

Missouri
**Targeted Monitoring Review of
 School Improvement Grants (SIG) under section 1003(g) of the
 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended
 April 16- April 20, 2012**

BACKGROUND

FY 2009 Overview of SIG Schools in Missouri

Tier	Number of FY 2009 Eligible SIG Schools	Number of FY 2009 Served SIG Schools
Tier I	21	14
Tier II	32	18
Tier III	406	0

FY 2009 Implementation of SIG School Intervention Models

Models	Number of Schools Implementing the Model
Turnaround	14
Transformation	17
Restart	0
Closure	1

FY 2010 Overview of SIG Schools in Missouri

Tier	Number of FY 2010 Eligible SIG Schools	Number of FY 2010 Served SIG Schools
Tier I	25	6
Tier II	30	5
Tier III	443	0

FY 2010 Implementation of SIG School Intervention Models

Models	Number of Schools Implementing the Model
Turnaround	11
Transformation	0
Restart	0
Closure	0

MONITORING VISIT INFORMATION

Monitoring Visits

LEA Visited
School Visited
Model Implemented
FY 2009 Funding
Awarded
(over three years)

St. Louis Public Schools
 Vashon High School
 Turnaround
LEA Award (for 11 SIG schools): \$11,222,900
Vashon High School SIG funding: \$1,035,387

LEA Visited
School Visited
Model Implemented
FY 2009 Funding
Awarded

Hayti R-II School District
 Hayti High School
 Transformation
LEA Award (for 1 SIG school): \$2,587,162
Hayti High School SIG funding: \$2,587,162

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<p><i>(over three years)</i> SEA Visited FY 2009 SIG Award FY 2010 SIG Award FY 2011 SIG Award</p>	<p>Missouri Department of Education \$ 54,099,767 \$ 8,860,652 \$ 9,002,486</p>
Interviews Conducted	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Missouri Department of Education</i> ➤ <i>St. Louis Public Schools District Staff</i> ➤ <i>Vashon High School: Principal, School Leadership Team, 4 Teachers, 4 Parents, Students, and 4 Classroom Visits</i> ➤ <i>Hayti R-II School District Staff</i> ➤ <i>Hayti High School: Principal and Vice Principal, 5 Teachers, 4 Parents, Students, and 3 Classroom Visits</i> 	
U.S. Department of Education Staff	
Team Leader	Carlas McCauley
Staff Onsite	Kimberly Light and Christopher Tate

OVERVIEW OF MONITORING REPORT

The following report is based on the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) onsite monitoring visit to Missouri from April 16 to April 20, 2012 and review of documentation provided by the State educational agency (SEA), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools. The report consists of three sections: *Summary and Observations*, *Technical Assistance Recommendations*, and *Monitoring Findings*. The *Summary and Observations* section describes the implementation of the SIG program by the SEA, LEAs, and schools visited, initial indicators of success, and outstanding challenges being faced in implementation. This section focuses on how the SEA, LEAs, and schools visited are implementing the SIG program with respect to the following five areas: school climate, teachers and leaders, instructional strategies and time, use of data, and technical assistance. The *Technical Assistance Recommendations* section identifies strategies and resources for addressing technical assistance needs. The *Monitoring Findings* section identifies areas where the SEA is not in compliance with the final requirements of the SIG program and indicates required actions that the SEA must take to resolve the findings.

Please Note: The observations and descriptions included in this report reflect the specific context of the limited number of classrooms visited and interviews conducted at a small number of schools and LEAs within the State. As such, they are a snapshot of what was occurring at the LEA and school levels, and are not meant to represent a school’s, LEA’s, or State’s entire SIG program. Nor are we approving or endorsing any particular practices or approaches by citing them.

SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

School Climate

Safety/Discipline

St. Louis Public Schools

The Vashon High School leadership team reported that discipline and attendance had been a serious problem prior to SIG implementation and that the first year of implementation focused largely on addressing the climate of the school. Data provided by the school demonstrates that suspensions have been reduced from 1800 prior to implementation to 162 after SIG. According to the school, the attendance rate increased from 79.9 percent to 90.2 percent during the first year after implementation. The leadership team also reported that intervention specialists hired through SIG have helped reduce suspensions and the new no suspensions policy that began in November 2011 has also had an impact. To keep students focused on academics, the policy focused on only suspending a student for having drugs or a weapon on campus. All other student offenses are disciplined through detention and in-school suspension.

Hayti R-II School District

Hayti High School (Hayti), as reported by the State and LEA, is a different school since starting the implementation of SIG. The leadership team and teachers reported that SIG allowed the school to focus on creating higher expectations for staff and students which, according to interviews, were missing prior to implementation. The leadership team and teachers reported that higher expectations for staff and students have contributed to a more orderly and disciplined environment during the initial years of implementation.

Parent/Family Engagement

St. Louis Public Schools

While Vashon High School has indicated a need for increased parent and community engagement, a meaningful strategy for engaging parents has not been defined. Parents reported having opportunities to communicate with the school administration if needed and receipt of emails and other forms of communication about activities related to school improvement.

Hayti R-II School District

The district stated in its application to the MODESE a need for increased communication with parents. During interviews, parents also expressed displeasure with the district's current outreach performed by the school. Parents stated that aside from mid-term teacher conferences, contact was initiated only when a student was performing poorly or discipline issues surfaced. Interviews with the leadership team revealed plans to establish a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and develop a strategy that would result in the creation of meaningful activities that welcomed parents into the school. At the time of the monitoring visit the plan had not been implemented.

Teachers and Leaders

Staff Changes

St. Louis Public Schools

As a part of SIG implementation, SLPS administrators stated that the district moved teachers and principals around within the district because of contract limitations during the staff review process just prior to implementation. The district conducted a national search for turnaround principals but acknowledged during interviews that it had difficulty replacing principals as knowledge of the turnaround environment was reported to be lacking among most candidates. In total, SLPS hired three principals from within the district and the remaining seven leaders were recruited from other positions within the district or from outside of the district as a part of a national search. The principal at Vashon High School was hired in the year prior to implementing SIG and rehired to direct the implementation of SIG. He was the sixth principal at the high school since 2003. Teachers reported that the principal's role as an instructional leader has been key to improving student achievement through a continuous observation and skill-reflection process that is supportive of their ongoing development.

The district also reported that prior to full implementation of Vashon's chosen SIG model all staff had to reapply for their position within the school. Teachers and district staff both described the hiring process as very complicated and many teachers opted out of participating.

Hayti R-II School District

Prior to implementation, the district made the decision to replace the principal for the start of the school year and selected a Social Studies teacher to lead the school. The district saw the new principal's knowledge of the community and established rapport with students and families as a strength with the potential to ensure a greater sense of community buy-in.

The district chose to implement the transformation model, as detailed in the LEA application, in part because the rural setting of the school would limit the likelihood of the district to rehire 50 percent of the staff. As a part of the implementation of the transformation model by the district, Hayti focused on increasing the capacity of teachers to provide rigorous instruction aligned to state standards through an increased system of support by external providers and a full-time instructional coach. Teachers reported that the increased supports and sharing of practices through meaningful professional development activities have not only improved instruction at the school but also created a collaborative work environment.

Recruitment/Retention

St. Louis Public Schools

The retention of teachers in turnaround schools remains a concern for the district due to Teach For America turnover. As a part of SIG implementation, each teacher received a second planning period which teachers reported as an incentive to remain at Vashon during the rehiring process.

As for unfilled positions at Vashon high school, the district recruited potential staff by implementing a number of outreach activities including recruiting at postsecondary institutions in the area, advertising via the web and partnering with Teach for America (TFA) in an effort to attract candidates.

Hayti R-II School District

As stated by staff during the interview process, the rural setting of Hayti High School made recruiting and hiring new staff and leadership teams a challenge. While the district attempted to recruit principals from Missouri and Tennessee, as reported by the Superintendent, many candidates were deemed not a good fit for such a rural community.

Additional staff was hired to assist in the implementation of SIG at the district and school level. As indicated in the application, the Project Manager, hired by the district for the life of the grant, monitors progress and coordinates services and activities associated with full implementation. This role also provides support for leadership in interpreting achievement data and working with teachers to improve instruction based on feedback from external provider observations.

Professional Development

St. Louis Public Schools

As a part of SIG, both Vashon and SLPS have implemented various strategies aimed at improving instruction. Teachers reported receiving targeted professional development based on walkthroughs and review of achievement data. Opportunities for professional development were reported to be informed by the review of school level data by performance and for the purpose of targeted, ongoing instructional improvement.

Hayti R-II School District

As a part of the school's reform strategy, as detailed in the school's application for SIG funds, Hayti relies on external providers to assist in strengthening the instructional skills of teachers through coaching, targeted professional development based on observations and targeted summative data set development and assessment activities. Teachers and leadership at Hayti report that the assistance received to date has been central to gains in student achievement and the alignment of the curriculum and instruction to state standards.

A major focus of the second year of implementation has been professional development for teachers on creating formative assessments for the purpose of ensuring that teachers create student data sets and target instructional strategies based on achievement data. The school tests each student at several points during the quarter and progress is charted to ensure a mastery of skill through differentiated teaching practices.

Presently, as reported in interviews with the principal and MODESE staff, the principal participates in regular leadership trainings provided by MODESE and has an assigned principal mentor to provide guidance and support.

Instructional Strategies and Time

Curriculum Changes

St. Louis Public Schools

Prior to the implementation of SIG, the LEA application reported that instruction at Vashon was not student centered. The needs analysis highlighted in the LEA application concluded that implementation of the curriculum was not aligned to state standards. The application stated that teacher collaboration and effective professional development were also lacking. The LEA

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application also states that the school had poor implementation of curriculum and poor efficacy of support for expectations for high student achievement; as a result, the district surmised in its application that students were not achieving. The district reported that only 38 percent of all students demonstrated proficiency in Communication Arts and only 8.2 percent of students were proficient in Mathematics in 2009 (the year just prior to SIG implementation). For the first year post SIG implementation for which data is available, 44 percent of all students achieved proficiency in Reading and 23 percent of students' demonstrated proficiency in Mathematics.

Hayti R-II School District

Data from the 2010-2011 school year show that while Hayti has not reached the school's goals in proficiency, a culture of academic achievement is strong at Hayti and student achievement is on the rise. The high school, as reported in the district's application, had low student proficiency in Communication Arts and Mathematics. Moreover, the school had double digit achievement gaps in proficiency between black students (75 percent of the student population) and white students (accounting for 25 percent of the student population). The LEA application also reported that for all students during the 2009 school year, only 23.6 percent of students achieved proficiency in Communication Arts and 11.1 percent achieved proficiency in Mathematics. In 2009, 34.4 percent of white students achieved proficiency in Communication Arts while only 20.9 percent of black students achieved proficiency. The district's application reports for 2009, only 25 percent of white students achieved proficiency in Mathematics while only 6.8 percent of black students achieved proficiency. For the first year post SIG implementation for which data is available, 35.9 percent of all students achieved proficiency in Communication Arts and 37.8 percent of all students achieved proficiency in Mathematics. 22 percent of black students achieved proficiency in Communication Arts in 2011 and 33.1 percent of black students demonstrated proficiency in Mathematics.

Increased Learning Time

St. Louis Public Schools

The district added 24 minutes to the school day four years ago. At this time the district is not seeking to increase the learning time of St. Louis Public Schools in accordance with SIG guidance.

Hayti R-II School District

Hayti extended the school day as a part of implementing the transformation model to focus on increasing instruction in core content areas. The school provides additional planning time and a \$30 a day incentive to teachers as a part of implementing increased learning time.

Use of Data

School and District Use of Data

St. Louis Public Schools

SLPS collects data on the leading indicators and utilizes a system of tailored data sets for all SIG schools to better analyze the success of particular interventions at a given school. The district reported that schools set improvement targets on benchmark data and interim data sets are reviewed in an ongoing way with the assistance of MODESE staff to realign strategies for the purposes of reaching their target. SLPS reported that school leadership is empowered to make

decisions based on data and to use data to advocate for implementing new strategies or changing course when a particular intervention strategy is not working in their school.

Vashon uses differentiated data to inform changes to instructional practices. The teachers reported that since implementing SIG they have received instruction on how to create tests that accurately capture student learning for the purpose of being able to create data sets that can be used to inform instructional practices. This was seen by teachers as essential to mastering a sustainable process for measuring student achievement. Also, the school incorporated achievement data in all aspects of student life. For example, in every classroom visited, and throughout the school, student achievement is charted on bulletin boards as a way of encouraging students to take ownership over their academic growth. Teachers and leaders have made academics central to participating in athletics and other school activities. The administration reported that utilizing data in this way has created a sense of accountability and community pride that did not exist prior to SIG.

Hayti R-II School District

MODESE works with Hayti monthly to set achievement targets and develop processes for evaluating and closing achievement gaps. LEA staff continues to monitor benchmark data, with the assistance of MODESE and external providers, to ensure that teachers and school leadership are demonstrating growth through student achievement. The transparency with which the data is being presented was reported by parents, teachers and the principal to be influencing the school community to take ownership over their data and students to take ownership over their learning.

Technical Assistance

District Support

Each of the districts visited provide extensive support to their SIG schools as a part of the implementation process. Each district's approach to providing technical assistance differs because of the varying levels of district capacity. For example, SLPS created a number of positions to provide technical assistance to SIG schools, including Positive Behavior Intervention Specialists at all eleven SIG schools, Teaching and Learning Facilitators (TLFs) to work with teachers on English language arts/math strategies, and instructional specialists. The school leadership team also reported that the LEA conducts monthly innovation meetings and professional development opportunities.

SEA Support

MODESE was reported by both districts visited to be very involved in the implementation of SIG through continuous monitoring and technical assistance to each school implementing one of the four turnaround models. The department has restructured its offices under the new Commissioner to increase the capacity of the State office to provide whole program services to schools. The level of technical assistance provided by the State to SIG schools has been instrumental in helping LEAs build their capacities to serve Missouri's lowest-performing schools.

Beginning with the SIG application process for LEAs, the State provided assistance to LEAs by holding meetings to discuss the application process and the selection of turnaround models. For

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a district that lacked the capacity to assess its own needs and develop an application, MODESE paid for the assistance of providers during the application process.

Each of the districts visited spoke highly of the school-level assistance provided by MODESE after receiving their SIG award. At the school-level, the SEA provides two consultants to focus on successful SIG implementation through compliance and school improvement.

Each school reported monthly technical assistance walkthroughs by MODESE's two consultants as essential to their turnaround success. Mentors and coaches for SIG schools are leveraged as a part of the technical assistance provided by the State through Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs). Further, each leadership team interviewed detailed professional development opportunities and spoke of the significance of having former principals and superintendents guiding them in their turnaround efforts.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

This section addresses areas where additional technical assistance may be needed to improve the quality of SIG program implementation.

Issue 1: While visited districts have identified services and staff to increase family and community engagement, neither district has articulated a clear plan for effectively using those resources. Moreover, the LEAs and its schools have not fully informed parents about the schools' improvement efforts or the family-engagement resources available to them.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Provide MODESE resources on effective strategies for engaging families and the school community (Responsibility: ED).
- Provide focused technical assistance to LEAs on strategies and methods to improve family and community outreach regarding turnaround reform efforts occurring in each districts' schools, such as:
 - Preparing parent letters and informational packets for LEAs and schools to use to introduce parents to the SIG program;
 - Holding meetings for parents and community members about the ongoing turnaround reform efforts occurring in each school; and
 - Helping LEAs develop plans to engage families and the community and to help families use resources available from SIG implementation (Responsibility: MODESE).
- Develop a family and community engagement plan or a set of strategies that districts will use to involve parents in SIG implementation and use resources available for family and community engagement (Responsibility: LEA).

Issue 2: According to SLPS teachers, the district has not consistently recognized or rewarded strong work. Recognition and rewards are especially important given the district's challenges with recruitment and retention.

Technical Assistance Strategies:

- Identify resources and provide guidance to MODESE on rewards, financial and otherwise, used in other districts and states (Responsibility: ED).
- Provide focused technical assistance to LEAs to support the development of a plan to clearly identify and reward teachers for their work (Responsibility: MODESE).
- Develop criteria for granting rewards and identify resources to help school leadership grant rewards to teachers (Responsibility: LEA).

MONITORING FINDINGS

Summary of Monitoring Indicators

Critical Element	Requirement	Status	Page
1. Application Process	The SEA ensures that its application process was carried out consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	NA	NA
2. Implementation	The SEA ensures that the SIG intervention models are being implemented consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections I and II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	Finding	14
3. Fiscal	The SEA ensures LEAs and schools are using funds consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)) ; §1114 of the ESEA; and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87]	NA	NA
4. Technical Assistance	The SEA ensures that technical assistance is provided to its LEAs consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	NA	NA
5. Monitoring	The SEA ensures that monitoring of LEAs and schools is being conducted consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Section II of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended	NA	NA

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	(75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]		
6. Data Collection	The SEA ensures that data are being collected consistent with the final requirements of the SIG program. [Sections II and III of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010))]	NA	NA

Monitoring Area: School Improvement Grant

Finding 1: The MODESE has not ensured that SLPS is establishing schedules and implementing strategies that increase learning time at Vashon that comply with the turnaround model requirements. Although Vashon provides after-school tutoring and a Saturday credit recovery program, the district reported that at this time it does not have the capacity to lengthen the school day, week, or year to provide additional time for activities such as additional instructional time, *and* additional time for teachers to collaborate, plan and engage in professional development as required for the implementation of the turnaround model.

Citation: Section I.A.2(a)(1)(viii) of the final requirements states that an LEA implementing the turnaround model must “establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time.” Section I.A.3 of the final requirements defines *increased learning time* as “using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects.”(75 FR 66363 (October 28, 2010)).

Further action required: The MODESE must work with LEAs to ensure that all schools implementing the turnaround or transformation models have significantly increased the number of school hours and that the additional time is being consistently used for all three required purposes, including instructional in core academic subjects. For each school implementing the turnaround or transformation model, the MODESE must submit to ED documentation demonstrating an increase in learning time and evidence that the time is being consistently used in accordance with the SIG requirement’s definition of “increased learning time.”

Finding 2: The MODESE has not ensured that Hayti is providing incentives to teachers and principals that have increased student achievement. Hayti’s principal indicated that incentives had, at times, been offered but that incentives were applied inconsistently. Teachers in Hayti reported receiving few incentives for their work in raising student achievement and the district did not demonstrate that incentives were linked to student achievement in the documentation provided.

Citation: 75 C.F.R. § I.A.2.(d)(1)(i)(C) requires that an LEA must identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.

Further action required: MODESE must work with LEAs to develop and implement a tool or rubric to identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing the

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turnaround and transformation models, have increased student achievement. The tool or rubric must be based in part on student performance and include other indicators such as observations of classroom instruction, and attendance. MODESE must submit this tool to ED and it must be implemented in the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year.