

Summary of Level 4 School Funding Opportunities

In May 2010, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) formally declared 35 schools as Level 4 (“underperforming”) schools. These designations were based on a statewide analysis to identify which schools required the most significant intervention to improve academic outcomes for students. *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap*, signed by the Governor in January 2010, redefined the responsibility of ESE and school districts to intervene in Level 4 schools, but did not specify the allocation of additional financial resources districts should expect in order to rapidly improve the academic performance in the schools. The following is a description of the funding opportunities available to districts with Level 4 schools.*

Federal School Turnaround Grants

In February 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) finalized regulations for the use of competitive grants to intervene in each state’s lowest performing schools. Each district will be eligible to apply for \$500,000 or more per year for up to three years on behalf of each of its Level 4 schools. A district applying for a School Turnaround Grant will be required to choose one of four federally-prescribed intervention models and demonstrate its capacity to implement that model effectively over three years. Details of the grant application can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/turnaround/>.

School Turnaround Grant applications require that districts develop extremely rigorous Redesign Plans for each school that will be assessed against three sets of criteria:

- 1) The extent to which the district and school(s) demonstrates the capacity and commitment to support and implement the proposed strategies;
- 2) The extent to which the plans are based on a detailed analysis of current, accurate and precise data; and
- 3) The extent to which the plans display a strategic and actionable approach that will lead to rapid and sustainable improvement in targeted schools.

USED requires that applications for the 3-year School Turnaround Grants be submitted by July 28th, 2010 in order to receive funds for the 2010-11 – 2012-13 school years. School Turnaround Grants must be submitted by December 1st, 2010 in order to receive funds for the 2011-12 - 2013-14 school years.†

Level 4 Schools ‘Bridge Funding’

Due to the high standard by which the federal School Turnaround Grant applications will be assessed, many districts will have insufficient time to develop Redesign Plans that meet all of the federal criteria. As a result, ESE will be making available ‘Bridge Funding’ grants of approximately \$100,000 that will be available for Level 4 schools not receiving School Turnaround Grants for the 2010-11 school year. These funds will be made available upon the approval of a Level 4 school’s Turnaround Plan, and must be used to implement the strategies outlined in the first year of the plan. Level 4 schools that receive ‘Bridge Funding’ will be eligible to apply in December for the three-year School Turnaround Grant funds beginning 2011-2012.

* This description does not apply to the Matthew J. Kuss Middle School and Henry Lord Middle School in Fall River Public Schools .

† Pending federal approval