



## **History of the Missouri School Improvement Program**

### **Early Missouri School Accreditation/Classification**

The Constitution of Missouri (Article IX) gives authority to the State Board of Education to supervise instruction in the public schools of the state. Since the early twentieth century, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has classified (accredited) public school districts. From 1950 to the mid 1980's, Missouri classified schools using an "AA/AAA" classification system. School districts received a classification of A, AA, AAA, or U (unaccredited) based on a review of a school district's educational resources (staff, facilities, materials, courses). In the mid 1980's, the state's educational leadership began to question the "fairness" of the system since only those districts with financial resources (typically those in affluent suburban communities) could reach AAA status. Furthermore, the system provided no indicator of the educational process in the district or how its students were performing.

### **Conceptualizing a School Improvement Model**

Seeking to improve an antiquated and ineffective system for classifying Missouri public schools, a group of state education leaders, in collaboration with the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) and the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSED) at the University of Missouri-Columbia, came together to explore the best possibilities for ensuring a quality education for all Missouri students. Their goal was to move from a classification system based on resources (inputs), compliance, and minimum standards to one of ongoing school improvement with sustained support. The result of this work was the development of a common set of standards and indicators that considers every school's resources, instructional processes, and student performance—the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP).

At the same time that Missouri was beginning to thoughtfully consider its public school classification system, research around effective schools began to emerge at the national level offering a better understanding of what effective schools looked like and how to identify them. The Missouri State Board of Education responded to the national trends in educational research, publishing Reaching for Excellence: An Action Plan for Educational Reform in Missouri, in 1984. The state's lawmakers subsequently passed a landmark piece of educational legislation in 1985, enacting most of the report's recommendations and setting the stage for development of the Missouri School Improvement Program.

### **Garnering Stakeholder Support**

In October 1987, the State Board of Education appointed a statewide task force composed of stakeholders from across the state to advise and give input to Department staff during the launch of the new classification process. This advisory group, still functioning today, set the precedent for statewide collaboration in Missouri's reform efforts. The MSIP Standards and Indicators incorporated three areas: Resource (program of studies, class size, professional staff ratios, teacher certification and plan time), Process (curriculum, instruction/assessment, differentiated instruction, instructional climate, libraries, guidance and counseling, supplemental programs, governance and administration, facilities, safety and support services), and Performance. For the first time in Missouri's history (and ahead of most states in the country), student performance would play a role in the accreditation of a public school district. Every public school in the State of Missouri was to undergo an onsite MSIP review at least once every five years.

### **Implementation of MSIP – 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycles**

The first two cycles of MSIP included a comprehensive, multifaceted onsite team review for all public school districts. The onsite team was composed of field educators (60 percent of the team) and Department staff (40 percent of the team). Involvement of classroom teachers and local school and district leaders in this “peer review” process further encouraged a collaborative effort to improve Missouri’s schools. To inform the process, all students in grades 3-12, all professional and support staff, the local board of education and all parents received an advance questionnaire survey. The MSIP team conducted onsite interviews with teachers, administrators and the board of education. The district created a self-study around the MSIP Standards and Indicators and compiled documentation to substantiate district practices. At the conclusion of the review, the district received a report of strengths, concerns, and available resources. The Department learned quickly that MSIP would be a catalyst for positive change in the way Missouri schools operated. For the first time, written curriculum and ongoing district curriculum reviews became the norm rather than the exception. Districts began to pay attention to factors that create positive school climate. Administrators became more active as leaders in their schools, and teachers began to explore instructional practices that would better meet the needs of all their students.

### **Missouri’s Outstanding Schools Act – Encouraging Sustained Educational Reform**

In the early ‘90s, prior to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of MSIP, the Missouri legislature revisited education reform legislation and enacted the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993, whose requirements incorporated many of the concepts reflected in the fledgling school improvement program and encouraged further reflection on statewide educational processes. The Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 contained a mandate that the Department create a set of rigorous academic standards for Missouri students and a primarily performance-based state level assessment to determine how well students achieved those standards. The Outstanding Schools Act also required the Department to identify Academically Deficient Schools, or chronically low-performing buildings. For the first time, the Department had authority to intervene at the building level. Finally, the legislation created regional professional development centers to provide a statewide system of support for districts and teachers in implementing reform efforts. The initiatives that began as a result of the Outstanding Schools Act, coupled with lessons learned from the first two cycles of MSIP, informed the continued evolution of the program in its 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle.

### **MSIP 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle – Streamlining and Integrating School Improvement and Focusing on Accountability**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of MSIP began in 2001 with significant programmatic changes. Again with stakeholder input, the Department integrated the process standards and indicators to help districts make links within instructional design and practices. Assessment requirements of the Outstanding Schools Act formed the basis for new performance standards. Beginning with the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of MSIP, district performance was evaluated based upon Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) results across grade levels and content areas, ACT participation and performance, enrollment in advanced courses, enrollment in vocational courses, college placement, vocational placement, dropout rates, and attendance rates. With the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of MSIP, student performance began to carry a majority of weight in the determination of accreditation.

Throughout the first two cycles of MSIP, the Department refined and improved the process of collecting student performance data from both state and local sources. For the first time, districts received an Annual Performance Report (APR) of their current performance related to the MSIP performance standards. The APR allowed local districts and the Department to focus intensely on any performance issues that emerged prior to a district’s onsite MSIP review. 3<sup>rd</sup>

cycle's proactive approach to addressing performance issues led to decreasing numbers of unaccredited Missouri districts.

### **Creating a Statewide System of Support**

The Department worked in tandem with efforts in the newly developed Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs) to focus statewide support on school improvement. SUCCESS teams comprised of Department staff and RPDC staff began to provide assistance to school districts likely to be Provisionally Accredited or Unaccredited at the time of their MSIP review. Each year, the SUCCESS Teams identified school districts whose student performance was unsatisfactory in the year prior to the district's scheduled MSIP review.

### **MSIP 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle -- Sustaining School Improvement**

As the Department prepared for the creation of 4<sup>th</sup> cycle standards, several realities and lessons learned impacted MSIP processes. First, resources within the agency were dwindling. It made little sense to continue to do intensive onsite reviews in districts that had satisfactory student achievement. Because of the focus on student performance in 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle, more and more districts had achieved desirable outcomes, and the onsite review had become primarily a compliance review. In contrast, the Academically Deficient Schools audit process taught us that determining what was happening in low performing schools without seeing classroom instruction was futile. We also learned that trying to fix low performing buildings without dealing with district level issues was not useful. Finally, the work of the Academically Deficient Audit Teams demonstrated that relationships between building staff and the management team were critical to gaining any traction for real change in those buildings.

As a result of the analysis of lessons learned during 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle, major changes have occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of MSIP -- the current iteration of school improvement in Missouri. While the standards have not changed measurably, the review process has changed dramatically. The Department currently focuses its resources on those districts whose APRs indicate declining performance over multiple years, in particular those in danger of being unaccredited. Additionally, districts with highest need have been moved up in the MSIP cycle so that the onsite review occurs as soon as possible. The onsite MSIP review is now diagnostic in nature, resulting in the creation of a report that identifies the most significant areas of concern in addressing student performance issues.

Districts identified as having performance issues must create an Accountability Plan to improve student achievement before they receive their classification. To assist districts with the creation and implementation of these plans, the Department has created Regional School Improvement Teams (RSITs), an outgrowth of SUCCESS teams. Districts with required Accountability Plans must work with the RSITs and report regularly on their progress to the Department. To date, several districts have shown enough progress on their APRs to move off their Accountability Plans, demonstrating the success of this effort.

### **Goals of MSIP 5**

As the State prepared to revise the MSIP process and move to the fifth iteration of the program, policy goals focusing on the creation of a next-generation accountability system were held central to decision-making:

### MSIP 5 Policy Goals:

- Articulate the state's expectations for districts in driving actions for improving student achievement with the ultimate goal of all students graduating ready for success in college and careers;
- Distinguish performance of schools and districts in valid, accurate and meaningful ways so that districts in need of improvement can receive appropriate support and interventions to meet expectations, and high-performing districts can be recognized as models of excellence;
- Empower all stakeholders through regular communication and transparent reporting of clear data on performance and results, so that they can take action appropriate to their roles; and
- Promote continuous improvement and innovation within each district on a statewide basis.

Beginning with the end in mind, the MSIP 5 Performance Standards, based solely on student outcomes, were approved first. Revised MSIP 5 Process and Resource Standards will be presented to the State Board of Education in August 2012. Until the new rule goes into effect, the Fourth Cycle standards remain intact.

Regional meetings that included groups of educators, business and community leaders, parents, and students were held during summer 2011 as an avenue for providing feedback and recommendations on the newly proposed standards. These recommendations were used to revise the MSIP 5 performance standards and indicators that were presented to the State Board for approval during the September 2011 meeting. Next, the standards and indicators were posted for a 30 day public comment period; over two thousand comments were received and considered. The final rule containing the MSIP 5 Performance Standards and Indicators was approved by the board during the December 2011 meeting. [The MSIP 4 to MSIP 5 Crosswalk](#) outlines the revisions.

Upon initial approval of the performance standards and indicators, work to develop the MSIP 5 Scoring Guide began. The [MSIP 5 Scoring Guide Work Plan Outline](#) contains the process followed. Results from the [MSIP 5 Regional Advisory Meetings](#) and the [Scoring Guide Development Meetings](#) are available on the department's website.