



**The District School Improvement and
Accountability Council (SIAC)
Comments and Recommendations
to the Board of Education
On
Unified Improvement Plans**

April 2011

Background

During the past several years, a number of changes have occurred influencing the manner in which School Improvement Plans (now Unified Improvement Plans) have been prepared and written:

- In 2007, a new district wide School Improvement Planning process and template were introduced with the expectation that goals be developed for a three year timeframe.
- The School Performance Framework was introduced in 2008 for use in the evaluation of school performance. SIP goals did not necessarily correspond to the areas evaluated in the SPF.
- In 2010, schools were directed to develop Unified Improvement Plans in lieu of SIPs.

Consequently due to the changes noted above, District SIAC has been unable to provide specific school feedback. However, in 2008 a report was presented to the Board of Education with suggestions on process improvement.

Process

To complete our review in a timely fashion, District SIAC formed a committee from its membership that included:

Mary Franza, DPS Retired Employee Association
Marsha Gonzales, Community Person
Carla Johnson, DPS Parent
Rita Montero, Community Person, Former DPS Board Member
Michelle Moss, DPS Parent, Former DPS Board Member
Paula Ortlieb, DPS Parent, DPS Employee, Chair of District SIAC
Joan Poston, DPS Employee
Jacqui Shumway, DPS Parent

In mid-November, the District provided SIAC with non-charter school UIPs. Charter school UIPs were received in mid-December. District SIAC was informed that the Board would be voting in mid-January thus any input from District SIAC would be needed prior to that vote.

UIPs for review were selected by subcommittee according to the following process:

- Using the SPF Rating and Indicator Summary Report, we chose the four lowest rated schools in each of the grade configurations (elementary, K-8, middle and high).
- Using the SPF Rating and Indicator Summary Report, we also chose the top rated schools in each of the grade configurations (elementary, K-8, middle and high) for comparison.
- CDE's Title IA Schoolwide Plan Checklist (May 2010) was used to review each school's UIP. We then ranked each component on the checklist using a scale 1-5 (1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree).

Following reviews by individual committee members, we met to consolidate the rankings for each school and looked for common themes in areas in strengths and concerns.

Conclusions

It became clear that the UIPs were more structurally uniform than the SIPs in the last three years. There appears to be wide variation in how the UIPs are generated. The subcommittee found the UIPs to vary greatly. Two significant concerns were the lack of evidence for staff development and the lack of parental and community input into the UIPs. On the whole, the UIPs reviewed indicated that staff had analyzed root causes contributing to the school's low performance. In some instances, the staff applied these analyses to the development of targets and strategies within the Action Plan section of the UIPs. Unfortunately this was not always the case.

State and District expectations and support appear to have resulted in schools producing more meaningful UIPs with direct application to implementation of action plans.

Additional Concerns/Recommendations

Concerns:

- District SIAC was of the impression that by waiting to receive the UIPs in November, those UIPs would reflect the State targets and would be in the format of the State recommended plan type.
- District SIAC received UIPs without State targets, in draft form and written prior to the start of the school year.
- District SIAC received and reviewed plans in December 2010 that schools had begun implementing in August 2010.

Recommendations:

- The District and CDE need to develop a timeframe that provide schools the targets and plan types in more timely manner thereby allowing schools to incorporate meaningful changes in the UIPs prior to the start of the school year.
- If this is a tool for parents, some guidance in understanding the UIP needs to be provided. In its current state, it is not parent friendly. Inclusion of a glossary and resources of specific programs included in the action plans need to be provided.
- In the future, it would be beneficial for some members of District SIAC to be included in UIP training.



TITLE IA SCHOOLWIDE PLAN CHECKLIST

The following indicators are required components in a Title IA Schoolwide Plan. Schools are expected to review and adjust the plan on an annual basis. To update the plan, the school should use the Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) Template to document those amendments.

- ▶ **Comprehensive Needs Assessment.** Schools need to multiple data points for this analysis, such as student achievement, student mobility, attendance, discipline, and teacher perceptual data. This can be updated in your UIP in *section III: Narrative on Data Analysis and Root Cause Identification*.
 - The plan includes a trend analysis of CSAP data (e.g., status, growth)
 - There is trend analysis of other measures of student progress (body of evidence)
 - Other data indicators are considered in the analysis, such as student demographics and staffing considerations

- ▶ **Reform Strategies and Instructional Approach.** This can be updated in the UIP in *section IV: Action Plan(s)*. Remember that identified strategies must be connected to prioritized needs and root causes identified in section III of the UIP.
 - The reform strategies address the needs of all students to meet the state's proficient and advanced achievement levels.
 - There is evidence that the methods and instructional strategies to be implemented are scientifically research based.
 - There is a description of how methods and instructional strategies strengthen the core academic programs.
 - The plan demonstrates how the methods and instructional strategies increase the amount and quality of learning.
 - The plan details how the methods and instructional strategies provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum.
 - There is explanation of how the reform strategies meet the needs of historically underserved populations.
 - The plan addresses how the reform strategies address the needs of all students.
 - The plan describes how attention is given to low-achieving students who are at risk of not meeting state academic standards.
 - The plan includes strategies to support the needs of all students, especially low-achieving students, and includes counseling, pupil services, mentoring (if appropriate).
 - The plan includes strategies to support the needs of all students at the secondary level, especially low-achieving student s. It also includes college and career awareness, personal finance education, integration of vocation and technical education programs (if appropriate).
 - A method to determine that all students' needs have been met is described, including on-going evaluation for effectiveness and a method to make adjustments.

- ▶ **Teacher Qualification.** If this is identified as an area that needs improvement, make sure to include staffing data to your needs assessment and then address the strategies in your school's action planning. In the UIP, this would include sections III and IV.
 - A description of the qualification of all teachers and classroom/instructional paraprofessionals is included.
 - Strategies to attract and maintain high-quality highly qualified teachers are described.

- ▶ **Professional Development.** This component should be woven into the major improvement strategies listed in the action plan of the UIP.
 - High quality and on-going professional development for teachers, principals, paraprofessionals and other staff (as appropriate) that is based on the needs assessment is described.

- ▶ **Parent Involvement.** If this is identified as an area that needs improvement, you can include strategies woven into other major improvement strategies or listed separately as its own major improvement strategy. In the UIP, the action plans are in section IV.
 - There is description of how programs such as Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Parents as Teachers, etc. are integrated into the schoolwide plan for parent involvement
 - The school level parent involvement policy is included with and aligns with the plan.
 - There is indication that parents are involved in the planning, review and improvement of programs, such as the schoolwide plan.
 - There is evidence of a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students share the responsibility for improved student achievement.

- ▶ **Transition plans.** If this is identified as an area that needs improvement, make sure to address it in the data narrative and then address the strategies in your school's action planning. In the UIP, this would include sections III and IV.
 - There is a plan for transition students from preschool to the elementary level.

- ▶ **Assessment and Identification of Interventions for Students.** This can be updated in the UIP in your action plan(s) in section IV. Remember that identified strategies must be connected to prioritized needs and root causes identified in section III of the UIP.
 - There is a description of how teachers are involved with the analysis of academic assessment (especially CSAP) to improve the achievement of individual students and impact the overall classroom instruction.
 - There is a description of how timely assistance will be given to students who have difficulty mastering proficient and advanced levels
 - There is a description of how these students will be early identified and the potential interventions

- ▶ **Other Federal, State, and Local Services Coordination.** This may be identified as a root cause (e.g., lack of alignment between strategies and funding sources) in section III of the UIP. It may also be discussed in the action plans in section IV.
 - There is a description of how other NCLB Title Programs (Title I, Parts B, C, and F; Title II, Parts A, B and D; Title IV, Parts A & B; and Title V) are integrated and coordinated with the schoolwide plan, if applicable.
 - There is evidence other programs (such as violence prevention programs, nutrition programs, housing programs, Head Start, adult education, vocational and technical education, job training, etc.) are integrated into the schoolwide plan.

- ▶ **Schoolwide Plan Development.** If this is identified as an area that needs improvement, then address the strategies in your school's action planning (section IV of the UIP). In particular, the effectiveness of the proposed major improvement strategies discussed in section IV should be addressed in the UIP.
 - There is indication the plan was developed with the involvement of parents, other community members and school staff, including teachers, principal, program administrators (such as Even Start, Homeless Education, Early Reading First), pupil services personnel, and students (if appropriate).
 - There is a description of evaluating the effectiveness of the plan: how the plan will be reviewed and revised.
 - There is a description of how the plan will be available to the district, parents and the general public in an understandable, uniform format – and in a language parents can understand.