



**OREGON DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

**School Improvement Fund
Interim Report
SB 318**

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**2009 Oregon Legislature
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Improvement Fund (SIF), originally established by the 2001 legislature, was funded again by the 2007 Legislature, independent of the State School Fund. These funds were to be used in support of areas directly related to increasing student achievement. This report presents the *interim* results of districts'¹ school improvement efforts that were funded through the SIF during the 2007-2008 school year. As the data used for this report have been collected after only one year of implementation, it is important to keep in mind that these results are preliminary and represent only a “snapshot in time” of the on-going process of increasing student achievement.

Funds from the SIF were administered through a Request For Proposals (RFP) process. From a list of ten school improvement areas, districts were directed to select the elements of school improvement they wished to address. Districts could choose as many school improvement areas to target as they desired, but for each area selected they were also required to indicate which of the Oregon Department of Education’s (ODE) legislatively adopted Key Performance Measures (KPMs) their efforts would support (see the *Introduction* section of this report for more details). In sum, ODE distributed \$122,933,164 to 191 Oregon school districts, 20 Educational Service Districts (ESDs), one state-sponsored charter school, three juvenile detention programs, and 11 youth corrections schools in order to implement school improvements and enhance student academic achievement. See Table 1, Overview of School Improvement Areas.

With intent to establish a high level of accountability for the use of these funds, a two-step process was formulated to facilitate achieving this goal. First, the application for the RFP was designed so that the districts could be thoughtful and intentional about how to best use their funds to improve student achievement in their local environment, and included questions that would help them articulate their goals, rationale for approach, and methods for assessing progress, as well as how their proposed efforts integrated with their continuous improvement plans (CIP).

The second step involved the design of a comprehensive data collection system tailored for each grantee to the specific strategies and measures described in their applications. The ODE intended to collect data that would allow for an evaluation of both process and outcomes. Grantees were asked to report qualitative and quantitative data relating to:

- the strategies used
- anticipated and actual impacts of those strategies

¹ For the purposes of this report, the word “*districts*” will refer not only to actual school districts, but to any combination of both school districts and ESDs.

- the percentage of students whose performance on district-selected
- measures indicating progress towards a pre-determined improvement target.

While after only one year of implementation it may be too soon to show definitive results—as these data are a very preliminary look at the unfolding of a longer process—progress observed to date appears to indicate a positive trend. Evidence of a notable shift towards improvement in the majority of the improvement areas for all grade levels can be detected; the only exception to this pattern is in the area of student retention, a sub-category of the larger improvement area of Services to At-Risk Students.

As previously noted, districts were required to link areas of improvement to state-level KPMs. The four most commonly selected KPMs, regardless of chosen area for improvement, were KPM #3 Student Achievement, KPM #9 Schools Closing the Achievement Gap, KPM #7 Schools and Districts Meeting AYP, and KPM #5 High School Graduation.

Across all ten improvement areas, the most commonly used strategy during this first year of implementation was to increase staff FTE. The variety of staff positions funded with SIF dollars ranged from math and literacy coaches and a homeless coordinator to a drug and alcohol student and family counselor.

Professional development was another often used strategy and included activities such as mentoring in effective teaching methods, training in the integration of technology in the classrooms, and partnering with local universities.

The third most commonly used strategy for school improvement was the purchasing of instructional materials and supplies, including student monitoring software, welding ventilation systems, and computer hardware. A detailed account of the improvement strategies used, successes and challenges, and other notable trends appear for each improvement area in the body of the report.

The districts and the ODE have learned a great deal during this initial administration and implementation of the SIF. The majority of districts report that students and staff are benefiting from their respective programs and that these gains are expected to continue, pending the continuation of targeted funding. Districts also suggest that for some implementation activities, a re-evaluation and fine-tuning may be necessary. Similarly, ODE plans to make adjustments in the data collection methodology to facilitate more efficient data submission and analysis in the future.

Grantees had high hopes for the SIF funds but were also realistic about what could be achieved in such a short time frame. The results of the first year of

accountable SIF funding are promising and provide reason for cautious optimism for continued gains, especially for early to middle childhood (ages 3 through 8).

Table 1 provides basic information regarding:

- numbers of grantees in each improvement area
- number of students impacted by implementation efforts
- associated financial information for each category.

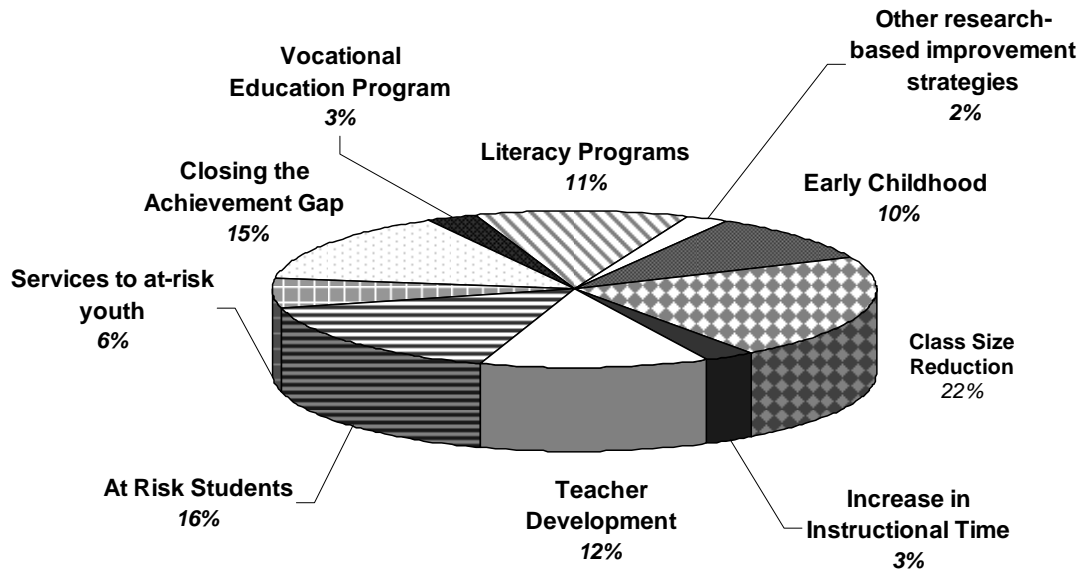
See Figures A and B for the percentage of dollars budgeted and dollars spent.

Note that two of the improvement areas have three sub-categories each. Specifically, the area for Mentoring, Teacher Retention, and Professional Development, includes efforts around all three defined but related sub-categories. The area for Remediation, Alternative Learning, and Student Retention includes three defined but related sub-categories.

OVERVIEW OF FUNDING PER SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA: NUMBER OF GRANTEES, STUDENTS IMPACTED, AND COST					
School Improvement Area	Number of Grantees	Number of Students Impacted	Total Budgeted	Total Spent	Amount Spent per Student Impacted
(1) Early Childhood Support	74	64,530	\$12,392,156	\$11,986,849	\$183
(2) School Improvement	78	123,714	\$26,571,214	\$22,954,662	\$186
(3) Increase in Instructional Time	57	26,685	\$3,275,510	\$2,062,988	\$77
(4) Mentoring, Teacher Retention, and Professional Development					
<i>Mentoring</i>	76	373,161	\$12,172,888	\$10,399,852	\$27
<i>Retention</i>	5	3,610	\$145,083	\$186,022	\$52
<i>Professional Development</i>	21	58,918	\$2,870,229	\$1,756,736	\$30
(5) Remediation, Alternative Learning, and Student Retention					
<i>Remediation</i>	50	68,123	\$16,217,136	\$15,333,503	\$225
<i>Alternative Learning</i>	21	6,755	\$2,741,042	\$2,335,080	\$346
<i>Student Retention</i>	7	8,253	\$807,200	\$682,427	\$83
(6) Services to At-Risk Youth	58	84,040	\$7,476,256	\$6,784,876	\$81
(7) Closing the Achievement Gap	62	171,594	\$18,001,350	\$14,312,529	\$83
(8) Vocational Ed Programs	38	8,281	\$3,526,196	\$2,686,037	\$324
(9) Literacy Programs	68	209,334	\$13,945,515	\$12,460,503	\$60
(10) Other Research-Based Strategies	29	87,869	\$2,791,383	\$1,134,674	\$13

Table 1: Overview of Funding per School Improvement Areas: Number of Grantees, Students Impacted, and Cost

2007-08 School Improvement Fund Percentage of Budgeted Funds per Improvement Area



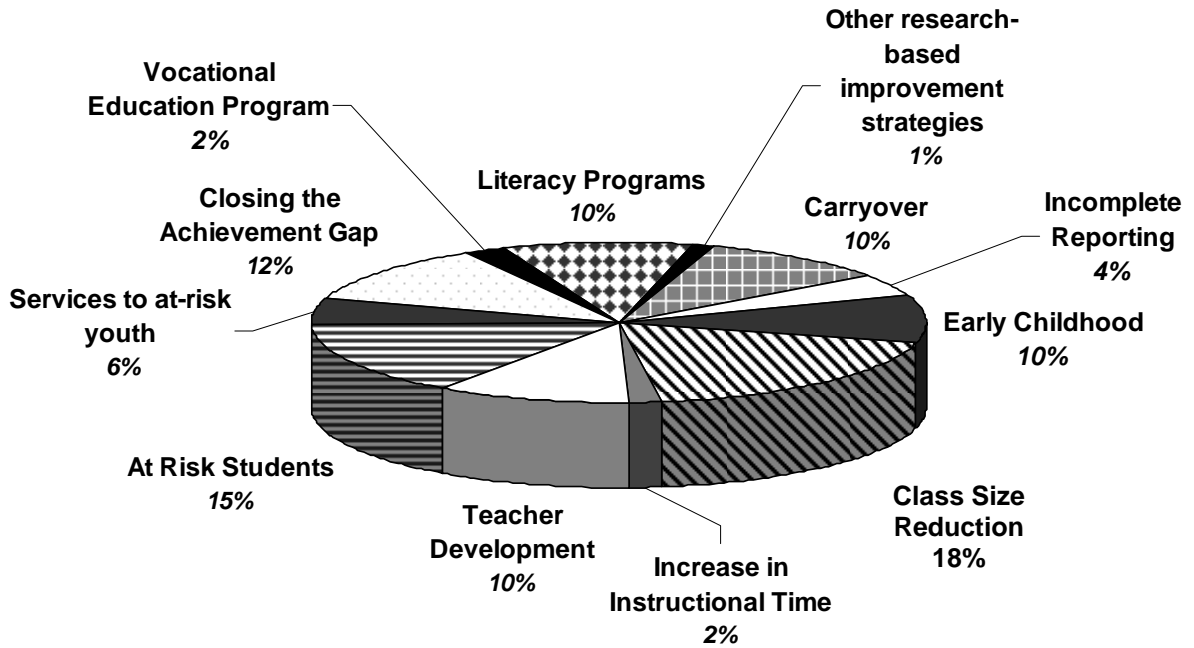
Total Budget: \$122,933,164

For budgeted amount per School Improvement Area, see Table 1

Figure A. Percentage of Budgeted Funds per School Improvement Area

2007-08 School Improvement Fund

Percentage of *Actual* Expenditures per Improvement Area



Total Budget: \$105,076,746

For actual expenditures per School Improvement Area, see Table 1

Figure B. Percentage of Actual Expenditures per School Improvement Area

I. INTRODUCTION

Background. In June 2007, the Oregon Legislative Assembly passed Senate Bill 318, creating a \$260 million School Improvement Fund (SIF). The SIF is independent of the State School Fund, and the 2007-09 appropriation is intended to support activities directly related to increasing student achievement. The Department of Education was charged with administering the SIF in the form of grants to districts and programs.

The legislation outlined a set of ten school improvement areas from which SIF grant applicants (districts, education service districts, and other eligible programs) could choose. Applicants were also provided with flexible implementation guidelines for determining specific evidence-based

improvement strategies within the ten allowable areas. Grant applicants were required to link their proposed activities for a given area to at least one of the 13 applicable state-level Key Performance Measures (*taken from the full list of ODE's 25 KPMs*), and were asked to include all of the KPMs their proposed activities would support.

Ten Allowable School Improvement Areas

- Early childhood support including establishing, maintaining or expanding quality pre-kindergarten programs and full-day kindergarten programs;
- Class size reduction with an emphasis on the reduction of kindergarten through grade three class sizes;
- Increases in instructional time including summer programs and before- and after- school programs;
- Mentoring, teacher retention and professional development;
- Remediation, alternative learning and student retention;
- Services to at-risk youth;
- Programs to improve a student achievement gap among student groups identified by culture, poverty, language and race and other student groups;
- Vocational education programs;
- Literacy programs; and
- Other research-based student improvement strategies approved by the State Board of Education.

Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

- # 1: Access to pre-kindergarten
- # 2: Kindergarten readiness
- # 3: Student achievement
- # 5: High school graduation
- # 6: College readiness
- # 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP
- # 8: Low performing school improvement
- # 9: Schools closing the achievement gap
- # 10: Schools offering advanced courses
- # 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy
- # 12: Safe schools
- # 14: Highly qualified teachers
- # 15: Minority staff

Funding Requirements. To receive approval for 2007-2009 funding, districts were required to submit grant applications to the ODE by October 12, 2007. In the application, districts were asked to identify improvement areas they planned to target using SIF funds and to explain how these efforts would support their Continuous Improvement Planning (CIP) goals. Districts were also asked to provide a quantifiable performance measure (e.g., Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) that would be used to verify progress on their selected KPMs. In addition, districts

were required to submit a detailed expenditure plan to illustrate how the SIF would move them towards achieving their stated goals for the implementation period.

Funding Statistics. ODE approved SIF grants for 191 districts, 20 Educational Service Districts (ESDs), one state-sponsored charter school, three juvenile detention programs, and 11 youth corrections schools. Districts were approved for funding November 2007. See Table 2 on page 4 for an overview of funding distribution. Also see Appendices A and B. Funding was allocated using a weighted formula based on student attendance. A “weighted” student generates funding as a percentage of his or her attendance (e.g., a student attending 80% of the time would generate only 80% of the potential funding amount). Table 3 shows the actual “weighted per student” amounts applied per funding year.

FUNDING FORMULA WEIGHTS		
Formula Type	Year	Weighted Per Student Amount
District and Program Funding Formula	07-08	\$182.50
	08-09	\$191.82
ESD Funding Formula	07-08	\$9.13
	08-09	\$9.59

Table 3: Funding Formula Weights

AMOUNT DECLINED BY DISTRICTS	
Ashwood SD	\$5,042
Black Butte SD	\$11,307
Drewsey SD	\$6,642
Frenchglen SD	\$5,800
Malheur County SD	\$2,515
South Harney SD	\$6,746
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$38,052</i>

Table 4: Amount of Funding Declined by Districts

Six districts did not submit grant applications and formally declined funding. The amount of funding these districts would have received is displayed in Table 4.

Measures: Qualitative. Based on the allowable improvement areas chosen and the KPMs linked to those areas, grantees were asked to provide descriptive information regarding the *expected* impact of the strategy implementation they had

selected, the *actual* impact, and the *subsequent steps* grantees would be taking. For the final SIF report, ODE plans to conduct a thorough content analysis of this two-year qualitative data and note the common themes that emerge among districts.

Measures: Quantitative. Grantees selected performance measures to numerically track student progress. District selections included: Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS-an early reading assessment), local formative assessment tools, and other assessments available for general purchase. For

each measure grantees established student performance percentages in two categories of measurement:

- The *baseline* -- percentage of students (prior to implementation) meeting or exceeding a predetermined performance benchmark or student grouping
- The *target* -- desired increase in percentage of students meeting or exceeding performance from the baseline percentages due to implementation of improvement strategy.

A third category, *actual*, captured the percentage of students reported as having met or exceeded the performance benchmark, or scoring level, as compared to the target.

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Table 2: Overview of Funding per School Improvement Areas: Number of Grantees, Students Impacted, and Cost

II. METHODOLOGY

Of the 211 districts who were asked to report in the 08-09 SIF data collection, 31 districts (14.69%) chose not to report, and 27 districts (13.27%) partially reported for one or more of the improvement areas they had selected.

Keeping in mind the desire for a high level of accountability from grantees for the expenditure of the SIF grants, the data collection for the SIF project was purposefully designed to provide a means for each grantee to report on the specific uses of the funds proposed in their application. This process consisted of four distinct phases:

- Designing the electronic data submission tool
- Preloading the electronic tool with each district's specific information
- Cleaning and validating the data for analysis
- Conducting qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Designing the electronic tool. The first phase, design of the electronic tool, was a collaborative effort between the program and technology offices at ODE. The tool was designed to correspond with parts of the initial grant application grantees submitted to receive funding, so as to ensure data was collected that was relevant to the specific strategies implemented by each grantee. This customization of the data collection tool is a feature never implemented on any other data collection conducted by the ODE, but one that opens up possibilities for the collection of qualitative data that can allow for a deeper understanding of how and why specific strategies implemented may or may not have the intended impact on student achievement, a story that numbers alone cannot adequately tell.

Preloading the electronic tool. Because of the wide variation in districts' choices of areas, strategies within those areas, and measures to gauge progress, the electronic data submission tool needed to be flexible enough to accommodate this variation, yet standardized to a level that would allow efficient data analysis. It was acknowledged early in the project that the tool would have to be preloaded with information from each district's application to facilitate reporting by the districts that was consistent with their originally stated intentions. Once the format of the tool was determined and the electronic infrastructure built, seven different ODE staff members spent nearly 300 hours reading portions of the grant applications and entering information from those applications into each district's specific electronic submission form.

Cleaning and validating the data. Oregon districts have not previously been asked to supply data in a form such as requested in the data collection for the SIF grant. The first time a new collection methodology is introduced, challenges are to be expected. ODE staff worked in close communication with districts to accommodate changes needed in the structure of their collection tool, or to provide clarification on the type and form of data being requested in different sections of the tool. Careful checking was done across district submissions to identify places where data had not been entered correctly, and to note the degree of completeness of the data submissions. As an example, the

usual direction of the relationship between *baseline* and *target* is that the target should be higher than the baseline; however, some of the measures used to gauge progress inherently indicate a reverse relationship, where the desired outcome is for the target to be lower than the baseline, as in a drop-out rate. It was these types of details that were checked and clarified with districts to the extent possible to ensure the quality of data submitted.

Analysis of data: Qualitative responses. The qualitative questions posed in the electronic tool asked districts to describe:

- The improvement strategies employed
- The expected impacts of implementing those strategies
- The actual impacts observed
- The next steps needed, based on the experience of the first year's implementation.

Fields for commentary regarding the specific measures used to gauge progress were also provided. Detailed directions explaining the type of information being requested in each field were provided to assist districts in submitting the requested information.

A considerable amount of comment was generated through the qualitative fields that provided an interesting window into the process of strategy implementation. However, after an initial pass through the responses looking for common themes, ODE analysts determined the commentary was not as robust as needed to tell the story of this project. One factor contributing to this is that the responses reflect only one year of implementation, and it is expected that given another year, these responses will provide more insight into the challenges and benefits of particular strategy implementation.

Based on this initial experience with the qualitative data, the decision was made to rethink the methodology for collecting and analyzing the qualitative responses for the final report and to focus more on the analysis of the quantitative measures for the interim report, using the qualitative data to identify common themes among implementation strategies across improvement areas. It is expected that with another year of implementation and a tighter focus on collecting this type of data, the qualitative responses will be a value-added component to understanding the ultimate impact of the SIF project and will be highlighted in the final report.

Analysis of data: Quantitative responses. Data on four different categories of quantitative measures were collected:

- State assessments in relevant subject areas (OAKS)
- DIBELS
- Local formative assessments
- Other district selected measures.

For each category of measurement, districts were asked to report their baseline percentage of students² meeting the benchmark or desired rating level. This was noted as the *baseline*. They were also asked to set a target percentage representing improvement over their baseline, noted as the *target*. According to the logic of the measure, the target could be higher or lower than the baseline; for example, one would set a target lower than baseline if the measure used is a drop-out rate, whereas the target would be higher if the measure used is an academic test such as OAKS. DIBELS measures could be either, depending on several factors. Finally, districts were asked to report the actual percentage of desired performance on their selected measures, noted as the *actual*.

A difficulty encountered in the analyses was that where districts reported on multiple strategies in a single improvement area using different measures for each strategy, and sometimes even different measures for different age groups of students within the same strategy, a methodology for aggregating results and quantifying improvement was not always available. The complexity of these data makes it difficult to track which improvement strategy has contributed to improvements observed, and to what extent. It is worthy to note that because these data represent only one year of implementation, the results obtained are considered preliminary, and more pronounced patterns in the aggregation may be more evident when additional data is available.

Realizing that a comparative analysis of the quantitative data was not methodologically feasible, the approach to analysis taken was to examine reported percentages within measure type and improvement area regardless of strategy to discern patterns of district improvement or progress towards the target percentage. For this reason, the richness of the qualitative data expected after two years of implementation will be instrumental in understanding the trends noted in the quantitative analyses.

² Districts were asked to report the percentage of students meeting a pre-determined benchmark; however, in order to aggregate the results at the district level, analyses were conducted in terms of the percentage of scored assessments that exceeded the pre-determined benchmark by at least 1%. This was necessary due to the fact that some districts chose multiple subject area assessments for one strategy, meaning one student could have multiple scores represented in the analyses.

III. RESULTS

School Improvement Area 1: Early Childhood Support

Early Childhood Support includes establishing, maintaining, or expanding quality pre-kindergarten programs, and full-day kindergarten programs.

Statistics Summary

Seventy-four of the participating districts (34%) chose Early Childhood Support as one of their areas for improvement. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$11,986,849, approximately \$183 per child. Overall, an estimated 64,530 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement (Table 5).

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 1	
Number of districts	74
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	64,530
Total budgeted amount	\$12,392,156
Total actual amount spent	\$11,986,849
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$183

Table 5: Summary Statistics School Improvement Area 1 (Early Childhood Support)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs). Table 6 shows the percentages of the 74 districts targeting Early Childhood Support that linked this area to improvement in each of the listed KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to direct their attention toward multiple KPMs. Those KPMs garnering the most attention from the 74 districts reporting in this area were KPM #3 Student Achievement (66%), KPM #2 Kindergarten Readiness (59%), and KPM #7 Schools Closing the Achievement Gap (23%).

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 74)
# 1: Access to pre-kindergarten	14.86%
# 2: Kindergarten readiness	59.45%
# 3: Student achievement	66.21%
# 5: High school graduation	2.70%
# 6: College readiness	1.35%
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	9.45%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	2.70%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	22.97%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	1.35%
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	2.70%
# 12: Safe schools	1.35%
# 14: Highly qualified teachers	2.70%
# 15: Minority staff	1.35%

Table 6: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 1 (Early Childhood Support)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Districts that selected Early Childhood Support mentioned 81 overlapping strategies for improvement. The most common are summarized below.

Extension of the kindergarten program. The most common strategy, mentioned by 66% of the 74 school districts, was the extension of the kindergarten day. For example one district said, *“Pilot a full-day kindergarten at four Title I schools to help better prepare for 1st grade...,”* while another suggested, *“...extend kindergarten day 1 hour. . .”*

Several districts specifically mentioned making full-day kindergarten available to high risk students. As stated by one district: *“Provide full-day kindergarten for at-risk kindergarten students in all elementary schools in the district.”*

Staffing level increases. The strategy of increasing staffing levels (e.g., increasing FTE, hiring specialists) was cited by 28% of the districts and was seen as a way to reduce class size, improve student achievement, provide for the needs of special populations such as English Language Learners, and increase identification of at-risk students, as evidenced by these comments:

“Fund 1 FTE kindergarten teacher (and provide professional development) to reduce first grade class size from 26 to 17.”

“This additional FTE focuses on reading and mathematics skill development.”

“The district will add 0.5 FTE elementary school counselor for K-6. This will increase the district’s ability to be able to identify at-risk youth earlier leading to better outcomes in later grades.”

Preschool or pre-kindergarten. Sixteen percent of the 74 districts reported the expansion of, or implementation of, preschool programs. One district intended to supplement the migrant preschool program.

Other strategies. Districts saw the need to use multiple “other” strategies to spur improvement. For example, one district chose to provide “*research based professional development,*” and “*data-driven decision-making to assist and monitor early childhood development.*” Another district implemented “*professional learning communities.*” Some districts referenced the need to buy instructional materials and supplies, while others suggested the need to provide mental and/or physical health services to their children. For example, one district reported its intent to “*help provide outreach services in early childhood education, providing health screening of entering students and making referrals for medical /dental services.*”

Initiating after school programs was also mentioned as well as tutoring and summer classes. Some districts advocated the purchase of technology to help teachers provide instruction, while others wanted to provide individual and small group services by Child Development Specialists. In sum, many strategies were employed. The data indicated that while some strategies were common to multiple districts, districts also had their own unique needs and methods to address improvement within the area of Early Childhood Support.

Preliminary Findings

On the whole, as noted in Table 7, the patterns of gains made within this very short period of implementation hold promise for the future. However, it must be emphasized that these trends are **very** preliminary and warrant further monitoring. Nonetheless, positive statements provided by grantees, such as a decrease in at-risk students entering kindergarten and “*more students entering first grade at or above grade level,*”

are encouraging for future results. One district was able to make a significant difference:

“We extended Migrant Preschool from 40 days to 164 days and participation from 27 students to 40 students.....Over 90% of K+ students were on grade level at the end of the year.”

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 1			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		77%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	77%
		Low risk	86%
Local /Others	All Grades		63%

Table 7: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures, School Improvement Area 1 (Early Childhood Support)

School Improvement Area 2: Class Size Reduction

Class Size Reduction with an emphasis on the reduction of kindergarten through grade three class sizes.

Summary Statistics

A total of 78 of the participating districts (35%) chose Class Size Reduction as one of their areas for improvement. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$22,954,662, approximately \$186 per child. Overall, an estimated 123,714 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 2	
Number of districts	78
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	8
Total number of students impacted	123,714
Total budgeted amount	\$26,571,214
Total actual amount spent	\$22,954,662
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$186

Table 8: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 2 (Class Size Reduction)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

Table 9 shows the percentage of the 78 districts targeting Class Size Reduction that linked this area to each of the following KPMs for improvement. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to concentrate their attention on multiple KPMs. As can be seen in the following table, student achievement was expected to be positively impacted by 89% of the districts. Closing the Achievement Gap (27%) and Schools and Districts Meeting AYP (22%) were also chosen as KPMs linking to Class Size Reduction.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 78)
# 1: Access to pre-kindergarten	2.56%
# 2: Kindergarten readiness	11.54%
# 3: Student achievement	88.46%
# 5: High school graduation	5.13%
# 6: College readiness	1.28%
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	21.79%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	3.85%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	26.92%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	1.28%
# 12: Safe schools	5.13%
# 14: Highly qualified teachers	5.13%

Table 9: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 2 (Class Size Reduction)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Class Size Reduction was the most highly targeted SIF area and the most narrowly defined. The majority of districts that selected Class Size Reduction chose to increase staff FTE or hours. This most often translated into the hiring of additional licensed teachers. However, districts also mentioned hiring instructional assistants.

Other strategies supported class size reduction without a focus on increasing FTE: *“remodel a modular classroom to accommodate an elementary class,”* and *“secure appropriate grade 3-4 materials and K-5 intervention materials.”*

Preliminary Findings

On the whole, as can be seen from Table 9, the gains made within this very short period of implementation hold promise for the future; however, it must be emphasized that these are **very** preliminary trends. Districts expected that smaller class sizes would, as expressed by one district, *“allow teachers to adequately assess all students and provide instruction at a level that meets the individual needs of students,”* *“give teachers the opportunity to provide high quality instruction,”* and *“increase reading fluency levels at the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 6th grade levels.”* In many cases, as can be observed in Table 9, this was true; however, some districts reported mixed results. One district, despite hiring additional staff, failed to reduce class sizes because of increased student enrollment. Another district stated that while the overall percentage of K-2 students meeting the end-of-year DIBELS benchmark increased from 59% to 71%, the overall OAKS improvement goal of 83% for grade three in reading was not met.

Nonetheless, one District noted that, *“funding of 1 FTE 1st grade teacher kept class size under 18 and reduced the number of students needing strategic and intense reading instruction.”*

Districts reported class size reductions, for example:

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 2			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		77%
	6 through 8		49%
	10		60%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	missing
		Low risk	86%
Local /Others	All Grades		37%

Table 10: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 2 (Class Size Reduction)

much as we would have liked in our overall assessment results. This year we will look at alternative strategies to assist struggling students as well as look at class size.”

“First grade class sizes were reduced from two classes of 27 to three classes of 18.”

“Second grade classes were reduced from two classes of 29/30 to three classes of 19/20/20.”

Clearly, however, if student performance is to be increased, smaller class size is only one piece of the puzzle. While the vast majority of districts are continuing to focus on the reduction of class size, some are also incorporating additional means:

“Lowering class size didn't help us as

School Improvement Area 3: Increase in Instructional Time

Increases in instructional time including summer programs and before- and after-school programs.

Summary Statistics

Fifty-seven of the participating districts (26%) chose Increase in Instructional Time as one of their areas for improvement. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$2,062,988, approximately \$77 per impacted child. Overall, an estimated 26,685 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 3	
Number of districts	57
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	26,685
Total budgeted amount	\$3,275,510
Total actual amount spent	\$2,062,988
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$77

Table 11: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 3 (Increase in Instructional Time)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage of the 57 districts targeting Increase in Instructional Time that linked their endeavors to each of the following KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to concentrate their attention on multiple KPMs. As can be seen in the following table, student achievement was chosen by 89% of the school districts as a Key Performance Area linking to Increase in Instructional Time; this was followed by High School Graduation (40%), Closing the Achievement Gap (37%), and Schools and Districts Meeting AYP (35%).

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 57)
# 1: Access to pre-kindergarten	3.51%
# 2: Kindergarten readiness	5.26%
# 3: Student achievement	89.47%
# 5: High school graduation	40.35%
# 6: College readiness	12.28%
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	35.09%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	12.28%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	36.84%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	5.26%
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	3.51%

Table 12: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 3 (Increase in Instructional Time)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Seventy-two overlapping strategies were mentioned by the 57 districts that selected Increase in Instructional Time. The following section summarizes the most common strategies.

Summer programs. Seventy percent of the 57 districts intended to use the funds to begin or continue summer programs. In some instances the program was specifically funded in order that students would have the opportunity for credit retrieval (high school) or to reach previously unattained benchmarks. Also seen as necessary (by at least two school districts) was exposure *“to PE and health education.”*

Twenty-one percent of districts specifically mentioned targeting their summer programs to elementary grades; 21% targeted middle school and 18% focused on high school. One district proposed that they would, *“work with the University of Oregon to better identify students in need of summer school.”*

Another district noted that although they had provided a summer program in previous years: *“in the past it was offered at a fee to parents, which made summer school unattainable to many targeted students.”*

After school programs. The percentage of districts proposing to implement or extend after school programs was 44%. One innovative district announced that *“We are implementing several extra opportunities for success including study labs and Saturday School.”*

Staff FTE increase. As might be expected, a number of districts (16%) chose to increase staffing in order to support the increase in instructional time.

Other strategies. Four districts referenced their need to “add courses.” One wished to *“reinstate both physical education and music programs into elementary schools,”* while

another aspired to “provide students . . . in secondary school with on-line learning opportunities.” The need to purchase instructional materials was mentioned by several districts. Lastly, transportation was identified as a necessary support by one school district.

Preliminary Findings

The outcome measures used to track growth suggest mixed results. This was also reflected in the qualitative statements made by the following three school districts:

“Academic performance observed in K-4 improved; Academic performance observed in Grades 5-8 declined; Six (Grades 9-12) students recovered graduation credits.”

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 3			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		61%
	6 through 8		37%
	10		38%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	60%
		Low risk	71%
Local /Others	All Grades		37%

“Initial analysis of whole group results shows more than typical growth from spring to fall for students attending summer camp in reading and math.”

“No major impact on ‘08 state assessment due to short time frame.”

As the last quotation seems to imply, a greater time period to enable growth may be necessary before the true benefits of these programs can be seen in student achievement results. Time will also give schools the opportunity to fine-tune their programs.

Table 13: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 3 (Increase in Instructional Time)

The majority of districts appeared to use the funds for failing or at-risk for failing students. One school district suggested they planned to provide funding for “...students to attend the local community college/regional university to take part in an advanced electronics program. Also provide online classes at no cost to students for college credit & and purchase computer and software.”

School Improvement Area 4: Mentoring, Teacher Retention, and Professional Development.

Summary Statistics

In all, 102 districts (46% of all districts) chose to focus on Mentoring, Teacher Retention, and Professional Development. This category was further broken down into three sub-groups: Mentoring (34%), Teacher Retention (2%), and Professional Development (10%). A total sum of \$12,342,610 was spent in this area with the majority of the money going to support Mentoring (\$10,399,852) and Professional Development (\$1,756,736). These two areas of development impacted 374,161 students (\$27 per student) and 58,918 students (\$30 per student) respectively.

Mentoring

Table 14 provides the summary statistics for the sub-category of Mentoring. As the table illustrates, 76 districts focused on this area for improvement, and an estimated 373,161 students were impacted for an estimated cost of approximately \$27 per child.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 (MENTORING)	
Number of districts	76
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	7
Total number of students impacted	373,161
Total budgeted amount	\$12,172,888
Total actual amount spent	\$10,399,852
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$27

Table 14: Summary Statistics School Improvement Area 4 (Mentoring)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage of the 76 districts targeting Mentoring that linked their endeavors to the following KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to link to multiple KPMs. As can be seen in the following table, most districts linked Mentoring to Student Achievement (78%); some linked to Closing the Achievement Gap (34%). Highly Qualified Teachers and Schools and Districts Meeting AYP were each linked by 28% of districts.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 76)
# 2: Kindergarten readiness	3.95%
# 3: Student achievement	77.63%
# 5: High school graduation	19.74%
# 6: College readiness	14.47%
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	27.63%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	9.21%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	34.21%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	6.58%
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	7.89%
# 14: Highly qualified teachers	27.63%

Table 15: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 4: (Mentoring)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Professional development. Professional development was selected by 85% of the 76 districts as a strategy for improvement. Particular emphasis was placed on mentor training for those individuals who would be placed in the mentoring role. For example, *“the ESD will participate in training key personnel in a Leadership Institute.”* Additionally, six districts proposed forming Professional Learning Communities. Districts chose to use these funds in a variety of ways. For example:

“Funds will be used to partially support a teacher mentoring program that will include staff development in effective teaching strategies (writing instruction), teaching standards-based curriculum, and using effective classroom management techniques.”

“An integrated program of master teacher mentoring for instructional excellence for newer teachers, leadership training for administration and targeted professional development in areas of: Language Arts, Math for special needs and struggling students, planning and class management.”

“Instructional coaches will provide professional development to teachers in the areas of literacy, mathematics and strategies to address the needs of 2nd language learners in the classroom.”

One district intended using the money to fund a technology coach.

Other strategies. Additional strategies mentioned by districts included buying instructional materials and paying for testing fees and travel costs.

Preliminary Findings

Table 16 shows evidence for moderate positive trends in student improvement while the qualitative data provides evidence supporting the continued development of teacher expertise through professional development. This is reflected in the following quotes:

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 (MENTORING)			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		49%
	6 through 8		38%
	10		40%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	62%
		Low risk	89%
Local /Others	All Grades		51%

“We nearly doubled our ability to train teachers in Sheltered Instruction which in turn impacted the classroom with high quality instruction.”

“New teachers were provided with orientation, technology training, and continuous improvement training. These trainings led to better teacher preparation as well as a positive attitude toward the district and students.”

Table 16: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 4 (Mentoring)

Teacher Retention

Table 17 shows that five districts chose to focus on Teacher Retention as an area for improvement. In all 3,610 students were impacted by this area; approximately \$52 was spent per child impacted.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 (TEACHER RETENTION)	
Number of districts	5
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	3,610
Total budgeted amount	\$145,083
Total actual amount spent	\$183,022
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$52

Table 17: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 4 (Teacher Retention)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage (and actual number) of the five districts that chose to support Teacher Retention as a mechanism for improving the respective KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to link to multiple KPMs.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 5)
# 3: Student achievement	60.00% (N=3)
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	40.00% (N=2)
# 8: Low performing school improvement	20.00% (N=1)
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	40.00% (N=2)
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	40.00% (N=2)
# 14: Highly qualified teachers	60.00% (N=3)
# 15: Minority staff	20.00% (N=1)

Table 18: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 4 (Teacher Retention)

Chosen Improvement Strategies and Preliminary Findings

One district provided tuition reimbursement for training. This strategy significantly reduced the number of teachers who left the district, and due to this success, the program was expected to be continued. Others proposed a new staff academy, ongoing mentoring, and staff development. Those teachers receiving mentoring expressed high levels of support. In all cases, districts said that there would be ongoing support for teacher retention; programs will continue to be monitored and adjusted as necessary.

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 (TEACHER RETENTION)			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		0%
	6 through 8		25%
	10		0%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	N/A
		Low risk	N/A
Local /Others	All Grades		44%

Table 19: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 4 (Teacher Retention)

The measures designed to verify progress suggest limited levels of student improvement so far. It is possible that this might be attributed to the short time frame for which these data were reported.

Professional Development

Table 20 shows that 21 districts decided on Professional Development as an area for improvement. In all 58,918 students were impacted by this focus at an approximate cost of \$30 per student.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 (PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT)	
Number of districts	21
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	58,918
Total budgeted amount	\$2,870,229
Total actual amount spent	\$1,756,736
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$30

Table 20: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 4 (Professional Development)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage of the 21 districts that chose to support Professional Development as a mechanism for improving the respective KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to link to multiple KPMs.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 21)
# 2: Kindergarten readiness	4.76%
# 3: Student achievement	71.43%
# 5: High school graduation	19.05%
# 6: College readiness	14.29%
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	38.10%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	23.81%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	52.38%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	9.52%
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	4.76%
# 14: Highly qualified teachers	23.81%
# 15: Minority staff	9.52%

Table 21: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 4: (Professional Development)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Districts chose 26 overlapping strategies to implement Professional Development.

Professional development courses and classes. Districts had a variety of innovative proposals for increasing and improving Professional Development. These included *“partnering with Portland State University to provide access to university coursework leading to a Read Oregon Literacy Endorsement. This led to 25 people within the school district taking advantage of the 3 times this has been offered to date. The district intends to continue their partnership into the future.”* Other sites chose to reimburse tuition which in the case of one district led to at least one very positive outcome: *“We nearly doubled our ability to train teachers in Sheltered Instruction which in turn impacted the classroom with high quality instruction.”*

Other strategies mentioned included implementing courses in technology, workshops, summer courses, weekly check-ins, and basing development on *“Guskey’s (2000) recommendations i.e., systematic, ongoing, job embedded and collaboratively designed.”* The district using Guskey’s method noted that the districts had to built capacity to continue with this methodology, and not only were teachers very positive in the evaluation of the method, but *“students results showed improvement in some areas and will likely produce results on the statewide assessment.”*

Increase FTE strategies. Strategies chosen under this theme included hiring additional ESD staff to provide ongoing training and hiring instructional coaches to provide teachers with embedded classroom-based coaching. As a result, five *“coaches worked in 29 schools in the District. While writing scores slightly declined, reading results increased by almost 2% and math results increased by nearly 6%.”* For the next funding period this district plans to add an additional 18 instructional coaches and a classified professional development coordinator.

Preliminary Findings

Assessment results indicate a trend toward improvement in student outcomes. But at least one district noted that getting 100% teacher “buy-in” to implement new approaches was a challenge:

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 (PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT)			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		44%
	6 through 8		38%
	10		25%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	N/A
		Low risk	N/A
Local /Others	All Grades		38%

“Making Standards Work hasn't had 100% teaching staff participation. (But) it has been highly supported by school administrators and we have gotten good feedback from the teachers who have participated. Too early to tell impact on students.”

Table 22: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 4 (Professional Development)

School Improvement Area 5: Remediation, Alternative Learning, and Student Retention

Summary Statistics

In all, 78 districts (36% of all districts) chose to focus on Remediation, Alternative Learning, and Student Retention. This category was further broken down into three sub-groups: Remediation (N=50; 23%), Alternative Learning (N=21; 10%), and Student Retention (N=7; 3%). A total sum of \$18,351,010 was spent in the area of Services to At-Risk Students with the majority of the money going to support Remediation (\$15,333,503) and Alternative Learning (\$2,335,080). These two areas of development impacted 68,123 students (\$225 per student) and 6,755 students (\$346 per student) respectively.

Remediation

Table 23 illustrates that 50 districts chose to focus on Remediation. In all, 68,123 students were impacted with an estimated per student cost of approximately \$225.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 (REMEDICATION)	
Number of districts	50
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	3
Total number of students impacted	68,123
Total budgeted amount	\$16,217,136
Total actual amount spent	\$15,333,503
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$225

Table 23: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 5 (Remediation)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage of the 50 districts targeting Remediation that linked to the following KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to link to multiple KPMs. As can be seen in the following table, most districts suggested that Remediation services would impact Student Achievement (68%) followed by High School Graduation (64%). Some districts believed it would also help close the Achievement Gap (38%).

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 50)
# 3: Student achievement	68.00%
# 5: High school graduation	64.00%
# 6: College readiness	20.00%
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	24.00%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	4.00%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	38.00%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	8.00%
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	14.00%
# 12: Safe schools	2.00%

Table 24: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 5: (Remediation)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Three overarching themes characterize the strategies districts selected for Remediation.

Increase staff FTE. Fifty percent of districts hired additional staff, both teachers and instructional assistants. In one case it was for the *“qualified person to set students up for access to the SD online alternative curriculum.”* In another case, the increased staffing levels were necessary for alternative school expansion: *“District will expand alternative high school. (Funds will be used) to purchase licensed instructional staff. The school will be operating for the first time at an independent campus.”*

Program change, course addition. Sixty percent of districts that selected Remediation chose a program related change such as the addition of courses, classes, or an increase in instructional time. Mention was made of *“extra curricula supports,”* online courses, tutoring, and specialist instruction to help math development, reading development, and credit recovery. For example, *“the SD has initiated for the 07-08 school year tutoring for at-risk students for 3 periods a day that is designed to increase student retention and decrease the drop-out rate; providing additional alternatives for remediation and instruction.”*

Instructional materials and supplies. Districts (12%) also purchased new computers and software. In some cases, this was for the use by remediation teachers and in other cases, for the support of online courses.

Preliminary Findings

While Table 25 shows moderate evidence of promise, there was a particularly insightful comment made by one district explaining their results:

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 (REMEDIATION)			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		57%
	6 through 8		32%
	10		42%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	56%
		Low risk	83%
Local /Others	All Grades		57%

Table 25: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 5 (Remediation)

“Results were less than anticipated because many students entered the program having failed. Also the needs of the culture of these students were not completely understood and necessitated more research based strategies to address them.”

In contrast, another district stated: *“This program has exceeded expectations! Our drop out rate has declined by more than half, and more students are choosing to stay in school rather than take community college courses. Remediation of basic skills is another positive as teachers are reporting.”*

Alternative Learning

Twenty-one districts chose to focus on Alternative Learning as an area for improvement. This impacted 6,755 students for an approximate cost of \$346 per student.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 (ALTERNATIVE LEARNING)	
Number of districts	21
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	1
Total number of students impacted	6,755
Total budgeted amount	\$2,741,042
Total actual amount spent	\$2,335,080
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$346

Table 26: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 5 (Alternative Learning)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

Table 27 shows the percentage of the 21 districts that elected to concentrate on Alternative Learning as a mechanism for improving the respective KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to link to multiple KPMs. Districts expected that support for Alternative Learning would link to High School Graduation (67%), Student Achievement (52%), and the reduction of Suspensions, Expulsions and Truancy (38%).

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 21)
KPM 3: Student achievement	52.38%
KPM 5: High school graduation	66.67%
KPM 6: College readiness	14.29%
KPM 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	23.81%
KPM 8: Low performing school improvement	9.52%
KPM 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	23.81%
KPM 10: Schools offering advanced courses	4.76%
KPM 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	38.10%
KPM 12: Safe schools	4.76%

Table 27: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 5: (Alternative Learning)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Three dominate themes characterize the strategies districts selected to implement Alternative Learning.

Increase staff FTE. Forty-two percent reported instructional strategies that included increasing staff FTE, both licensed teachers and instructional assistants. One district chose to hire a ‘Youth Transition Specialist,’ while another chose to hire “5 intervention specialists to assist data teams in high schools.”

Program related change. Thirty-eight percent of districts proposed a program related change or extension such as, “increases in Instruction and Services to At-Risk (students). Fund personnel for Headwaters extended day program (grades 9-12, on the greater Campus). Headwaters allows SD to directly serve Alt Ed. students in a program that is flexible, rigorous and relevant.” One district specifically targeted students in rural areas to “create an alternative learning center for flexibility of the instruction of rural students.”

Other strategies. Other strategies mentioned to support Alternative Learning include the acquisition of materials and supplies and providing “training and programs (Waldorf instruction, Peace Builders, music integration) to reduce disruptive behavior and increase math and reading achievement.”

Preliminary Findings

Once again there were mixed results, but overall there were trends in a positive direction. For example, although one district found that offering credit make-up through online

classes did not make the positive difference that they had anticipated, other districts reported:

“Literacy (including writing) improved significantly (54.4% to 69.9%), but math posted a slight decline (53.3% to 48.3%). While we are ecstatic about the literacy scores and disappointed about the slight decline in Math, we were not surprised.”

“The Alternative Education program did successfully serve at-risk youth in our schools and was a prudent investment of School Improvement Funds.”

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 (ALTERNATIVE LEARNING)			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		62%
	6 through 8		63%
	10		42%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	N/A
		Low risk	N/A
Local /Others	All Grades		45%

Table 28: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 5 (Alternative Learning)

Student Retention

Seven districts focused on student retention as an area for improvement. As Table 29 shows, this area impacted 8,253 students for an approximate cost of \$83 per student.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 (STUDENT RETENTION)	
Number of districts	7
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	8,253
Total budgeted amount	\$807,200
Total actual amount spent	\$682,427
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$83

Table 29: Summary Statistics School Improvement Area 5 (Student Retention)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage (and number) of the seven districts that chose to support Student Retention as a mechanism for improving the respective KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to link to multiple KPMs.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 7)
# 3: Student achievement	57.14% (N=4)
# 5: High school graduation	42.86% (N=3)
# 6: College readiness	28.57% (N=2)
# 8: Low performing school improvement	14.29% (N=1)
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	14.29% (N=1)
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	14.29% (N=1)
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	57.14% (N=4)
# 12: Safe schools	14.29 (N=1)

Table 30: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 5 (Student Retention)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Districts chose 11 overlapping strategies for improving Student Retention that fell into three general categories.

Program related change. Eighty-five percent of districts reported strategies related to program change. Implementations included a counseling advocacy project, a Learning Climate project, an “after school tutoring program for secondary students who are falling behind in academic performance,” monitoring students at the middle school and high

school who did not reach the “meets” performance level on OAKS, and initiating a credit recovery program.

Increase staff FTE. One district “added 5.2 teachers to do academic interventions to assist with remediation and student retention,” while another used the funds to “pay (a) music teacher across the district,” and a third hired tutors.

Other strategies. Districts reported using funds to provide additional materials to students, to provide training to reduce disruptive behavior, and to enhance professional development.

Preliminary Findings

Although only seven districts implemented SIF funding for student retention, one district (despite its disappointing data) gave a compelling report:

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES STUDENT IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 (STUDENT RETENTION)			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		33%
	6 through 8		17%
	10		0%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	N/A
		Low risk	N/A
Local /Others	All Grades		50%

“One student graduated who would have been expelled if not for the availability of our alternative education program, and another graduated early because of their participation in the program.”

Table 31: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: Student Improvement Area 5 (Student Retention)

School Improvement Area 6: Services to At-Risk Youth

Summary Statistics

Fifty-eight participating districts (26%) chose Services to At-Risk Youth as one of their areas for improvement. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$6,784,876, approximately \$186 per child. Overall, an estimated 123,714 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 6	
Number of districts	58
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	84,040
Total budgeted amount	\$7,476,256
Total actual amount spent	\$6,784,876
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$81

Table 32: Summary Statistics School Improvement Area 6 (Services to At-Risk Youth)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 74)
KPM 3: Student achievement	60.34%
KPM 5: High school graduation	58.62%
KPM 6: College readiness	12.07%
KPM 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	22.41%
KPM 8: Low performing school improvement	5.17%
KPM 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	29.31%
KPM 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	41.38%
KPM 12: Safe schools	12.07%
KPM 14: Highly qualified teachers	1.72%

Table 33: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 6 (Services to At-Risk Youth)

Table 33 shows the percentage of the 58 districts targeting Services to At-Risk Youth that linked this area to each of the above KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to concentrate their attention on multiple KPMs. As can be seen in the table, expected impacts were Student Achievement (60%), High School Graduation (59%), and Suspensions, Expulsions, Truancy (41%).

Chosen Improvement Strategies

The 58 districts providing Services to At-Risk Youth mentioned 70 overlapping strategies that organize into the following categories:

Increasing staff FTE. Sixty-six percent of the reporting districts mentioned increasing staff FTE. While some districts hired new teachers, many districts chose to fund specialist staff. See next section.

Specialist staff. A variety of specialist staffing positions were funded within this area to provide outreach to at-risk students, including an *“alternative education teacher for (the) Drug and Alcohol Youth Treatment Center,”* a *“Drug and Alcohol Student and Family Counselor,”* *“an attendance officer to do home visits and coordinate with law enforcement,”* and a *“homeless coordinator.”*

Specialized programs and program change. Specialized programs and program change were mentioned by 35% of districts within this area and included such innovations as the *“Middle school program 'Families and Student Together (FAST)', a structured program that opens communication between parents and their children (and school).”* One grantee wanted to *“Increase socio-emotional services to increasing numbers of at-risk students,”* while another wanted to make use of *“Self Enhancement, Inc. focused advocacy and support for African American freshman.”*

Professional development. Twelve percent of the grantees proposed plans related to some form of professional development. One grantee established *“Training and implementation support for mentoring of 9th graders by adults and/or junior/senior students.”* Other districts planned to provide Positive Behavior Support (PBS).

Other strategies. Other strategies included but were not limited to *“extended learning time staffed by educators (e.g., after school library, Saturday school),”* after school programs, and even supplies for (student) reinforcement.

Preliminary Findings

As Table 34 illustrates, the gains made within this very short period of implementation hold promise for the strategies. However, it must be emphasized that these are **very** preliminary trends. Qualitative data also support this trend. For example, as expected by many grantees and stated by one, *“Expulsions reduced 42%. Suspensions reduced 16%.”* One grantee experienced *“a 35% decrease in the number of discipline referrals in grades K-8.”*

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 6			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		77%
	6 through 8		49%
	10		60%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	Missing
		Low risk	86%
Local /Others	All Grades		37%

Table 34: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 6 (Services to At-Risk Youth)

grantee stated, “The number of failures has declined and attendance is better. It is too early to tell if there has been an effect on graduation.”

Another grantee noted that “students involved in RY maintained and/or improved their attendance, academic progress, and behavior. All students remained in school. Over the course of the year, the counselor met with 98 different students of which approximately 30% fell into the at-risk category as outlined above. All of the at-risk seniors completed the amount of credits needed to receive a diploma at graduation.”

While the results trend to the positive, they are **preliminary**. As one

School Improvement Area 7: Closing the Achievement Gap

Programs to improve the student achievement gap among student groups identified by culture, poverty, language, and race and other student groups

Summary Statistics

A total of 62 of the participating districts (28%) chose Closing the Achievement Gap as one of their areas for improvement. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$14,312,529, approximately \$183 per child impacted. Overall, an estimated 171,594 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 7	
Number of districts	62
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	171,594
Total budgeted amount	\$18,001,350
Total actual amount spent	\$14,312,529
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$83

Table 35: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 7 (Closing the Achievement Gap)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

Table 36 shows the percentage of the 62 districts targeting Closing the Achievement Gap that linked this area to each of the following KPMs: 76% linked to Student Achievement, 61% linked to Schools Closing the Achievement Gap, and 40% linked to Schools and Districts Meeting AYP.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 62)
# 2: Kindergarten readiness	3.23%
# 3: Student achievement	75.81%
# 5: High school graduation	27.42%
# 6: College readiness	8.06%
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	40.32%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	16.13%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	61.29%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	1.61%
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	3.23%
# 14: Highly qualified teachers	8.06%
# 15: Minority staff	1.61%

Table 36: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 7 (Closing the Achievement Gap)

Eighty-six overlapping strategies were mentioned by the 62 districts that selected Close the Achievement Gap. These fell within the following themes:

Increasing staff FTE. Sixty-two percent of the reporting grantees mentioned increasing staff FTE. The hiring of math specialists was mentioned by multiple grantees. Another grantee said the district would *“implement a Response to Intervention model (K-6), additional ESL teachers, additional Special Education teachers, a bilingual teacher, and an additional administrator position.”*

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or English Language Learners (ELL) students. Thirty-two percent of grantees indicated support for LEP and/or ELL students. There was some overlap between the most common theme of increasing staff FTE and the second most common theme in which districts mentioned targeting ELL students in their effort to close the achievement gap. As well as hiring specialist instructional staff, one district used SIF funds to hire a Spanish speaking home/school liaison. They stated that this liaison, *“who is well respected in the community and has a strong commitment to the importance of education will help in closing the achievement gap more than anything else.”*

Professional development. Thirty-one percent of districts allocated some funds to professional development such as *“training teachers in new strategies for teaching students whose first language is not English.”*

Instructional materials and supplies. Thirty percent of grantees described funds being allocated to some kind of instructional materials and/or supplies. For example, one school district proposed to *“purchase new math curriculum and possibly provide professional development on that curriculum.”* Another enthusiastically described that, *“a new system (Edusoft) was purchased and 12 schools piloted a math assessment. Teachers were trained in using the system and are hot to use data to inform instruction. Teachers now have real time data to design targeted instruction and intervention.”*

Other strategies. Other strategies mentioned included adding courses, classes, and increasing instructional time. Three grantees referenced some kind of program related change. One used funds to purchase Edline in order to stay in closer communication with parents.

Preliminary Findings

Table 37 illustrates that gains appear to be greater for younger students than for those in middle and high school. Mixed results were described by districts in the qualitative

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 7			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		63%
	6 through 8		42%
	10		27%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	80%
		Low risk	82%
Local /Others	All Grades		51%

data such as “increased scores grades 3-5 on OAKS in 2008 reading and math. Writing scores at grade 4 decreased,” and “5th grade math exceeded their target but 6th grade reading maintained. Other grades and subjects showed declines.”

Table 37: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 7 (Closing the Achievement Gap)

School Improvement Area 8: Vocational Education Programs

Summary Statistics

A total of 38 of the participating districts (17%) chose Vocational Education as one of their areas for improvement. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$2,686,037, approximately \$324 per child impacted. Overall, an estimated 8,281 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 8	
Number of districts	38
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	0
Total number of students impacted	8,281
Total budgeted amount	\$3,526,196
Total actual amount spent	\$2,686,037
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$324

Table 38: Summary Statistics: School Improvement Area 8 (Vocational Education Programs)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage of the 38 districts targeting Vocational Education that linked this area to each of the following KPMs. As can be seen in Table 39, 61% of grantees expected High School Graduation to be positively impacted, 55% expected to impact Student Achievement, and 47% expected that this area would impact College Readiness.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 38)
KPM 3: Student achievement	55.26%
KPM 5: High school graduation	60.53%
KPM 6: College readiness	47.37%
KPM 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	10.53%
KPM 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	15.79%
KPM 10: Schools offering advanced courses	13.16%
KPM 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	10.53%
KPM 12: Safe schools	2.63%

Table 39: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 8 (Vocational Education Programs)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Forty-two overlapping strategies were mentioned by the 38 districts to improve Vocational Education. Three themes emerged:

Increase in instructional time and the addition of classes. Forty percent of grantees used funds to increase instructional time or to supplement vocational courses or classes. For example one district wrote that the *“District will use funds to provide additional sections of manufacturing technology, woods, home economics, and information technology.”* Another provided the addition of *“Programming with VB, programming with Java, web design/HTML, AP computer science, metals lab, and construction technology,”* while another added power mechanics technology and agricultural science. One high school was funded to *“build viable vocational programs in the areas of Video Production and Construction Technology.”* In another example, a district was *“developing a work place safety program and a school to work program with community partnership.”*

Increase in staff FTE. The second most commonly reported theme in the Vocational Education Program instructional area (34% of districts), was to increase staff FTE. One district chose to use funds to hire a vocational education teacher: *“Retain the services of a Wood Shop/Computer Teacher (who is also HQ in Math). This teacher has a goal of having all wood, metal and computer courses qualify for “College Now” credit through Lane Community College.”*

Acquisition of instructional materials or supplies. A smaller number of districts (16%) reported purchasing instructional materials or supplies for Vocational Educational purposes (e.g., new welding ventilations systems, a CAD/CAM lab complete with software, a CNC machine used for metal fabrication, and new welders).

Other districts were less specific and merely said they would *“Purchase technology to improve course offerings...”* or *“Purchase equipment.”*

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 8			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		57%
	6 through 8		41%
	10		53%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	N/A
		Low risk	N/A
Local /Others	All Grades		51%

Preliminary Findings

Clearly gains were made as illustrated by Table 40. Qualitative data also suggests some positive developments as a result of this funding.

Table 40: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 8 (Vocational Education Programs)

For example:

“Pro-tech Auto Mechanics classes are being expanded in collaboration with United Auto Workers, thus meeting the needs of alternative ed students who also increased performance in core content. Students met AYP in 07-08 for the first time.”

“Though further data is still to be collected, course grade information that is available shows a significant increase.”

“We have had students be accepted into apprenticeships directly out of our vocational education program.”

Once again, although results trend toward the positive and districts intend to continue to grow their programs, results must be interpreted with caution.

School Improvement Area 9: Literacy Programs

Summary Statistics

Sixty-eight of the participating districts (31%) chose Literacy as one of their areas for improvement. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$12,460,503, approximately \$60 per child. Overall, an estimated 209,334 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 9	
Number of districts	68
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	5
Total number of students impacted	209,334
Total budgeted amount	\$13,945,515
Total actual amount spent	\$12,460,503
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$60

Table 41: Summary Statistic School Improvement Area 9 (Literacy Programs)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The following table shows the percentage of the 68 districts targeting Literacy that linked this area to each of the following KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to concentrate their attention on multiple KPMs. As can be seen in the following table, 93% of grantees expected Kindergarten readiness to be positively impacted and 37% expected College Readiness to be positively impacted.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 68)
# 2: Kindergarten readiness	5.88%
# 3: Student achievement	92.65%
# 5: High school graduation	16.18%
# 6: College readiness	10.29
# 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	36.76%
# 8: Low performing school improvement	10.29%
# 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	32.35%
# 10: Schools offering advanced courses	1.47%
# 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	4.41%
# 12: Safe schools	1.47%
# 14: Highly qualified teachers	4.41%
# 15: Minority staff	1.47%

Table 42: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 9 (Literacy Programs)

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Ninety-two overlapping strategies were mentioned by the 68 districts to improve literacy. These fell within the following themes:

Increase in staff FTE. Increasing staff FTE was the most common strategy (54% of districts). Districts hired literacy coaches, language arts instructors, and reading teachers at all levels. Some districts also hired instructional assistants.

Acquisition of instructional materials or supplies. The second most frequent theme (28% of districts) included purchasing class instructional materials or supplies. Multiple districts reported purchasing new literacy programs or curriculum. Other districts chose to specifically purchase new books or texts, such as English language development texts and *“books for our Accelerated Reader collection.”*

Professional development. Fourteen districts (21%) chose to use funds to provide some form of literacy support training for their staff. For example, one district chose to use funds to increase the number of teachers who had reading endorsements. Another reported, *“Seven teachers (all district literacy coaches and literacy leaders) will be trained in Writing Across The Curriculum and share techniques and strategies with building staff.”*

Program related change. Eighteen percent of districts whose improvement strategies fell within the theme of program related change chose to implement a new program, *“Implementing Response to Intervention in grades K-3,”* modify an existing program, *“Reorganize literacy programs such as Reading Recovery, Accelerated Reader, strategic reading, intensive writing, and development of a laptop program,”* or use funds to support an existing Literacy program, *“Funds will support the Literacy Infusion Project that enables each school to implement research-based best practices in literacy instruction according to student needs.”*

Other strategies. Seventeen percent of districts also mentioned other strategies such as adding courses and student instruction time. One district specifically referred to LEP and ELL students, stating that the district would buy supplemental components for the district ELL literacy adoption. Several districts mentioned summer school. One district said they would *“Screen all K-12 students and place lowest performing 20% in the appropriate reading interventions.”*

Preliminary Findings

Table 43 indicates some gains in literacy across all grades although gains appear to be more evident in the lower grades. Qualitative data support this observation:

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 9			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		67%
	6 through 8		43%
	10		48%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	81%
		Low risk	82%
Local /Others	All Grades		35%

Table 43: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 9 (Literacy Programs)

“Reading achievement has increased somewhat at the elementary and high school levels. District-wide, our middle school results have not shown improvement. However, one middle school exceeded targeted growth while the other lost ground.”

“The immediate results are mixed. In this first year of implementation, the lower grade levels tended to show more growth; the secondary grades did not have the same level of coaching and experienced only sporadic increases in student achievement.”

School Improvement Area 10: Other Research-Based Strategies

Other Research-Based Improvement Strategies Approved by the State Board of Education

Summary Statistics

A total of 29 of the participating districts (13%) chose Other Research-Based Strategies. The total dollar amount spent to increase development in this area was \$1,134,674, approximately \$13 per child. Overall, an estimated 87,869 children were affected by this mechanism for improvement.

SUMMARY STATISTICS: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 10	
Number of districts	29
Number of districts not reporting data for this area	6
Total number of students impacted	87,869
Total budgeted amount	\$2,791,383
Total actual amount spent	\$1,134,674
Dollar amount spent, based on the above numbers, per impacted student	\$13

Table 44: Summary Statistics School Improvement Area 10 (Other Research-Based Strategies)

Link to Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES (KPMs)	Percentage of Districts that Selected (N= 29)
KPM 3: Student achievement	89.66%
KPM 5: High school graduation	27.59%
KPM 6: College readiness	24.14%
KPM 7: Schools and districts meeting AYP	48.28%
KPM 8: Low performing school improvement	24.14%
KPM 9: Schools closing the achievement gap	55.17%
KPM 10: Schools offering advanced courses	6.90%
KPM 11: Suspensions, expulsions, truancy	6.90%
KPM 14: Highly qualified teachers	3.45%

Table 45: KPMs Selected in School Improvement Area 10 (Other Research Based Strategies)

The preceding table shows the percentage of the 29 districts targeting Other Research-Based strategies that linked this area to each of the relevant KPMs. In all cases, districts had the opportunity to concentrate their attention on multiple KPMs. As can be

seen in Table 45, 90% of grantees expected Student Achievement to be impacted by Other Research-Based Strategies.

Chosen Improvement Strategies

Thirty-five overlapping strategies were mentioned by the 29 districts that selected this open-ended area. Many of the Other Research Based strategies echo those used to promote the nine previously described areas for improvement.

Increase in staff FTE. The most commonly reported theme (38% of districts), involved increasing staff FTE. This was mentioned generally: To *“hire more licensed teachers,”* and also in specific terms: To *“hire an advanced math teacher to eliminate or reduce remote distance learning or independent study,”* and to *“fund a highly qualified trainer to work with educational staff on a weekly basis on effective teaching methodology.”*

Professional development. Twenty-four percent of the districts chose to use funds to provide some form of professional development for staff including certification in a Teaching and Learning Connection Program, integration of the use of technology into the classroom, and professional development to *“use and apply warehoused data into important decisions regarding their districts.”* Additionally, two districts reported that they would focus funds on developing a Professional Learning Community, attending conferences, and providing for attendance and training at workshops.

Acquisition of instructional materials or supplies. Acquisition of computer based instructional materials, student monitoring software, and classroom hardware was mentioned by 20% of districts.

Program related change. Two grantees proposed support for the development of a music and intramural gym program and the implementation of programs such as Response to Intervention.

Other strategies. Two districts intended to use funds to align curriculum to standards. Funds were also used to support travel for professional development.

Preliminary Findings

Table 46 suggests some improvement. Additionally, the qualitative remarks were generally positive. Grantees noted such outcomes as the improvement of attendance,

an increase of scores at the grade 10 benchmark, and increases in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard in reading and math.

PERCENT OF IMPROVEMENT DEMONSTRATED ON DISTRICT SELECTED MEASURES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AREA 10			
Test Type	Grade Level	Risk Level (DIBELS Only)	Percentage of Tests Showing Improvement Over Baseline
OAKS	3 through 5		35%
	6 through 8		33%
	10		34%
DIBELS	K-3	At risk	80%
		Low risk	71%
Local /Others	All Grades		19%

Table 46: Percentage of Improvement Demonstrated on District Selected Measures: School Improvement Area 10 (Other Research-Based Strategies)

IV. DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

School Improvement Areas. In all, the results for the first year of implementation show a measured degree of promise. Looking across all school improvement areas, the ones that impacted the greatest number of students were Teacher Mentoring, followed by Literacy Programs, and Closing the Achievement Gap.

Key Performance Measures. KPM #3 Student Achievement was the most often cited KPM across all school improvement areas. The next three most often listed were KPM #9 Schools closing the achievement gap, KPM #7 Schools and districts meeting AYP, and KPM #5 High school graduation.

It should be noted that the KPM list districts were asked to select from was designed for state agency use, not for district use. Because KPMs are summative measures based on other data, improvement in the allowable areas could not be aligned to the KPMs. Therefore, the data analysis was based on the assessments districts used for each selected area, rather than on the percentages attached to the KPMs.

Improvement Area Strategies. The most frequently chosen strategy for improvement, across all 10 pre-approved areas, was to increase staff FTE. This included (but was not limited to) hiring the following: licensed teachers, math coaches, literacy coaches, a vocational education teacher, ELL instructional aides, specialists focusing on students using alternative education, an alternative education specialist for the Drug and Alcohol Youth Treatment Center, a drug and alcohol student and family counselor, an attendance officer, a homeless coordinator, a parent involvement specialist, and a Spanish speaking home-school liaison.

By adding staff, many districts expected to decrease class size, identify at-risk students more quickly, increase attendance, and improve achievement. For example, one district used funds to hire a youth transition specialist in order to enhance the probability of disabled students being able to enter and retain “meaningful and competitive employment after leaving school.”

Professional development was also utilized at fairly high rates across areas for improvement and included the following: mentoring in effective teaching strategies, master teacher mentoring, training for student peer mentors, training teachers in new ELL strategies, training in the integration of technology into the classroom, and partnering with local universities to provide university coursework leading to Read Oregon Classroom Teaching Certificate of Literacy. Professional development funding was also used to support workshop attendance across the improvement areas. One respondent stated they expected the district’s professional development efforts to enhance teachers’ knowledge of content standards and best practices. Several districts noted the success of the professional development in increasing teacher expertise, and

many were intent on maintaining efforts by applying for grant funds from additional sources.

A further strategy mentioned by many was the acquisition of instructional materials and supplies. The range of these items included: supplies for student reinforcement, student monitoring software, classroom hardware, literacy programs, books such as English language development texts, and books for the Accelerated Reader collection. Also mentioned were welding ventilation systems, a CAD/CAM lab complete with software, a CNC machine (used for metal fabrication), and new welders. Further, there were purchases of wood, software such as Edline and Edusoft, and software for math and alternative education.

Given the variety of instructional supplies, the expectations for what they could help teachers and students achieve were also varied. Expectations included: increased student achievement, increased attendance, and increased parent school communication. It was anticipated that vocational programs could be enhanced to provide students with greater levels of skill. It was expected that credit recovery would increase, more at-risk youth would graduate, and literacy levels would increase. Among the expectations cited, there were both successes and disappointments. For example, with the use of alternative education software one district experienced an increase in levels of credit recovery while another district noted no change. Nonetheless, one of the vocational programs reported that some students were accepted directly into apprenticeships as a result of having these enhanced learning opportunities.

The last *major* strategy to be mentioned across multiple areas was the addition of courses and/or changes to programs to increase instructional time. Once again the range was fairly wide as districts designed programs to fit their own needs. For example, some districts expanded existing preschool programs or implemented new ones, while others offered small groups services provided by child development specialists. The SIF also funded tutoring, summer classes, and after-school programs. One grantee worked with the local university to more easily identify students in need of summer school. In one case the district's migrant preschool was extended from 40 days to 164 days and participation was increased from 27 students to 40 students. Another district provided the program *Response to Intervention* in grades K-3.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Technical assistance is beneficial. The original Oregon School Improvement Fund resulted from the 2001 legislative session. At that time, funds were distributed to districts with few requirements for program accountability. Senate Bill 318 (2007) and the revised Oregon Administrative Rule 581-023-0112 (2008) amended the original 2001-03 School Improvement Fund statute and rule for the 2007-09 SIF distribution. With increased accountability and a focus on the Key Performance Measures in the 2007 version, the grant fund established in 2007 retained the same name as the fund established in 2001, which required a concerted effort on the part of the ODE to

differentiate the two projects and communicate the new focus and additional emphasis on accountability. These efforts are on-going, and will continue with the next year of implementation, aimed at keeping the districts focused in the second year on continuing with efforts in the improvement areas they implemented in the first year, rather than changing areas, in order to maintain the desired high level of accountability.

Recommendations: The districts could benefit greatly from some form of regional technical assistance. Not only does regional technical assistance provide greater outreach to districts, it also results in a broader and deeper understanding than can be afforded through one-on-one technical assistance alone; this depth of understanding emerges via the synergistic actions of the participants. Through e-mail and phone calls, the department has served 45% of the districts; 55% of the districts have not requested assistance, but most likely could have benefited from the opportunity to interact with neighboring districts and representatives from the state office. As the ODE's resources are already heavily utilized, an additional allocation from the SIF to enact this type of regional assistance would be helpful.

Overlapping areas. The extensive number of allowable areas from which to select, and the overlapping focus of some of those areas made it difficult for districts to know how to clearly categorize program expenditures, avoid program funding overlap, and slot their improvement activities into definitive categories. For instance, the following six allowable areas overlap: "Literacy," "Closing the Achievement Gap," Teacher Development ("Mentoring, Teacher Retention, and Professional Development"), Remediation ("Remediation, Alternative Learning, and Student Retention"), "Services to At-Risk Youth," and "Increases in Instructional Time." Deciding under which of these six allowable areas, for example, the strategy of hiring literacy coaches most aptly belongs is problematic; it could be appropriate in each one.

Moreover, the presence of overlapping categories complicates the data analysis process. For example, professional development is part of the larger allowable area, "Mentoring, Teacher Retention, and Professional Development," but districts have also included professional development strategies and funds in the areas of "Literacy," "Closing the Achievement Gap," "Services to At Risk Youth," and several others. Had districts instead been able to place all their professional development strategies and funds under one area labeled "Professional Development," better generalizations and observations could be made from the data.

Recommendations: Condensing the list of allowable areas into fewer areas that are distinctly different from one another would not only improve the likelihood of increased impact on student achievement, but would also result in a more focused and manageable data collection for both districts and the ODE, optimizing the opportunity for clearer, more definitive conclusions from the analyses.

Using common measures. Having districts identify their own assessments adds a layer of complexity to the data collection and analysis that presents some significant challenges. As the number of diverse assessments reported increases, this complexity also increases on an exponential scale, and identifying meaningful comparisons for analysis becomes methodologically cumbersome. Additionally, the more improvement areas selected by a district, the more data they are required to report, and for some districts, this makes the data collection effort an overwhelming task.

To address some of this complexity and to provide some commonality in the measures reported by districts, the data collection was inherently designed so that assessment results could only be reported in terms of percentages; this was problematic in some cases where the chosen assessment did not lend itself well to conversion to a percent. ODE analytic staff provided considerable assistance to districts in doing the conversion and submitting their data correctly when this proved to be difficult for them.

Recommendations: Allowing only OAKS for grades 3 through high school, and DIBELS plus one other choice of reading inventory for K-2nd grade would not only simplify the collection for districts, it would also simplify the data analysis for ODE. However, this decision should be considered in light of the revisions made, if any, to the list of allowable areas. Not all areas currently on the list lend themselves to assessment through OAKS, and the use of local formative assessments may be more appropriate in some cases for the efforts being implemented.

Conclusions

Successes. During the years 2007 and 2008, taxpayer dollars amounting to \$122,933,164 were divided among and used by 191 Oregon school districts, 20 Education Service Districts, one Oregon Department of Education Charter school, three Juvenile Programs and 11 Youth Districts to improve student academic achievement throughout the state. Districts embarked upon multiple research-based state-approved endeavors to improve the expertise and retention of high quality staff and to directly target districts' unique gaps in educational resources for children and youth. Students from pre-kindergarten through high school were challenged and supported through multiple means to make academic gains in achievement. Teachers themselves were challenged and supported to scaffold their students to increased achievement. The results of this first year of accountable funding are encouraging and provide evidence for cautious optimism for sustained improvements in future years. While a five to ten year time frame is a much more realistic period in which to expect sustained and consistent growth, results of activities during this one year span of time suggest that academically related seeds planted one year ago may be starting to flourish (see individual SIF area chapters for more detail). This first time implementation of the SIF with heavy accountability has had some heartening results—especially on focused interventions for early childhood, ages 3 through 8.

Challenges. The educational landscape of the country is marked by the high value placed on evidence-based strategies and best practices that have been proven through rigorous research. This value is well-placed, but does not come without a cost, and this past year has been a difficult one for many districts in Oregon with respect to budget constraints. The SIF grant has allowed districts to thoughtfully and intentionally implement research-based strategies to improve student achievement, but few districts have funds available to engage in the evaluative process necessary to guide subsequent efforts.

The state office has experienced similar challenges this past year and has worked collaboratively with districts to conduct an evaluation of the overall project that could provide meaningful information about the successes and challenges of the strategies employed. However, as seasoned evaluators are quick to point out, producing good research requires an investment of both time and resources at the outset of a project for evaluation efforts to progress in an efficient and fruitful manner. While a project of this scope and magnitude is certainly a worthy undertaking, with full promise of substantial benefits for the students of Oregon, it is an equally worth undertaking to properly and thoroughly evaluate the efforts so as to continuously improve and build upon those efforts and optimize subsequent outcomes. This cannot happen without the investment of adequate resources, and achieving the level of accountability and understanding of this project has been very challenging in an environment of shrinking budgets. Even so, the ODE will continue to look for ways of maximizing existing resources to provide the highest level of accountability and analysis possible for this project.

Future directions: Districts. Many, if not most districts, reported that students and teachers alike were benefiting from their respective programs, and that they would continue to benefit given maintained funding. In fact, several districts suggested that their programs could *only* continue if further funding was forthcoming. Multiple districts also suggested that the end of the reporting period would be a time of re-evaluation in order to fine-tune their approaches for the future.

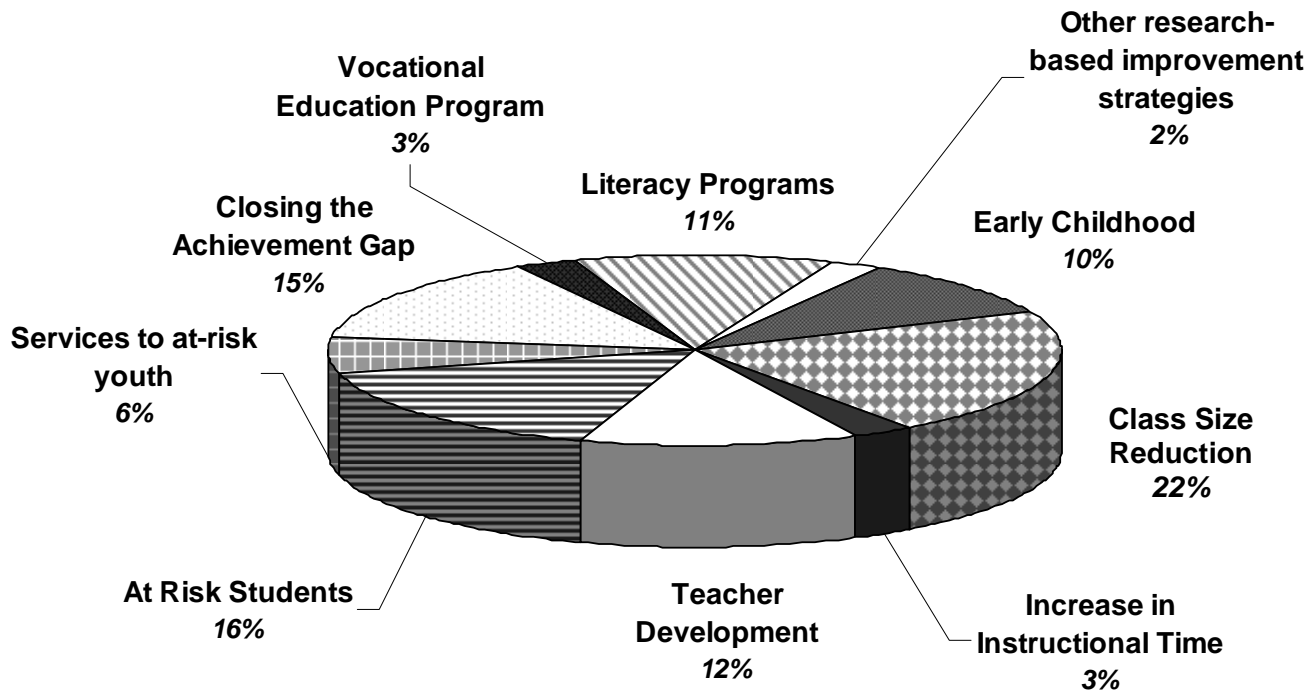
Future directions: Research. It will also be important to establish *why* certain districts made improvements in areas that others did not, and what was key to the strategies districts used that worked; from this type of analysis, districts can learn best practices from one another. A reduction in the number of allowable areas, and a limit on the types of measures used for assessing progress might allow evaluators to reasonably compare and contrast progress. Additionally, were qualitative data submitted by districts this first year be collected in the second year through researcher phone or in-person interviews, a more fine-grained understanding of how well programs are working might be obtained. Resources from SIF targeted in this manner would be a wise investment.

Final words. In conclusion, while grantees overall had high hopes for the SIF funds, they were also realistic in their expectations as to what could be achieved in this short time frame. While the department expects a degree of improved implementation for 2008-09, expectations are tempered by the challenges described in this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

2007-08 School Improvement Fund Percentage of *Budgeted* Funds per Improvement Area

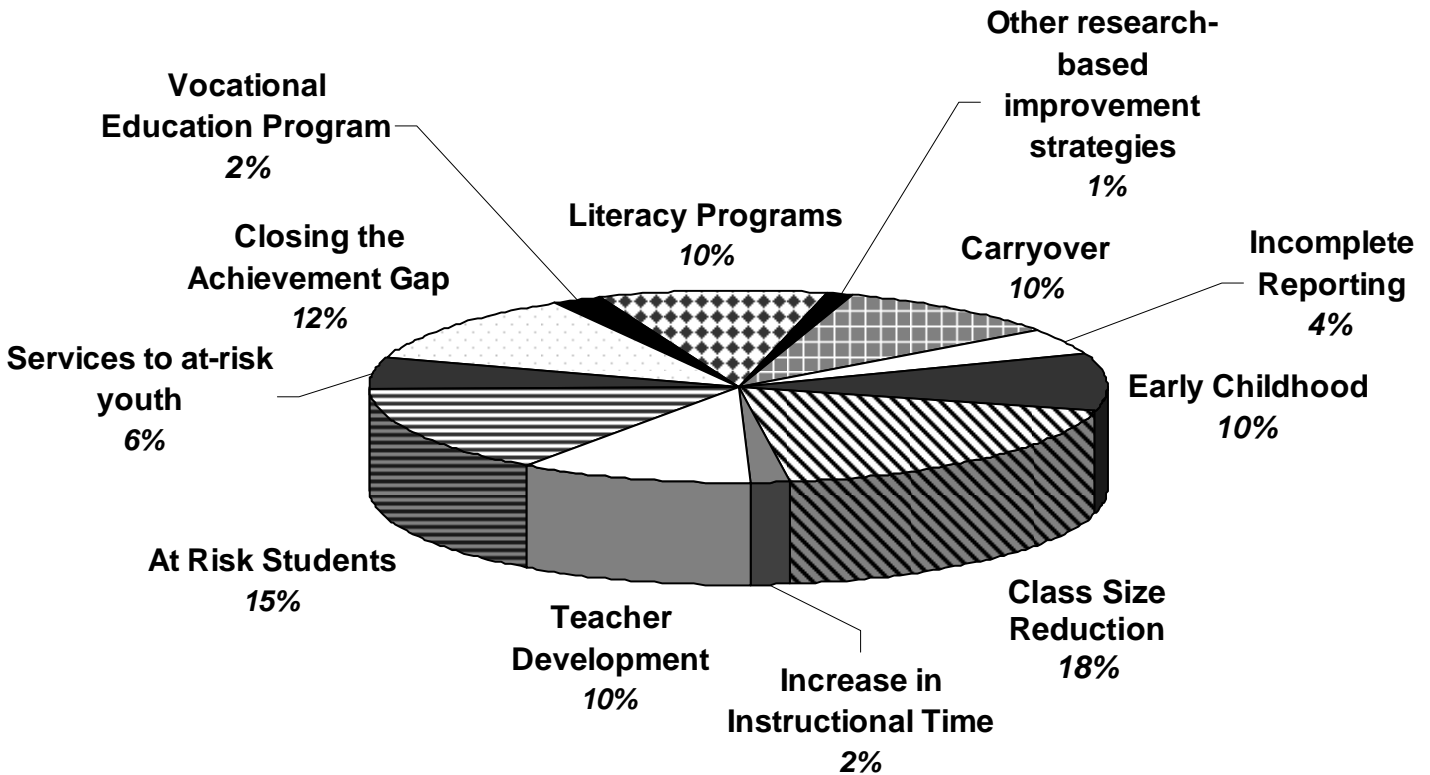


Total Budget: \$122,933.164
For budgeted amount per School Improvement Area, See Table 2

Appendix B

2007-08 School Improvement Fund

Percentage of *Actual* Expenditures per Improvement Area



Total Expenditures: \$105,076,746

For actual expenditures per School Improvement Area, see Table 2

