures, programs, and activities;
3. promoting regular and open communication between school personnel and students' family members;
4. communicating with families in a format and language that is understandable, to the extent practicable;
5. providing information that will enable families to encourage and support their students' academic progress, especially in the area of reading;
6. providing information that will enable families to encourage and support their students' citizenship, especially social skills and respect for others;
7. providing information that will enable families to encourage and support their students' realization of high expectations and setting life-long learning goals;
8. providing information and involving families in monitoring student progress;
9. providing families with timely and meaningful information regarding Florida's Sunshine State Standards, State and local assessments, and pertinent legal provisions;
10. preparing families to be involved in meaningful discussions and meetings with school staff.

C. Volunteer Opportunities

1. providing volunteer opportunities for families to support their students' school activities;
2. supporting other needs, such as transportation and student care, to enable families to participate in school-sponsored family involvement events.

D. Learning at Home

1. offering training and resources to help families learn strategies and skills to support at-home learning and success in school;
2. working with families to establish learning goals and help their students accomplish these goals;
3. helping families to provide a school and home environment that encourages learning and extends learning at home.

E. Involving Families in Decision Making and Advocacy

1. Involving families as partners in the process of school review and continuous improvement planning involving families in the development of its District-wide parent involvement policy and plan

F. Collaborating with the Community

1. building constructive partnerships and connecting families with community-based programs and other community resources;

2. coordinating and integrating family involvement programs and activities with District initiatives and community-based programs

The Superintendent will provide a comprehensive plan to engage parents, families, and community members in a partnership that supports each student's academic achievement, the District's continuous improvement, and individual school improvement plans. The plan will provide for annual evaluation, with the involvement of parents and families, of the plan's effectiveness and identification of barriers to participation by parents and families.

Operational Flexibility

Provide the LEA's definition of "operational flexibility" provided to comprehensive support and improvement (CS&I) and targets support and improvement (TS&I) schools to enable full and effective implementation of the school improvement plan (SIP).

The responsibility of implementing a school-level turnaround plan is a collaborative effort between the external partner, Area Directors of Education, and the school's principal and teaching staff. Principals in turnaround schools are given the authority to implement a reform plan that is specific to the needs of the school and its students. The principal is given the flexibility to hire staff and develop a team of teachers who are committed to positively impacting school improvement. No teacher will be placed at the school that has not met with the approval of the turnaround principal and other committed staff members who form the school leadership team. The principal will determine if a staff member is not supportive of his/her reform plan to implement turnaround strategies. Staff members who are not supportive of the reform plan will be removed from the school at the principal's request. While the district leadership team, with school leader input, selects district-wide initiatives to be applied to every school, the principals at turnaround schools are given additional flexibility in determining what specific supplemental interventions they feel are necessary to move their students ahead academically. Turnaround principals have flexibility from several district rules on instruction, school schedule, student groupings, and other instructional strategies. In most cases, principals focus first on changing school culture to build both teacher and student expectations.

External Partners

Describe the LEA's rigorous review process to recruit, screen, select, and evaluate any external partners with whom the LEA will partner.

The District's process to identify an external partner and review potential external partners was very rigorous and involved soliciting proposals from at least three evidence-based partners. Proposals, not only included costs but included evidence that they had the ability to understand Florida Standards, have made substantial gains in other schools with the same grade level, and that they have been able to successfully implement their strategic plans with similar demographic groups as are being served in Gadsden's CS&I, TS&I schools. Services of all submitted proposals were outlined in a matrix to compare value and determine if strategies would assist the district in changing the school culture, climate, teacher and leader quality, and student achievement. These matrices were shared with the School Board, the State Board of Education, and the district stakeholders to assist with the selection process. Proposal costs were also evaluated to determine the best value that could be obtained with limited revenues, yet the most effective plan that had the highest potential for return on investment.

Dissemination

Provide the methods for dissemination of this application to stakeholders (i.e., students, families, school staff and leadership, and local businesses and organizations) and describe the methods and timelines for reporting student progress, including how communication is provided in a parent-friendly, understandable format, and in multiple languages, if necessary.

Dissemination Methods: School and district marques; internal building signage; media; news releases; School Board meetings; Quarterly Community assessment team meetings; bi-monthly parent meetings; electronic alerts; district and school websites and on social media. Timelines of reporting vary with type

of information. The district will develop and disseminate a report card annually through media, websites, and signage. The district will hold quarterly CAT meetings and monthly Board meetings where information will be shared with the public. Schools will share district and school report cards at annual Title I meetings and through bi-monthly parent meetings. Parents will be notified of their rights annually through newsletters, backpack notices, electronic notices, and other media releases. All schools are provided with translated materials to assist non-English speaking families with registration. District-trained bi-lingual staff are available through the ELL and Migrant Department to provide services to parents in their native language whenever feasible. Schools with 15 or more of the same non-English speaking students are encouraged to hire bilingual assistants within the school. Interpreters assist during parent meetings, ESE staffing, ELL committee meetings and other meetings requiring translations. A continuous effort to translate documents directed at parents and to post in the heritage language on the district website is a priority. All parent notifications through the electronic messaging system (Skylert) and the student database parent portal are available in Spanish. All parents are able to receive or hear translated messages about all programs that impact their students at the schools as is practicable.