



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Phil Tegeler and Mr. Michael Hilton  
Poverty and Race Action Council  
1200 18<sup>th</sup> St. NW #200  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Tegeler and Mr. Hilton,

We have completed our initial review of submissions of evidence-based, whole-school reform models received in response to the *October 2014 School Improvement Grants' (SIG) call for evidence*. We regret to inform you that the model you submitted on behalf of the National Coalition on School Diversity was found not to meet the SIG final requirements available at <https://federalregister.gov/a/2015-02570>.

Specifically, the proposed evidence-based, whole-school reform model you submitted was reviewed by What Works Clearinghouse-certified reviewers against the evidence requirements for these models, as set forth in the Notice of Proposed Requirements (NPR), 79 FR 53254 (Sept. 8, 2014), and found not to meet those requirements. Subsequently, in December, Congress passed, and the president signed, the *Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015*, which revised the authority for local educational agencies to use SIG funds to implement evidence-based, whole-school reform models. As a result, in the Notice of Final Requirements (NFR), 80 FR 7224 (Feb. 9, 2015), the Department revised the evidence requirements for these models to require evidence of effectiveness that includes at least one study that meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards with or without reservations, rather than two such studies as in the NPR; in addition, the revised requirements specify that, if meeting WWC standards with reservations, the evidence for a model must include a large sample and a multi-site sample.

WWC-certified reviewers also reviewed the proposed model that you submitted against the revised requirements in the NFR for evidence-based, whole-school reform models, and the model was found not to meet the revised requirements. Specifically, none of the four citations you submitted met WWC Group Design Standards. The first, *Student Achievement in Public Magnet, Public Comprehensive, and Private City High Schools (Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 18(1), 1-18)*, does not meet WWC Group Design Standards because the author does not present information with which to assess baseline equivalence. The author uses baseline test scores in the analyses, but does not report the baseline scores by intervention and comparison group. The study could meet WWC Group Design Standards with reservations if the author provides evidence that the treatment and control groups are equivalent at baseline.

The second study, *What Factors Predict High School Graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District (Silver, D., Saunders, M. & Zarate, E. (2008))*, also does not meet WWC Group Design Standards because it does not provide sufficient data to evaluate baseline equivalence. Baseline data on rate of low standardized test scores is provided as a proxy for on-time graduation, but it is provided for the full sample, rather than for each quasi-experimental condition.

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<http://www.ed.gov/>

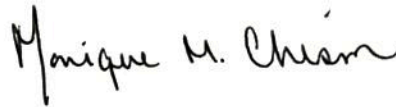
*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

The third study, *Does School Choice Work? Effects on Student Integration and Achievement* (Betts, J.R., Rice, L.A., Zau, A.C., Tang, Y.E., & Koedel, C.R. (2006)), does not meet WWC Group Design Standards because none of the three analyses report sample sizes that would enable attrition rates to be assessed. Baseline equivalence also is shown only for the main test-score outcomes and not for other student characteristics that could affect test score outcomes.

Finally, the fourth study, *Can interdistrict choice boost student achievement? The case of Connecticut's Interdistrict Magnet School Program* (Bifulco, R., C. D. Cobb, and C. Bell. (2009); *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, 31(4), 323-345), does not meet the strength of evidence requirements. Although the sample for the randomized control portion of the study meets WWC Group Design Standards, the sample cannot be considered multi-site. This study could meet the final SIG requirements if the quasi-experimental portion of the study (based on a multi-site sample) could indicate statistically significant favorable impacts. We sent the author a query to address this issue, but to date, we have not received a response.

Thank you for participating in the first call for evidence under the new SIG requirements. Although your submission was not approved, we encourage you to continue to build and submit additional evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of your reform model for future consideration. I also thank you for your continued efforts to improve educational outcomes for students through innovation and reform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monique M. Chism". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Monique Chism, Ph.D.  
Director  
Office of State Support