

Vermont School Improvement Grant Application

Spring, 2010

Supervisory Union/ District Name: Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union

Contact Person: Dena F. St. Amour; Linda Chaim

Role: Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment; Director of Special Education

Email: dstamour@fnwsu.org, lchai@fnwsu.org

Phone: 802-868-4967 X13

This grant application must be submitted with:

- ✘ Statement of Agreement signed by superintendent
- ✘ School Improvement plans for each Tiered school included in the grant
- ✘ Budget/SU Improvement Plan
- ✘ All relevant attachments Tier I and II: (B, D2, E) **Tier III (B, E)**

Superintendent Signature:

Date:

LEA Application

Directions: Please note that this application must include information and responses for all tiered schools in your SU or District. For some districts you may have multiple entries in the tier III sections. For Supervisory Unions /Districts with ONLY Tier III schools, go to the Appropriate portion of Section B indicated by the arrow.

In Vermont, for the purposes of the School Improvement Grant, when we refer to the LEA, we are referring to the Supervisory Union/District.

A. SCHOOLS TO BE SERVED: An LEA must include the following information with respect to the schools it will serve with a School Improvement Grant.

An LEA must identify each Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III school the LEA commits to serve and identify the model that the LEA will use in each Tier I and Tier II school.

SCHOOL NAME	NCES ID #	TIER I	TIER II	TIER III	INTERVENTION (TIER I AND II ONLY)			
					turnaround	restart	closure	transformation
Highgate Elementary	00434			X				
Swanton Schools	00049			X				
MVUHS	00195			X				

Note: An LEA that has nine or more Tier I and Tier II schools may not implement the transformation model in more than 50 percent of those schools.

B. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION: An LEA must include the following information in its application for a School Improvement Grant.

REQUIREMENT 1

- (1) For each Tier I and Tier II school that the LEA commits to serve, the LEA must demonstrate that—
- The LEA has analyzed the needs of each school and selected an intervention for each school; and
 - The LEA has the capacity to use school improvement funds to provide adequate resources and related support to each Tier I and Tier II school identified in the LEA’s application in order to implement, fully and effectively, the required activities of the school intervention model it has selected.

TO MEET REQUIREMENT (1) ABOVE:

Analyze the needs of each Tier I, Tier II and Tier III school identified in the application and selected an intervention model (Tier I and Tier II) or activities (Tier III) for each school.

The Vermont Department of Education will evaluate the LEA's needs assessment application based on the following criteria:

Tier I and Tier II ONLY

1) School Assets and Data Analysis:

- a) Overview and assessment of school and community assets as well as needs

Directions: Attach self-assessment (Attachment B). Include summary of findings here:

- b) Input from staff, public/private partnerships, parents and other community members

- i) For high schools this includes input from regional career center, postsecondary, non-profit and business partners and assessment of alternate pathways to graduation in the region.

Directions: Include evidence of input here:

- c) Inclusion of analysis of recent and longitudinal New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) results and other relevant common local assessment system data for all students and for subgroups (demographic categories as well as any subgroup of students relevant to school needs including at minimum, students with disabilities, students eligible for free and reduced lunch, and English language learners)

Directions: Summarize conclusions from your analysis of data here:

- d) Inclusion of the following data and **summarization of conclusions** reached after assessing the data:

- i. Graduation rates,
- ii. Drop-out rates,
- iii. Discipline referrals,
- iv. School action plan priorities,
- v. Highly qualified teacher data,
- vi. Child count by disability category
- vii. Percent of students with disabilities in the general education classroom more than 80% of the time
- viii. Number of out of district placements
- ix. Number of students in "alternative" day placements
- x. Number of ELL students
- xi. Number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch
- xii. Most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey

NOTE: The data above for each Tiered school will be sent to you electronically.

Directions: Please include a summary of conclusions about the data above and any other relevant data here:

- e) Inclusion of a guided self assessment, conducted by the Supervisory Union/District (SU) School Support team (this team must include the superintendent, principal of the school(s), curriculum coordinator and special education coordinator), on *Major Factors for Rapid Change in School Improvement* (See Attachment B – *Major Factors for Rapid Change Self Assessment Tool*, and Attachment C – *A Theory of Action*, Richardson, 2009) and agreement to participate in a comprehensive assessment conducted by an external evaluator of the VT DOE's choosing to inform school improvement implementation plan development and VTDOE school improvement support team service plan development. If such an assessment has already been conducted, the School Improvement Support Team will assess the scope of that assessment to determine if additional evaluation is warranted.

Directions: Attach self assessment Attachment B signed by the Superintendent and any accompanying narrative. Please note we have included a rubric you may choose to use to inform your responses on the self-assessment.

f) If a school has an existing school improvement plan and/or plan for restructuring under the Vermont State Accountability System and the related Commissioner's Required Actions, the School Improvement Support Team will review this plan with the SU School Support Team to assist them in incorporating new requirements under SIG and any information generated by the guided self-assessment. The initial school improvement plan is provided with the application and includes at minimum:

Plan is attached

- i) Establishment of self-defined annual achievement goals tied to state accountability measures and achievement for all students and relevant student subgroups.
- ii) Those strategies defined as required actions through the state accountability system.
- iii) Those strategies defined through the selection of one of the required models.
- iv) Other strategies designed to assist in achieving school improvement targets.
- v) A budget and timeline for implementing the plan.

Tier I and II Schools Only - Selection of an Intervention Model

1) Demonstrated consideration of all four intervention models (see Attachment D1 - *Description of the Intervention Models*) using the *LEA Tier I and Tier II School Model Selection Assessment Tool* (Attachment D2) to justify the selected intervention linked to analysis of assessment and other relevant data.

Based on the needs/self assessment and analysis of data, identify an intervention model (using Attachment D1) for each Tier I and Tier II school the LEA elects to serve. The justification for the selection of a specific model must be described in a narrative in the Model Selection Tool provided in Attachment D2.

Questions the LEA should consider in the selection of an intervention model are included in the Model Selection Tool (See Attachment D2) – *LEA Tier I and Tier II School Model Selection Assessment Tool*.

Directions: Complete page 1 of Attachment D2 and attach. Indicate the Intervention Model selected below:

Four School Improvement Models approved for Tier I and Tier II schools:

Turnaround Model: Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50% of the staff and grant the new principal sufficient operating flexibility (including staffing, calendars/time and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.

Restart Model: Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.

School Closure: Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving.

Transformation Model: Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms; (3) increase learning time and create Community-oriented schools; and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support

(Section I.B.1 of 1003(g) allows an SEA to award SIG funds to an LEA for a Tier I or Tier II schools that has implemented in whole or in part, one of the models within the last two years so that the LEA and school can continue or complete the intervention being implemented. For example, if a Tier I or Tier II school has replaced its principal within the last two years, the SEA may award funds to the school's LEA to implement a turnaround model in the school even though the school will not be required to hire another new principal. A school that receives SIG funds in accordance with this flexibility must fully implement the selected model as required by the final requirements. In other words, if the school had been implementing the model only in part, it must use the funds it receives to expand its implementation so that it fully complies with the regulatory requirements. Addendum: the two years

referenced with respect to this flexibility are the two years prior to the full implementation of the model in accordance with the notice using SIG funds for which and LEA has complete achievement data. In other words, with respect to the award of FY2009 funds for implementation in the 2010-2011 school year, the “last two years” are the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years.) – USED Guidance document March 24, 2010.

REQUIREMENT 1 (Continued)

2) The LEA has demonstrated that it has the capacity to use school improvement funds to provide adequate resources and related support to each **Tier I, Tier II and Tier III** school identified in the LEA’s application in order to implement fully and effectively the selected intervention in each of those schools.

Tier I and Tier II ONLY

1) Vermont Department of Education will evaluate the LEA’s capacity to implement fully and effectively the selected intervention using the following criteria:

- a. Evidence of actions that the LEA/school has already taken related to the required elements of the chosen intervention.
 - i. Evidence should include documentation of progress toward existing school improvement plan strategies that are substantially aligned with required elements of the chosen intervention (e.g., The LEA indicates they have already developed and implemented a consistent annual evaluation system for teachers that is informed by student growth and outcomes (both individual and in the aggregate) in this case the LEA would be required to provide the reviewers the documentation that outlines that system and the progress they have made toward implementation.)

Directions: Describe here the steps already taken related to the chosen intervention. Please note that any required elements not reflected here must be addressed in the improvement plan

- b. Evidence of actions that the LEA has already taken related to Commissioner’s Required Actions under the state accountability system of AYP.
 - i. An end of year report documenting progress on implementing Commissioner’s Required actions will be submitted with this application.

Directions: Insert end of year report here:

- c. Provide a narrative description of current conditions (including barriers) related to the following:

Directions: For each item (i through x) describe current conditions, including any barriers and how they will be addressed over the funding period.

- i. Board support (e.g., minutes and/or board actions that indicate board support for the application and willingness to direct the school in implementing the forthcoming plan as defined.)
- ii. Union support (e.g., documentation of local union willingness to include revised evaluation systems in upcoming contracts, or amend existing contracts to include these changes.)
- iii. Financial capacity beyond SIG/sustainability (e.g., inclusion in budget of matching funds including use of other funding sources to support implementation efforts and sustain practices beyond the life of the grant)
- iv. Current evaluation practices (e.g., outline of current evaluation system for principals and teachers, including model, frequency of evaluation, etc.)
- v. Staff capacity/talent (e.g., description of staff experience level, special expertise, highlighting positions/individuals who will be actively engaged in implementing the school improvement plan and working closely with the state School Improvement Support team.)
- vi. Statewide and regional partnerships (e.g., agreements with ESAs, local agencies, and/or institutes of higher ed.)
- vii. Allocation of adequate time for teacher collaboration, job embedded professional development (i.e., as described in the LEA’s application)

- viii. Data systems that inform on-going assessment of student progress and instructional practices (e.g., describing current use of systems like Aimsweb, Dibels, SWIS, etc.)
- ix. Parent and community partner support (i.e., support and engagement of local parent organizations, businesses, agencies and associations in school decision-making and activities.)
- x. The sufficiency of the budget to implement the selected intervention fully and effectively in each Tier I and Tier II school identified in the LEA's application as well as to support school improvement activities in Tier III schools throughout the period of availability of those funds (taking into account any waiver extending that period received by either the SEA or the LEA). (i.e., reviewers will look to see if the budget includes staffing, consulting, contracts with partners, materials, substitute costs or stipends, costs for transitioning to new or expanded schedules sufficient to sustain improvement activities described during the period of the grant and matching or other funding sources to sustain strategies beyond the life of the grant.)

2) **The school will conduct a guided self-assessment of each school using the rubric provided (See Attachment E) to determine capacity and readiness for implementing the school improvement plan.**

Directions: Attachment E to be completed by school staff. A compilation of the data on Attachment E with the Superintendent's signature should be attached and a summary of findings included here:

For Supervisory Unions/Districts with ONLY Tier III schools, begin Section B here.

For Supervisory Unions/District with Tier I or Tier II AND Tier III schools, enter information about Tier III schools here.

For all Tier III schools, the Vermont Department of Education (VTDOE) will evaluate the LEA's needs assessment application based on the following criteria:

1) School Assets and Data Analysis:

- a) Overview and assessment of school and community assets as well as needs

Directions: Attach self- assessment (in Attachment B). Include summary of findings here:

Attached find self-assessment (*Appendix B*) for Highgate, Swanton and Missisquoi Valley Union Middle/High School. The summary of the findings of these three schools indicate that the principals agreed that the major factors of school improvement were either emerging, or strong; which is an

indication that the leadership is strong. There clearly is movement in each school for continuous improvement; with little variance as to the effectiveness. All schools are well along in establishing a professional teaching culture, with curriculum that has been aligned to state standards. A strong system is in place for scheduling teams to use data supporting high quality instruction and in monitoring student progress. All principals agreed that there are strong preschool and after school programs for students needing more support. All principals agreed that there is strong or emerging evidence of social and emotional support systems for students in the three schools.

- b) Input from staff, public/private partnerships, parents and other community members
 - i) For high schools this includes input from regional career center, postsecondary, non-profit and business partners and assessment of alternate pathways to graduation in the region.

Directions: Include evidence of input here:

One area receiving a lot of effort is improving both communication and public information regarding Missisquoi Valley Union High School. MVU was the focus of quite a lot of bad press, and hence struggled to pass budgets for some years. MVU has created a public relations committee and has worked very hard to improve community relations and information. Leadership changes have also improved both school outcomes, and overall pride in the school, which has been reflected in budgets passing even in these difficult economic times. There are even students "choosing" to attend MVU (the district participates in a school choice lottery with other local high schools.) Each school in the district has made increasing efforts to reach out to the community with such activities as; fathers' breakfasts; math nights; family fun nights, coffee hours; and data nights. There is a new career exploration program at the high school; which has made positive connections with local business. FNWSU after school programs have been recognized with awards. FNWSU continues to be a leader with Early Education programs, and collaborates with several Franklin County Supervisory Unions and agencies.

The Challenger Learning Center grant application efforts have involved all of Franklin County; and other partners across the state. All of these efforts have begun to yield more positive; receptive public attitudes towards the schools in FNWSU. * (see St. Albans Messenger)

- c) Inclusion of analysis of recent and longitudinal New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) results and other relevant common local assessment system data for all students and for subgroups (demographic categories as well as any subgroup of students relevant to school needs including at minimum, students with disabilities, students eligible for free and reduced lunch, and English language learners)

Directions: Summarize conclusions from your analysis of data here:

Conclusions from the data analysis show that NECAP and "culture" data, including common local assessment scores and student referrals were used to develop the Action Plans for school improvement. (See Appendices: I, L, S)

Swanton:

Swanton School accomplished a major goal by having all students make Adequate Yearly Progress regardless of family income level. "Closing the gap" in achievement is something we are very proud of. In the past three years, we have steadily increased scores on the NECAP math assessment, reaching a point where we are very close to matching the state average. Our reading scores between 2006 and 2008 remained fairly flat. In 2009, our efforts to strengthen reading resulted in an increase of eight percentage points, bringing us to within six percentage points of the state average. Our students with disabilities made gains in both reading and math. Between 2006 and 2009, students with disabilities gained eleven percentage points in reading and eight percentage points in math. We continue as an identified school, as we need to help our students with disabilities and the sub-group of those with Native American heritage to make greater gains. There are some Abenaki students who are also on

Individualized Education Programs; our data team has analyzed the results of the 2009 NECAP tests in both reading and math such that the students who are both Abenaki and in need of special education are disaggregated from the population who are Abenaki but not identified for special education. This report was prepared to examine the needs of these two categories intensively in order to address their specific needs with the goal of all students meeting with success.

Highgate:

The results of the NECAP arrive in January or February. Each year, the Highgate staff analyzes the recent results of the NECAP and is able to glean important information for action planning and instructional purposes. (See NECAP Patterns & Trends - Analysis 2009-2010) The 2009-2011 Highgate Literacy Action Plan goals were based on the analyses of the areas of subcategories that are in need of focus as a school system. (See Literacy Action Plan 2009-2010) This year's literacy goals for school-wide improvement in reading are specifically focused in three areas: Vocabulary/Word ID, Analysis & Interpretation, and Literal Understanding.

Additionally, longitudinal data is used to look at progress of students for the last five years. The results in reading were as follows:

For *all students*, the number of students in grades three through eight who scored Proficient with Distinction grew from 6% in 2005 to 11% in 2009. The number of *all students* who scored Proficient fluctuated from 2005 to 2009, going from 46% in 2005 to 52% in 2007 and back to 47% in 2009.

The *students with disability status* in grades three through eight who scored Proficient with Distinction on the NECAP remained stagnant with 0% over the years, with the exception of the year 2008 when 3% scored Proficient with Distinction. The number of *students with disability status* who scored Proficient fluctuated from 2005 to 2009, going from 11% in 2005 to 24% in 2007 and back to 13% in 2009.

When looking at *ethnicity*, nonwhite students in grades three through eight who scored Proficient or Proficient with Distinction on the NECAP made steady gains over five years – from 7% in 2005 to 12% in 2009 (with the exception of a slight decrease in 2007).

As for *students eligible for free and reduced lunch*, the number of students in grades three through eight who scored Proficient with Distinction grew from 3% in 2005 to 11% in 2008, yet declined in 2009, ending at 7%. The number of *students eligible for free and reduced lunch* who scored Proficient fluctuated with the following percentages: 40% in 2005; 44% in 2006; 42% in 2007; 34% in 2008 and 40% in 2009.

Although our NECAP Math scores remain flat we just missed meeting the mark for overall. However a closer look at the individual grade level results show that a significant number of students moved up one level. The number of students in the level 1 category is much smaller as these students moved to level 2. There were a few more students in the level four categories also. We need to continue to move students out of the large level two and into level 3. We continue to work on this and feel we have made significant progress.

Highgate will continue to look at how to improve the discrepancies in the scores of its two sub categories. Significant works needs to be done in the subcategory of disabilities.

MVU:

See (*Attachment S MVU NECAP Trends*)

- d) Inclusion of the following data and **summarization of conclusions** reached after assessing the data:

- i. Graduation rates,
- ii. Drop-out rates,
- iii. Discipline referrals,
- iv. School action plan priorities,
- v. Highly qualified teacher data,
- vi. Child count by disability category
- vii. Percent of students with disabilities in the general education classroom more than 80% of the time
- viii. Number of out of district placements
- ix. Number of students in “alternative” day placements
- x. Number of ELL students
- xi. Number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch
- xii. Most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Directions: Please include a summary of conclusions about the data above and any other relevant data here:

From the recent DOE data; FNWSU Graduation rate has gone down. (80.79%) The Supervisory Union Support Team noted that the graduation rate has shown variance over the years. (Of note the 2010 graduation rate for the grade 12 class of 177 students was 95.5%) We are looking into the causes of this variance over years. Data shows the overall drop out rate has improved, which is good news, however we still feel we need to understand more about this as well.

Discipline referrals in all three schools remain higher than we would like to see. Again, data reflects these numbers are not stable, and the SU Team felt this is an area of concern. In each school a system of discipline has been implemented and the data results will continue to be used and refined now that all schools have adopted data management systems. Currently, data is used to draw conclusions about

the number and frequency of referrals, while tracking individual students in an attempt to be proactive as well as focusing on social responsibility and behavioral needs of the students. School action plan priorities are always based on the data both for behavioral and academic outcomes through the NECAP and a variety of other common local assessments. Teachers have learned to look at student data and make decisions about adjusting their instruction during the year to improve outcomes.

At this point all teachers in the three schools are highly qualified and we intend to maintain this practice.

With reference to special education data the category of specific learning disability continues to be the highest disability need across all schools in the SU. The SU team felt that this is the one area that can be greatly impacted by appropriate academic intervention. This is an area that we are continually trying to reduce. Data indicates that there are a high percentage of students whose emotional, behavioral, and academic needs are not being met in the classroom. This often ends up being an out of class placement and in some severe cases can result in an out of district placement. We do exceed the target of out of district placement, but we have dropped down slightly since 2008. This is an area of focus for our SU as we continue to strive to keep all students in the regular classroom environment. We do not meet the target for kids who are in "alternative" day placements, separate schools or residential, but are getting closer to improving this target. We have a population of ELL students; less than 15. Those students are served by an ESL teacher who travels from building to building. He supports students, but also works in the capacity of training classroom teachers to support the needs of this subgroup.

Our SU has a high percentage of students who meet the criteria for free and reduced hot lunch. This sub-group provides us with a large number of at-risk students. There has been major focus to improve the "first level of instruction" which is in the classroom. If needed, students receive Tier II interventions, which are more intensive to support academic improvement. Growth has been made for this sub-group.

The two elementary schools also offer a Supplemental Education Service (SES) program throughout the school year and the summer.

We need to improve our communication with parents and increase parent participation at all levels, but especially at the high school. Efforts are being made to understand why parents are less involved as students get older; as the team feels home- school communication is critical to student success.

- e) Inclusion of a guided self assessment, conducted by the SU School Support team and for each school, on *Major Factors for Rapid Change in School Improvement* (See Attachment B – *Major Factors for Rapid Change Self Assessment Tool*, and Attachment C – *A Theory of Action*, Richardson, 2009). For schools that have been in Corrective Action under the state accountability system for 4 years or more, this includes an agreement to participate in an assessment conducted by an external evaluator of the VT DOE's choosing. If such an assessment has already been conducted, the School Improvement Support team will assess the scope of that assessment to determine if additional evaluation is warranted.

Directions: Attach self-assessment (Attachment B) signed by the Superintendent and include any accompanying narrative here. Please note we have included a rubric you may choose to use to inform your responses on the self-assessment.

Attached find self-assessment (Appendix B) * See above narrative in Section B #1 Section B 1.

- f) If a school has an existing school improvement plan and/or plan for restructuring under the Vermont State Accountability System and the related Commissioner's Required Actions, the School Improvement Support team will review this plan with the SU School Support team and school leadership team to assist them in incorporating any new strategies established by this application, into their plan.

This item is addressed in h) ii) below.

- g) The application reflects consideration of the required and permissible elements as outlined in the Transformation model and addresses which of those strategies it is committed to pursuing with these funds.

Directions: Indicate the required and permissible activities considered:

The Required activities being considered:

(B) Promote the continuous use of student data (such as formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students.

Permissible Activities being considered:

(A) Conducting periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity, is having the intended impact on student achievement, and is modified if ineffective.

The FNWSU Improvement Plan has embraced many of the strands in the Transformation Models presented but the best "fit" for our schools is the continued focus on student data and the analysis of that data in order to inform and impact classroom instruction, as well as provide data at the SU level to help support curriculum, development and implementation, as well as set priorities around PD initiatives. In our SU planning document, "FNWSU Planning for the Future" (*Appendix V*), one of the primary goals is: **All teachers have the opportunity to participate in a professional learning community focused on understanding best practices for instruction and assessment.**

This goal is the unifying theme throughout this grant application. The implementation of Professional Learning Communities in which teachers learn about and use assessment to inform their instruction is the foundation for improving our schools. The SU currently has PreK-12 Curriculum Leadership Teams who oversee the development and implementation of the FNWSU curriculum and local assessments.

These teams work closely with the administrative team and a process is already in place to conduct periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity across the SU. Student achievement data is used when determining if modifications in curriculum or assessments must happen.

h) The initial school improvement plan is provided with the application and includes at minimum:

**** School Improvement Plans and Required Actions are attached:**

Attachments: C, F, G, N, Q)

- i) Establishment of self-defined annual achievement goals tied to state accountability measures and achievement for all students and relevant student subgroups.
- ii) Those strategies defined as required actions through the state accountability system.
- iii) One of the required elements of the SIG Transformation Model (See Attachment F – SIG Transformation Model Required and Permissible Strategies) as it related to the data analysis and school improvement plan.

Directions: Indicate which required element of the Transformation Model is included in the Improvement plan

**** Transformation Model: Required Element: FNWSU is focused on #2 Comprehensive Instructional Reform Strategies and is the required element included in the Improvement Plan.**

- iv) Other strategies designed to assist in achieving school improvement targets.

REQUIREMENT 1 (Continued)

2) The LEA has demonstrated that it has the capacity to use school improvement funds to provide adequate resources and related support to each **Tier I, Tier II and Tier III** school identified in the LEA's application in order to implement fully and effectively the selected intervention in each of those schools.

Direction: Review your budget and school improvement plan(s) to assure adequate resources have been allocated to effectively implement each plan.

See Attached School Improvement Plans and Budget. Focus mainly on FNWSU Improvement Plan (Appendix A) which outlines each school's strategies and budget request.

Tier III Only

- 3) **The school will conduct a guided self-assessment of each school using the rubric provided (See Attachment E) to determine capacity and readiness for implementing the school improvement plan.**

Directions: Attachment E to be completed by school staff. A compilation of the data on Attachment E with the Superintendent's signature should be attached and a summary of findings included here:

Determining Readiness and Capacity For Implementing School Improvement

Analysis of the staff surveys presented information that clearly identified strengths and weakness of the Supervisory Union Tier 3 schools. Principals clearly have communicated a sense of urgency, vision and a plan. A little less strong was the Principal being recognized as the instructional leader, this is strongly emerging, however there were discrepancies in the schools which may be a reflection

of different styles of leadership. Interestingly, a clearly emerging trend is for Principals to be seen frequently in the classrooms.

The Supervisory Union wide teacher evaluation system is focused on teaching and learning outcomes. There is equally strong and emerging evidence that teachers do visit each other's classrooms and share both materials lesson plans.

As far as curriculum; there is strong emerging evidence that the FNWSU curriculum is aligned with state standards, and strong emerging evidence that the curriculum is aligned and focused across and within grades. Staff felt that the curriculum does reflect rigor, and emerging are strong formative assessments for each grade that is now tracked by student data systems.

Staff responses indicated there was room for improvement in the expectation that all students would be able to master the curriculum. There is also a need to create time for common planning of academic and social support in all schools.

Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union Schools have strong preschool and strong after school programs. The majority of paraprofessionals have passed proficiency requirements. Some areas that need to be worked on are (a) developing a warm and welcoming environment (b) and in developing adequate social and emotional support where data reflected were less than what would be hoped for.

Overall, the Principals self reflections do correlate with the staff surveys indicating FNWSU schools do have self awareness of the factors needed for school improvement. The FNWSU Support Team is planning to look at all discrepancies between the staff and Principal responses to determine if there are needed actions.

REQUIREMENT 2

- (2) If the LEA is not applying to serve each Tier I school, the LEA must explain why it lacks capacity to serve each Tier I school.

TO MEET REQUIREMENT 2 ABOVE:

Vermont has no LEA with more than one Tier I school therefore this is not applicable

REQUIREMENT 3

- (3) **The LEA must describe actions it has taken, or will take, to—**
- **Design and implement interventions consistent with the final requirements;**
 - **Recruit, screen, and select external providers, if applicable, to ensure their quality;**
 - **Align other resources with the interventions;**
 - **Modify its practices or policies, if necessary, to enable its schools to implement the interventions fully and effectively; and**
 - **Sustain the reforms after the funding period ends.**

TO MEET REQUIREMENT 3 ABOVE:

The LEA must describe actions it has taken, or will take, to—

- Design and implement interventions consistent with the final requirements;
- Recruit, screen, and select external providers, if applicable, to ensure their quality;
- Align other resources with the interventions;
- Modify its practices or policies, if necessary, to enable its schools to implement the interventions fully and effectively; and
- Sustain the reforms after the funding period ends.

1) The LEA must describe actions it has taken, or will take, to design and implement interventions consistent with the final requirements.

- **For Tier I and II schools:**

- o One of four interventions has been identified and a rationale for their selection has been adequately described and documented.
- o The application includes the use of a guided self assessment to inform school improvement action planning and plans to complete a comprehensive assessment conducted by an external evaluator to inform continued school improvement plan implementation.
- o All required elements of the selected intervention have been addressed so as to fully and effectively implement the selected model within the three year timeline of the grant.

These items have been previously addressed

- o **For Tier I and Tier II schools,** external coaching capacity (someone not under the supervision of the principal) has been identified to provide intensive technical assistance and guide the implementation process.

Directions: Describe how the LEA will address this requirement:

- **For Tier I, II, and III schools:**

- o The application includes the use of a guided self assessment to inform school improvement action planning.

This item has been previously addressed.

- o The application includes a commitment to work with the state School Improvement Support team in the development and execution of a school improvement implementation plan that

assesses and incorporates effective school improvement strategies already under way and includes required (for Tier I and II) and permissible strategies

- o The application includes a commitment to designate local leadership team (SU School Support team) responsible for directing and reporting on the progress of implementing defined elements. This team must include the superintendent, the principal of the school(s), the curriculum coordinator and the special education coordinator.

These items are addressed in the “Statement of Agreement”

- o Application reflects school improvement strategies already in progress.

This item has been previously addressed.

- Evidence-based practices are selected and plans to implement consider measures necessary to ensure fidelity of implementation. (e.g., the application includes approaches that have a research base reflecting effectiveness in improving instruction in the areas of concern such as mathematics or literacy; the application also includes approaches that provide a systemic model for improving instruction and learning and reflects the preparative and evaluative components of sustainable implementation such as achieving readiness to implement, communicating progress, evaluating outcomes, and providing supervisory union/district support through funding, allocation of personnel, and time for professional development, collaboration and planning.)

Directions: Describe any measures taken to insure fidelity of implementation of strategies in the plan or refer to the appropriate section of the improvement plan where this is addressed.

One proven factor contributing to success is the old adage of (a) “tell them what you are going to do”; (b) “do it” and (c) review what has been done. It is not enough just to offer opportunities for professional development, or to hope that teachers will change practice after sitting through a training. The same applies to overall school improvement. Having a plan and communicating this plan establishes both

directionality and focus. That is good, but not good enough. Often what is left out is full consideration of what is going to be different; and how to measure the difference. Hence, the Supervisory Union School Improvement Team has developed a clear chart which indicates each school's strategies for reform and a progress monitoring system. Using this chart; The FNWSU Support Team will meet quarterly to review each school as a unit and how FNWSU is improving successful outcomes for all students.

As a next step, Principals will be asked to create specific, measurable indicators for each strategy that they will use throughout the year to guide their progress monitoring.

* SEE Appendices D, M, T School Improvement Report Card

- o The application includes a commitment to provide the following required data elements annually:
 - 1.) Number of minutes within the school year
 - 2.) Student participation rate on State assessments in reading/language arts and in mathematics, by student subgroup
 - 3.) Dropout rate
 - 4.) Student attendance rate
 - 5.) Number and percentage of students completing advanced coursework (i.e. AP/IB), early college high schools, or dual enrollment classes
 - 6.) Discipline incidents
 - 7.) Truants
 - 8.) Distribution of teachers by performance level on an LEA's teacher evaluation system (once that system is up and running)
 - 9.) Teacher attendance rate

Directions: Please provide data for items 1 and 5-9 above to be used as baseline measures.

***See Attached Chart (Appendix U) including baseline measures for all three schools.

For Tier I, II, and III schools:

2) The LEA must describe actions it has taken, or will take, to Outline the need for recruitment of external providers in effectively implementing the defined school improvement plans and parameters which will be considered in ensuring quality and fit.

Some recommendations from the *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants* (Perlman and Redding, eds.; 2010) follow:

- a. Identify unambiguous reasons for hiring an external provider.
- b. Engage stakeholders about the need to hire external providers.
- c. Articulate specific goals for the relationship with the external provider.
- d. Budget adequate funding to support relationship with external provider for duration of contract;
- e. Develop a process for selecting external providers whose experience and qualifications match the specified goals.
- f. Negotiate a contract outlining roles and responsibilities of the external provider as well as the district and relevant schools.
- g. Provide support as needed and appropriate.
- h. Evaluate external provider's progress toward goals.
- i. Define consequences for failure (e.g., termination or modification of contract).

Directions: Summarize your reasons for contracting with an external provider (this includes school coach and any content providers) giving consideration to items a) through i) as applicable.

Contracting with outside providers brings in a fresh perspective, as well as much needed expertise in the areas our schools need for improvement. All of the persons who are considered (Aldo Bianchi; Margaret McClean, Jon Udis; and the Higher Ed Collaborative, Discipline With Dignity;) for contracting need to have had extensive experience in the area we need to improve. They also must have a proven ability to not only educate and inspire, but the also be able to be active catalysts for change. This process has been fine tuned from some past experiences of hiring outside providers who did not have any knowledge of school needs nor had a different agenda than what the school needs were. These past poor experiences have sharpened our schools to be clear in matching identified needs with identified resources. However, there are not as of yet codified procedures regarding outside providers. We do depend on DOE for guidance as to qualified providers of services our schools requires, this has worked out well to date. Another important aspect in contracting with an external provider is that when the match is good, we intend to continue working with them to sustain the change. We strongly feel that in many cases a “one shot deal” is not what causes change. We bring a person on with the intention of building capacity, but realize that this in itself may take time.

For Tier I, II, and III schools:

3) LEA agrees to collaborate and cooperate with state organized trainings for Supervisory Union administrators, principals, teachers and paraprofessionals, informational meetings, and trainings provided through the state.

This item is addressed in the “Statement of Agreement”

For Tier I, II, and III schools:

4) The LEA must describe actions it has taken, or will take, to Align other resources with the interventions.

- The LEA plan must be comprehensive and systemic in its approach. Reviewers will look to the budget and school improvement plan to assess the alignment and allocation of resources (e.g., personnel, percent of time committed, recognition of and/or effort to assess and realign existing initiatives and funds from other sources to support school improvement goals, refocusing existing professional development and in-service days to support training needs related to improvement, etc.) :

Directions: Please review budget and school improvement plan to assure items below are addressed and check appropriate boxes

- X Human resources
- X Fiscal resources
- X Time and schedule
- X Existing Initiatives
- X Related activities
- X Partnerships
- X Alignment of PD activities

*** All items were addressed within the School Improvement Plan and the Budget for all three schools. See FNWSU School Improvement Plan (Appendix A)

For Tier I, II, and III schools

5) The LEA must describe actions it has taken, or will take, to Modify its practices or policies, if necessary, to enable it to implement the interventions fully and effectively.

- The LEA agrees to use an external evaluation (Tier I and II ONLY) and internal review process to identify any current practices or policies that are barriers to a full and effective implementation of the

selected intervention and commit to eliminating barriers through the implementation process. This process will also identify areas where a consolidation of focus would benefit the school improvement process (such as multiple committees focusing on similar outcomes – or with no defined outcomes) and work to converge efforts on common goals and outcomes.

- Inclusion of actions to address those barriers in the plan, utilizing the following, as applicable:
 - o Board and Union letters of recognition or memorandum of understanding that document commitment to modify or amend current agreements, practices, and procedures to allow full and effective implementation of the transformation model.
 - o Agreements for operational flexibility to implement reform at the school level.
 - Evidence of need for waivers to State Board of Education rules, when appropriate.

Directions: Identify barriers and any actions you have taken or will take to address these barriers. (Tier I an II can reference Requirement 1 I) c. i-ix)

This grant application has highlighted a need for a Supervisory Union Level School Improvement Committee. With three out of five schools being identified, (and a fourth having received the first check mark) it was clear that the Supervisory Union needed to consider a format to not only discuss, but to hold accountable the efforts being made at each of the schools. This type of unification of processes has been happening for curriculum, and it makes sense to extend this effort for school improvement in general.

One barrier that needs constant attention is the need to balance professional development time with the need not to short change our students' instructional time. With Principals and teachers being called out of the buildings so frequently for training of one sort or another; there have been increasing concerns about the amount of time students are with substitute teachers, who may not be "highly qualified."

For Tier I, II, and III schools

6) The LEA must describe actions it has taken, or will take, to Sustain the reforms after the funding period ends.

For each item below describe how it will be addressed over the funding period

The LEA must:

- Include strategies that build local capacity and methodologies that ensure interventions are integrated into the culture and routine practice of the school. (e.g., if student discipline and behavior is a significant factor to consider in working to raise achievement levels for students, the plan goes beyond providing individualized interventions and reflects a systemic approach to improving levels of student time on task and participation in the classroom by implementing or reconstituting an evidence based model to address school climate and culture such as Positive Behavioral Supports or Responsive Classroom. These models build local capacity to intervene early and support students within the school community with the least amount of intervention to achieve the greatest result and create sustainability by involving the whole school community in the implementation process.)

Directions: Describe here or refer to appropriate section of your plan or budget.

Because the focus for the FNWSU Improvement Plan is *comprehensive instructional reform strategies*, all strategies within the improvement plan are integrated into the culture and routine practice of the school. Each component of the plan represents a systemic approach to school improvement. The School Coach will ensure on-site professional development specifically in the area of assessment. The training and support will include all staff members, but will focus on the training of the Director of Teaching and Learning who will support and guide the continuation of this work once the grant period

has ended. This work will address the use of assessment to inform instruction and will also begin the conversation and transformation of grading at the high school level.

By using the data provided through discipline referrals, MVU has realized that the current system is not proving effective; therefore, through trainings and the support of BEST, MVU has created a new discipline system which will begin to be implemented this coming school year. Dr. Mendler who works with Discipline with Dignity will provide support and guidance. A team will also attend the BEST institute and although they are not implementing PBIS, the team has created a system to be introduced to staff, students and community. Addressing this need will support student success in the classroom and throughout the building. Highgate also continues to support their newly implemented PBIS work and realizes the importance of student behavior and its affect on learning. The continuation of critical friends training in Highgate and at MVU will strengthen the capacity of the TLC's as well as support the work at the Data Team level. This strategy will focus the communication and professional learning communities within the school. TLC's and Data Teams have a direct impact on student instruction and now that the teams have taken time to form and create collaborative working relationships, they can now concentrate on increasing student outcomes. Consultants coming into Swanton and Highgate to support formative assessment work and curriculum development using VCAT (Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Tool) will build capacity among the staff. But more importantly, in all cases, teacher leaders will be trained to allow for this work to be maintained.

- Identify local fiscal and structural support for the interventions where applicable beyond the life of the grant.

Directions: Describe how the budget will support on-going activities beyond the grant funding period.

According to all strategies, the SIG will support the initial training of school leaders who will carry out the training. Any other funds necessary for the continuation or advancement of this work will come from available Consolidated Federal Grant funds as they apply to the strategies. The CFG is aligned with the school improvement plans so these funds are used on a regular basis to support these strategies and will continue to do so after the life of the SIG.

- Identify other funding sources that will be used to complement SIG funds received in supporting the implementation of defined strategies. These could include other federal programs, as well as state and local funds and should also highlight funds that will be used to sustain the intervention beyond three-year grant period.

Ensure that all funding sources are identified in the plan.

SEE Above

- Plan for induction and mentoring of new staff.

Directions: Describe plans for induction and mentoring of new staff.

FNWSU currently uses the Danielson Pathwise model as our mentoring model. All new teachers are expected to take part in the one-day induction before the school year begins. Each school also has a trained pool of mentors who take on the responsibility of mentoring a new teacher for two years to work through the Pathwise program. The high school has a mentor teacher leader who supports this work. FNWSU is in the process of adjusting the Pathwise model and creating a differentiated model to support the needs of all levels of "new" teachers. Each school also conducts its own "new teacher orientation" prior to the start of the school year.

- Create a district level team that examines and reports on achievement levels for all students and subgroups for all schools in the supervisory union on a bi-annual basis. State assessment results are communicated annually to teachers, staff, family and community members and school boards. Appropriate response strategies are incorporated into school action plans.

Include these activities as responsibilities of the SU/District School Support Team

DONE

REQUIREMENT 4

- (4) The LEA must include a timeline delineating the steps it will take to implement the selected intervention in each **Tier I and Tier II** school identified in the LEA's application.

TO MEET REQUIREMENTS (4) ABOVE –

The LEA must include a timeline delineating the steps it will take to implement the selected intervention in each **Tier I and Tier II** school identified in the LEA's application.

Required items have been covered in Requirements 1 and/or 3 above.

REQUIREMENT 5

- (5) The LEA must describe the annual goals for student achievement on the State's assessments in both reading/language arts and mathematics that it has established in order to monitor its **Tier I and Tier II** schools that receive school improvement funds.

TO MEET REQUIREMENT (5) ABOVE –

In its application and school improvement implementation plan, the LEA must articulate annual goals (subject to the approval of the SEA) for 2010-2013 for student achievement on the State's assessments in both reading/language arts and mathematics that it has established in order to monitor its Tier I and Tier II schools that receive school improvement funds.

Directions: Discuss reading and math goals here

REQUIREMENT 6

(6) For each Tier III school the LEA commits to serve, the LEA must identify the services the school will receive or the activities the school will implement.

TO MEET REQUIREMENT (6) ABOVE -

For each Tier III school the LEA commits to serve, the LEA must identify the services the school will receive or the activities the school will implement as defined in the design section above.

Directions: Identify services Tier III schools will receive and/or activities schools will implement or reference appropriate sections of improvement plan.

**** The services the Tier III schools will receive and/or activities schools will implement are those included in requested FNWSU Improvement Plan. See Attachment A**

REQUIREMENT 7

(7) The LEA must describe the goals it has established (subject to approval by the SEA) in order to hold accountable its Tier III schools that receive school improvement funds.

TO MEET REQUIREMENT (7) ABOVE –

The LEA must describe the goals it has established (subject to approval by the SEA) in order to hold accountable its **Tier III** schools that receive school improvement funds.

Directions: Describe indicators the LEA will use to assess progress towards implementation of the improvement plan for Tier III schools.

The SU School Support Team, made up of the Superintendent, Director of Special Education, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, MVU Principal and Director of Teaching and Learning, Principal and Assistant Principal of Highgate, and Principal and Assistant Principal of Swanton, will meet on a quarterly basis to review the school improvement plan and to assess progress towards implementation of the plan. Principals will be required to complete the School Improvement Report Card. (Specific indicators to be developed by Principals as a first next step)

REQUIREMENT 8

(8) As appropriate, the LEA must consult with relevant stakeholders regarding the LEA's application and implementation of school improvement models in its **Tier I and Tier II schools.**

TO MEET REQUIREMENT (8) ABOVE -

As appropriate, the LEA must consult with relevant stakeholders regarding the LEA's application and implementation of school improvement models in its Tier I and Tier II schools.

Directions: Please include evidence of stakeholder engagement as well as a plan for on-going stakeholder engagement. (E.g. board minutes, correspondence, newsletters, community meetings, etc)

C. BUDGET: An LEA must include a budget that indicates the amount of school improvement funds the LEA will use each year in each Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III school it commits to serve.

The LEA must provide a budget that indicates the amount of school improvement funds the LEA will use each year to—

- Implement the selected model in each Tier I and Tier II school it commits to serve;
- Conduct LEA-level activities designed to support implementation of the selected school intervention models in the LEA's Tier I and Tier II schools; and
- Support school improvement activities, at the school or LEA level, for each Tier III school identified in the LEA's application.

Directions: An LEA must include a budget that indicates the amount of school improvement funds the LEA will use each year in each Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III school it commits to serve. Attach budget.

*****BUDGETS included for all three Tier III schools in *Attachment A* FNWSU Improvement Plan 2010-2011**

Note: An LEA's budget must cover the period of availability, including any extension granted through a waiver, and be of sufficient size and scope to implement the selected school intervention model in each Tier I and Tier II school the LEA commits to serve.

An LEA's budget for each year may not exceed the number of Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III schools it commits to serve multiplied by \$2,000,000.

D. ASSURANCES: An LEA must include the following assurances in its application for a School Improvement Grant.

The LEA must assure that it will—

- (1) Use its School Improvement Grant to implement fully and effectively an intervention in each Tier I and Tier II school that the LEA commits to serve consistent with the final requirements;
- (2) Establish annual goals for student achievement on the State's assessments in both reading/language arts and mathematics and measure progress on the leading indicators in section III of the final requirements in order to monitor each Tier I and Tier II school that it serves with school improvement funds, and establish goals (approved by the SEA) to hold accountable its Tier III schools that receive school improvement funds;
- (3) If it implements a restart model in a Tier I or Tier II school, include in its contract or agreement terms and provisions to hold the charter operator, charter management organization, or education management organization accountable for complying with the final requirements; and
- (4) Report to the SEA the school-level data required under section III of the final requirements.

These assurances and others are addressed in the Statement of Agreement. A copy of the State of Agreement signed by the Superintendent must be submitted with this application

Signed by Dr. John McCarthy, Superintendent of FNWSU

Dated: June 11, 2010

E. WAIVERS: If the SEA has requested any waivers of requirements applicable to the LEA's School Improvement Grant, an LEA must indicate which of those waivers it intends to implement.

Directions: The LEA must check each waiver that the LEA will implement. If the LEA does not intend to implement the waiver with respect to each applicable school, the LEA must indicate for which schools it will implement the waiver.

- ✘✘ Extending the period of availability of school improvement funds.

- “Starting over” in the school improvement timeline for Tier I and Tier II Title I participating schools implementing a turnaround or restart model.

- Implementing a school wide program in a Tier I or Tier II Title I participating school that does not meet the 40 percent poverty eligibility threshold.

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SIG LEA e application

5/10/2010