

Vermont School Improvement Grant Application

Spring, 2010

Supervisory Union/ District Name: St. Johnsbury School District

Contact Person: Nicole Saginor

Role: Superintendent

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Phone: 802-748-4744 ext. 2315

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
- All relevant attachments Tier I and II: (B, D2, E) Tier III (B, E)

Superintendent Signature:

Date: 6/15/10

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
St. Johnsbury Elementary School	00181	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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:

The District School Improvement Team reviewed the self-assessment and completed Attachment B using the rubric provided. We rated ourselves as "emerging" for the majority of items. While there were some areas that we have been working on and would have wanted a "strong" rating, we were able to summarize the reasons for not qualifying for each of those categories due to the lack of consistency, ownership by all, consistently high expectations, and accountability.

As essentially all the criteria were emerging, our three year grant will address each area of concern. These areas and our plans for addressing them can be found in Attachment F and in the budget submission.

- 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:

Teachers, paraeducators, and office staff were provided with copies of the Initial Assessment of Major Factors for Rapid Change in School Improvement. Each group discussed each indicator and identified the level of evidence for each one along

with their supporting data for their choice. They also filled out an input sheet indicating their thoughts about the structures we had in place that were moving us in the right direction that we would like to maintain and/or strengthen, as well as ideas for the future. A representative committee of 25 teachers came together to review that data and generate their recommendations for transformation strategies to be incorporated into the school improvement grant request. This list, along with the self-assessments, was used by the administrative team (the group to be the SU School Improvement Team) to develop the grant request.

We also held an informational session for the Community on the elements of the Tier I requirements. This was followed by a dinner during which tables of participants discussed the current state of the school and provided their input for the future. Attached is a synopsis of the community input.

- 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:

The NECAP data has shown a slow but steady increase since the 2006 teaching year scores. Despite the improvement in scores since that time, the poverty achievement gap has remained constant. The Special Education scores, while still below AYP levels, are rising at a slightly greater rate. (See attached growth graphs).

There is a close correlation between scores on the NECAP reading assessment and results of the Fountas and Pinnell scores. This leads us to believe that the NECAP scores are an accurate depiction of the level of achievement of our students. It does, however, lead to the conclusion that our instructional program is still not serving the needs of our population.

Our math scores remain persistently below state average and contain the poverty achievement gap as well. Our professional development emphasis over the last two years has focused on writing strategies (using the expertise of Karen Kurzman who taught a yearlong to the entire faculty) and reading (with the support of the LLI and Sue Biggam). The Commissioner's Required Actions included aligning the curriculum to the state standards. This became the largest task of the year, along with establishing standards of practice in literacy development through the grades. While this was important work, and perhaps may have contributed to our meeting AYP in reading for the all students category, the depth of our program needs to be addressed to reach all of our students.

The last time schoolwide effort was placed on mathematics was the adoption of the Investigations Program, and then Connected Math for the older grades. The focus was on implementation of the program, but there has not been an accompanying emphasis on helping teachers reach a deeper understanding of students' conceptual development. This will be a focus this year through the use of commonly developed assessments and the analysis of student work to approach a collaborative inquiry into instructional practices lead by a full time math consultant.

Finally, the persistent achievement gap indicated by the scores of students on Free and Reduced Lunch strongly suggests that a lack of consistently high expectations and equity of professional practice is an area of highest importance. We will address the poverty achievement gap by exploring the work of Eric Jensen and consulting with Robert Midi regarding his role in the "Roots of Success." These activities will be supported through CFP funds.

For more detailed analysis of student achievement data and our status, see attachment entitled Data Overview.

- 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:

St. Johnsbury has one of the largest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch in the state. We have qualified for state programs such as the "food backpack" program which provides families with healthy non-perishable food for the weekends and vacation times. The school has provided programs for students in poverty, such as special summer camps, clean clothing, and home-school coordination, but that level of support has not yet reached the classroom instructional level. Our highest priority for school improvement will have to be addressing attitudes and practices which perpetuate inequities.

The discipline referrals this year were shocking. (See data charts included). Having increased the number of Student Support Centers and restated the rubrics for Level I, II, and III behaviors for schoolwide consistency, it was the expectation that referrals would decrease. One hypothesis is now that teachers have learned to depend on the presence of behavior personnel to handle any misbehavior, even those that should be easily dealt with in the classroom. Therefore, another high priority will be to provide new structures of support that are not such convenient "dumping grounds" while providing professional development to teachers to enable them to atake ownership of low level challenging behaviors in the classroom.

Of all the data in the YRBS, the most disturbing was the extremely low proportion of students who reported that they would consult with an SAP if they had a substance abuse problem. We employ a full time SAP and plan to do so again next year. We will look carefully at this data to see if evidence of reduced risky behaviors results along with an increase in willingness to utliize the services of an SAP. (See attached data).

The School Action Plan for the years 2009-2012 is attached (per 1f). It was guided by our 2008 NECAP data and the Commissioner's Required Actions for Year 3 Restructuring. The plan will be updated and re-adopted by the school board this summer for the years 2010-2013 to coincide with our School Improvement Grant plan as finally approved.

- 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.*

See Attachment B.

- 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:
We have selected the Transformation Model. See attached rationale in Attachment D2.

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

We have already taken steps to replace our principal and the status of that process and our interim plans are outlined in Attachment F. We have gone through the process of self-evaluation based on the Major Factors for Rapid Change survey. Each teacher team discussed and submitted their ratings to the District's School Improvement Team. We completed the process ourselves by considering the input of all the teams and coming to consensus on each of the 15 criteria. We have begun to identify teams within the school who will participate on a building level leadership team to ensure input and communication with all faculty and staff, and who will work on various parts of the transformation plan including curriculum and instruction teams.

We had identified a PBS team and were already preparing to participate in readiness activities next year. We have a trained and functioning data team that meets regularly and who have led the faculty in some data analysis activities, although it has not yet become a standard of practice for each instructional group. All data has been tracked in a central system (VCAT) which all teachers can access and which is used to generate report cards as well as any questions that we wish to pursue. We can drill down to student and teacher levels for data analysis.

The school has implemented the Commissioner's Required Actions. The entire faculty has been trained in formative assessment through the FAP, with one of the principal trainers being the leader of our data team. Every teacher is part of a TLC and the principal had been a steady member of a PLC. A data team attended state training and now meets regularly to examine and discuss schoolwide data. Our literacy curriculum has been aligned to the GEs, we have implemented Investigations and Connected Math programs and are aligning those to the GEs. Middle School restructuring has begun in consultation with Otho Thompson and will continue next year through the SIG.

- 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:

Marion Anastasia and Beth Cobb are compiling this report. (Action Plan as updated and adopted by the School Board in August, 2009 is attached per 1f. New administration will update this plan with appropriate input by August 2010).

- 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.)

The School Board is completely supportive of the administration and the implementation of the Transformation Model. They adopted the model formally, have supported the required step of replacing the principal, and are each participating on committees, such as the Action Plan committee, the principal search committee, the PIRC committee, as well as standing committees that are crucial for our plan including the tech, science, and finance committees.

(See minutes of April 13, 2010 special meeting; Board Chair signature on Commissioner's Required Actions).

- 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.)

Up until this time, there has been a positive relationship between the administration and the Association. Several teachers have been terminated under various circumstances with the cooperation of the union. These have included those who would have been non-renewed due to negative evaluations and some who were non-renewed on probationary contracts. They have been supportive of rigorous standards of practice and there is every indication that they will support a new evaluation system as long as they are part of the process that establishes it. One of the co-presidents will serve on the Transformation School Improvement Team and the Professional Design Team that will take on this task.

There were a number of Association representatives on the committee that collated the faculty input for the transformation plan. They actively participated and contributed many positive ideas to the final plan. Some of the key union leaders have been part of the data team and have served as coaches and mentors and are committed to improving instructional practice.

The Association Co-President is a member of the SIG team and will serve on our Professional Design Team.

- 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)

St. Johnsbury receives generous allotments of CFP funds which have been used to create structures of embedded professional development over the last several years.

One of the barriers we face is the lack of support of the local newspaper which has a long stated agenda to interrupt the system of "government schools." They have made it a mission to defeat our current year's budget. One of the complaints they have is the fact that we have too many administrators and do not see the need for all the supports that we have built in to the system. At this time, there is no approved budget for the coming year. The second vote failed by 63 votes. We believe that we will only win the support of the town over the long haul if we can succeed with

our transformation plans and produce better results. The Superintendent has been meeting with community groups and individuals who have expressed doubts about the capacity of the school to move forward. The Association has been working with the School Board to reach an agreement on a salary freeze which should result in a passed budget. A third vote is scheduled for June 29, 2010.

- iv. Current evaluation practices (e.g., outline of current evaluation system for principals and teachers, including model, frequency of evaluation, etc.)

Currently the teachers are evaluated every three years, except for probationary teachers who are evaluated twice each year during their probationary period. The model of evaluation was adopted several years ago under the consultation of Bea Johnstone from New York City's District II. It begins with stating a "learning intention." The lesson structure is "to, with, by" which means that the teacher presents a lesson, practices with the students, then assigns individual or group work. Practices of formative assessment as presented in "Keeping Learning on Track" are incorporated into the expected standards of practice.

This is generally a sound approach, but it has not reached deeply enough into the content knowledge of teachers or their flexible ability to work with students' developing understanding. The new system will incorporate the positive elements of the current system, but will be based on a more evidence-based approach and will include measures of student engagement, assessment, and learning.

- 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.)

We have a veteran faculty with varying degrees of successful teaching records. There are several teachers on plans of improvement for next year and a few more who will come up for review next year. That said, we have some highly qualified teachers and some with special training who work directly with students and others who work as coaches and mentors for other teachers.

We have one graduate of VMI who worked for several years with the Vermont Math Partnership leading math professional development across the state. She is an eighth grade teacher who wishes to remain in the classroom, but who will take the lead on our math committee and provide modeling for other teachers. She will work closely with Reginal Quinn, former Director of the VMP, who will come on as our schoolwide math consultant.

There are two teachers who are involved with the Vermont Science Initiative, one completing the Masters Program and the other who is enrolled in the leadership program. Both of them are taking intensive content courses combined with instructional strategies and assessment techniques. Jessica Monahan is our Science Teacher Leader who is the Chair of our science committee and Brian Dumais, our middle school science teacher, is providing leadership on the committee as well.

Jeremy Ross and Alice Simpson have trained with Sue Biggam through the Literacy Leadership Institute (LLI) and both serve as mentors and coaches. They will continue to work with VRI and Sue Biggam to support continued growth in literacy.

Beth Cobb, statewide trainer for the FAP, is our Data Team leader and provides professional development and guidance for all grades in formative assessment techniques.

These teachers are some who will be serving on the Professional Design Team which will take the lead in many of our transformational initiatives.

We have had consultation from Otho Thompson who has worked with the Middle School to develop a middle school model to increase student engagement and ownership in their learning. Otho will continue to work with the school next year.

vi. **Statewide and regional partnerships (e.g., agreements with ESAs, local agencies, and/or institutes of higher ed.)**

We are members of our regional ESA, the NorthEast Kingdom School Development Center. Next year this partnership will allow us to access Dr. G. Christian Jernstedt who will present to our staff his work on Learning and the Brain. We will also be able to hear Dr. Eric Jensen, whose specialty - how children of poverty learn - is particularly relevant to the needs of our school improvement plan.

We will be receiving support from VRI over the period of the three years. Year 1 will include an audit and some consultation from Sue Biggam. Years 2 and 3 will address the findings of the audit and set priorities based on those findings. The goal will be to move teachers from knowledge to mastery of literacy building skills.

We have two teachers enrolled in programs of the Vermont Science Initiative who are leading our science curriculum committee work. We are hoping to work with Maura O'Brien and Renee Affolter to offer one of their key courses at our school next year. It will be open to all teachers in the region, but be particularly accessible to our faculty.

Education staff from the Fairbanks Museum have been attending all our science committee meetings to be able to align their support programs to our new curriculum. As part of our yearly budget, we support the Museum and in return have ready access to their services. All our students visit the Museum yearly for various learning experiences. This year and next, they have a special grant to encourage love of science in young students. We worked with them as they developed their "New Explorers' Club" which met weekly and included students aged 5-8. Initial reports indicate a very successful year and they look forward to next year.

StJ Academy has been a partner in a number of ways. We do transition programs for our middle school students and there is a program, called HALO, that targets at-risk students to help them adjust to the new expectations and increase their chances of success. This coming year, one of the faculty members at the Academy is on sabbatical to work on strategies of community and parent involvement. He will become a member of our PIRC committee and we will participate in any initiatives that he may develop.

One of our strongest partnership is the Parent Child Center housed at the old Lincoln Street School. Initially begun by a "bridge grant," the Head Start Program their makes space for an additional 15 pre-schoolers, thereby increasing our preschool capacity. For our annual contribution, we collaborate with Mental Health to provide a full time early childhood specialist whose services we access for our families. In addition, with our EEI grant, the Lincoln Street School houses our three year old program.

vii. Allocation of adequate time for teacher collaboration, job embedded professional development (i.e., as described in the LEA's application)

For the last two years, we have dedicated one double period a week for each grade level team to receive professional development and work on various tasks, such as developing assessments and aligning curriculum. Our new schedule for next year has taken this model and adjusted it according to feedback from teachers. The new schedule produces uninterrupted instructional time in the morning, creates 45 minutes additional instructional time per week, and places the "collaborative work time" at the end of the day when the teachers felt they would most benefit from it. The draft of the new master schedule is attached.

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.)

We have all our data on the VCAT system which tracks our state and local assessments and has many uses from data analysis to the generation of report cards.

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.)

We are working with the Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) this next year under a \$5,000 grant to promote parent involvement. We have an active PTO which is mostly dedicated to fund raising and supporting special school activities. They were represented on our Principal search committee and are participating in our PIRC committee.

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.)

We have designed our budget and our strategies to increase capacity. While there are some new positions included, they are mostly consulting and supportive to existing faculty and programs. The intention is to transform the structures, provide training and guidance, and set in motion new systems, such as the evaluation system, the behavior support system, and the enacted math, language, and science curricula. See Attachment F and the budget.

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:

It was the consensus of our teams that the school, in large part, qualified as "emerging" for the majority of the criteria. There was one "strong" area, that being the qualifications of our paraeducator staff, all of whom are HQT with either the appropriate degree status or having passed an online course and test.

Having been in corrective action for three years, many of the Commissioner's Required Actions have been either enacted, begun, or are being planned. These include key areas such as Teacher Learning Communities, embedded professional development, data team work, formative assessments, and aligning curriculum to the GEs. Our behavior systems and school climate have been an area of concern, but advancements have begun and the school will enter PBS readiness next year. Community support is one of our biggest areas to address, but due to the new PIRC program grant, we are poised to make a significant change there as well. Even though our budget has not passed, we have many positive relationships and partnerships within the community that support and enrich our work.

***See comments related to attachment B on requirement #1 1 (a).**

The groundwork has been done and many teachers feel that we have set out on the correct path. They are anxious to seriously ramp up efforts and seem willing to do whatever is necessary to participate in the transformation activities. There was a good deal of agreement and honesty among the staff as to where the school fell in the continuum which bodes well for addressing the needs of the Transformation Model.



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:

- 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

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 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.

- 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:

- h) 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) 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

- 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.

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:

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:**

- One of four interventions has been identified and a rationale for their selection has been adequately described and documented.
- 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.
- 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

- **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:

We have not yet engaged an external coach, but are pursuing several high quality options. We have been promised support in any case from the Snelling Center, guaranteeing us a research-based systemic approach to our transformation if we do not succeed in hiring another consultant.

- For Tier I, II, and III schools:

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

This item has been previously addressed.

- 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
- 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”

- 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.

See attachment F. Measures to ensure fidelity include the ViiM program, an external school improvement coach, external consultants, SEA oversight as stated in the Statement of Agreement, District level support, student assessment and teacher evaluation data, embedded and directed collaborative work time under the guidance of a Data and Assessment Specialist and external consultants.

- 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.

1) Number of minutes within the school year: 6,885 minutes

5) NA

6) Discipline incidents: approx. 2,500 (see data charts attached)

Suspensions: 73

7) Truants: 3

8) Teacher performance (no baseline data available)

9) Teacher attendance rate: average sick and personal leave = 11.2 days

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.

We are required to provide an external transformation coach as a Tier I school. The goal of this relationship is to maintain fidelity with our school plan, to consult with around barriers that arise, to assist in coordinating initiatives, and to offer assistance where necessary. We have contacted a number of candidates who provide this level of consultation and have not yet settled

on a provider. We will use, as our source of likely consultants, the Snelling Center which has provided leadership guidance to several of our school leaders and to many across the state.

We decided to engage a math consultant, as math has been a persistently and stubbornly an area of weakness, even though we have initiated new programs and have a Lead Math teacher as part of our embedded system of professional development. We have chosen Regina Quinn at the recommendation of our SEA support team and because she is one of the noted mathematics instructional experts in the state. She will work on a contracted basis for 210 days for Year 1 of the SIG program. Her duties will begin with a school audit and will focus then on supporting the Lead Math Teacher, the Special Assistance Math Teacher, and the math team to expand the expertise of our sustainable math supports. She will also work with grade level teams to train them to create common assessments on their own and to examine student work for conceptual understanding. This is a skill that is not evident in our current faculty but once achieved should be able to be sustained.

We have been working with Sue Biggam and the LLI program for two years. We will continue that work at a more modest level, but do not want to lose ground as we pick up the pace of math reform. Her role will be primarily to support the Lead Literacy Teacher and Special Assistance Literacy Teacher in their work co-teaching, modeling, and working with struggling students. We have made gains in literacy, having made AYP for all students for the first time in reading. But our poverty achievement gap persists and more work needs to be done. Literacy support will be ongoing throughout the grant through VRI and the ViiM program.

We are joining the ViiM program which will introduce consultants in PBS in Year 1 and literacy in Years 2-3, to support initiatives that are just beginning. This research-based approach has been presented to us by the SEA support team and appears to offer the expertise and support needed to address our school climate which is one of our biggest concerns.

The new system of teacher evaluation, if based upon the basic concepts contained in the Diagnostic Classroom Observation approach, will provide a pre and post reliable measure of teacher practice to evaluate the effect of our professional development efforts. (See Diagnostic Classroom Observation: Moving Beyond Best Practice, Saginor, 2008)

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

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

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:
 - 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.
 - 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 and II can reference Requirement 1 1) c. i-ix)

The largest barrier identified is lack of parental and community support. We are addressing this through our PIRC engagement and collaboration with the St. J Academy through the sabbatical activities of Richard Boisseau. See Attachment F and Requirement 1.

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.

We will participate in the ViiM program which will assist us to initiate, implement, and maintain a system of positive behavior supports. Our budget reflects participation in ViiM and identifies personnel in charge of and participating in the PBS process. We use our CFP funds to support a Behavior Specialist, a student Behavior Coach, and partially fund our full-time SAP. These are some of the personnel that will be the source of sustainability of the improved climate.

The instructional improvements identified by audits, the new curriculum, and new teacher evaluation systems will be supported by the new Co-Principal who will come on board in year 2. These changes will be put in place by consultants, an interim Instructional Leader under the guidance of the Superintendent/Curriculum Director and the Data and Assessment Specialist who are supported by local and CFP funds. The Professional Design and PBS Team structure will ensure that teachers continue to have a voice and stake in the developing systems and will be committed to their maintenance.

- 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.

The CFP funds have been used to support many of the structures that we have instituted and will continue to support the key positions and activities related to transformation. Our schedule and other elements of our restructuring plans will be paid for through local budgets, to the extent that the community can be engaged to support the school in the future.

- 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.

Plan indicates where other funds are leveraged, including grants from PIRC, CFP, ARRA, and local funds. See attachment F.

- Plan for induction and mentoring of new staff.

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

Our CFP funds have always provided for mentors for new staff for up to two years per our Master Agreement. Mentors are supported by the Principal and the Data and Assessment Specialist. This support will now include training on the new teacher evaluation system. New teachers are hired on probationary contracts and are observed a minimum of two times per year by the

Principal who assigns a coach in addition to a mentor if deemed necessary. The coaches are our Lead Teachers in math and literacy.

- 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

The District School Support Team in concert with the School Support team always has and will continue to review assessment results at least on a bi-annual basis. The School Report card is prepared by the building level leadership and is delivered annually to teachers, the Board, and the community.

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

See attached updated School Action Plan.

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

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.

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)

Attached are Board minutes indicating support of the Board for the Transformation process, presentation to the community and the Board about the Tier I designation, and results from a community dinner in which approximately 150 community members gave their input to what about the school they wanted to maintain, and what their ideas were for the future in light of the transformation agenda.

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.

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

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.