

Potential Guidelines for SAGE Program Flexibility

This memorandum outlines a few potential guidelines that might be placed around options for districts applying for flexibility in spending of SAGE funds. The objective would be to provide some degree of assurance that the funds are actually being spent on the proposed alternatives, in order to both provide fidelity of implementation measures as well as allowing for evaluation of impact.

One-to-One Tutoring

One alternative to small class sizes might be one-to-one tutoring for students. This intervention allows for additional individual instruction for students struggling in reading and/or mathematics in kindergarten through third grade. This intervention requires identification of students who would benefit most from the tutoring. These students are typically in the bottom quartile and have more difficulty with the instruction, but have high enough attendance to make the intervention meaningful.

The one-to-one tutoring intervention is applied within school. The tutor works with identified students within regular school hours in typically blocks of 20 to 60 minutes. The tutor works with identified students at least three times per week until the student no longer requires an intervention.

The one-to-one tutoring is administered from a qualified tutor. Tutors must be certified teachers who are experts in their field. Tutors should know their field's curriculum and standards and should have strong relationships with both school staff and students.

The one-to-one tutoring intervention is data informed. To appropriately target students in need for this intervention, teachers and tutors need student benchmark or formative assessment results. Teachers should review those students with limited growth to determine if the one-to-one tutoring intervention is necessary. Likewise, school staff, teachers, and the tutor themselves should track student growth over time to determine the effectiveness of the tutors in meeting their goals at each grade level.

Instructional Coaches

The second alternative to small class sizes is instructional coaches to provide embedded professional development for teachers in kindergarten through third grade. This intervention allows districts and schools to hire instructional coaches in the fields of mathematics and reading to support the professional growth and instructional effectiveness of teachers in their field. This intervention should provide one instructional coach for every 100 students in poverty.

Instructional coaches are full-time qualified staff. The instructional coach is a master teacher within their field of study and has experience in teaching adults. The professional development provided by the instructional coach must align with the curriculum and standards as well as the instructional frameworks within their field. The instructional coach should not evaluate teachers.

The instructional coaches intervention is data informed. To target the professional development needs of teachers appropriately, administration and instructional coaches need student benchmark or formative assessment results and ongoing observational review from school leaders. These data provide useful feedback to instructional coaches and teachers on areas of improvement. Likewise, school leaders and instructional coaches themselves should track student growth over time to determine the effectiveness of their professional development and coaching at each grade level.