Nebraska State Improvement Grant

NSIG

Every Child Succeeds

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Every Child Succeeds:
Executive Report:
Nebraska State Improvement Grant 1999-2006

What's Inside:

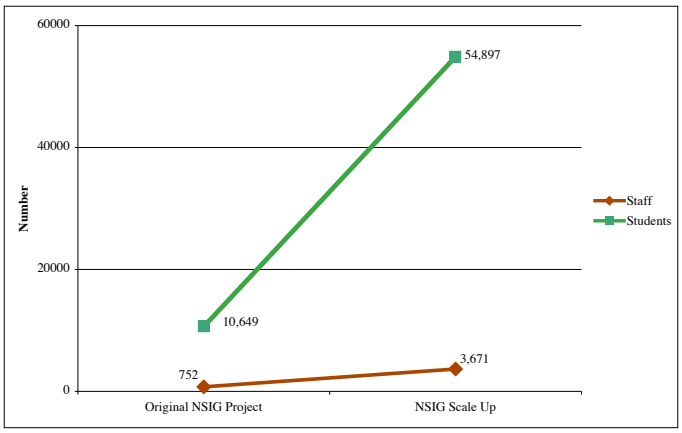
This document contains a summary of the final evaluation report for the Nebraska State Improvement Grant (NSIG). Included are an overview of the NSIG project, descriptions of participating sites, of the professional development provided through the grant, evaluation methods and results, and information about future related grant activities. Comprehensive evaluation reports completed at the end of the project are available from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE).

NSIG Project Overview

NSIG was a five-year project conducted by NDE funded through the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education. NSIG was designed to foster systems change by improving the infrastructure in schools and districts through personnel development, technical assistance, sub-grant funds to sites, and dissemination of research-based practices in positive behavior and instructional supports (PBIS). The goal of NSIG was to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Two cohorts, each consisting of individual elementary and middle schools, combinations of middle/high schools, or entire districts (all referred to as sites) participated in NSIG. Cohort 1 began participation in the first year of the project (2000-2001) and consisted of 11 sites: eight elementary schools, one high school; and two districts consisting of one or more elementary schools and one middle/high school. Cohort 2 began the project in year three of the grant (2002-2003) and consisted of five sites: one elementary school, three middle schools, and one district consisting of an elementary and a middle/high school.

As shown in Figure 1, NSIG professional development affected 752 staff and 10,649 students in 16 Cohort 1 and 2 sites. The success of NSIG led to two additional, related grants, the "NSIG Supplement" and a General Supervision Enhancement Grant (GSEG). The latter two grants supported a substantial "scale up" in Lincoln, Omaha, and Nebraska City Public Schools affecting 367 staff and 54,897 students, referred to as Cohort 3.

Figure 1: Number of Staff and Students Served by NSIG



Criteria for Participation in NSIG

Participating buildings and districts met the following criteria:

- Administrative leadership and support
- Evidence of commitment (prior training/PBS activity)
- Leadership Team composition (administrator, general & special educator, parents of children with/without disabilities, community agency, behavior specialist)
- 80% of staff agree to training plan
- Commitment to participate in NSIG evaluation requirements
- Commitment to mentor new sites

NSIG Professional Development

A Leadership Development Institute (LDI) and technical assistance were the primary vehicles for delivery of professional development to site-based Leadership Teams. Training and technical assistance focused on positive behavior support (PBS) (years 1-5) and instructional strategies (years 3-5). Thus NSIG professional development was referred to as PBIS. Professional development included:

- Building Effective Schools Together (B.E.S.T.) (Sprague, Bernstein, Munkres, & March, 1999)
- The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1987)
- A Framework for Understanding Poverty, research base on framework of poverty;Learning Structures (for teaching students who are from low socio-economic backgrounds (Payne, 1995; 2001)
- B.I.S.T.: Behavior Intervention Support Team (Ozanam B.I.S.T., 2000)
- Quantum Learning: Orchestrating Student Success (LeTellier, Porter, Reardon & Singer-Nourie, 2002)
- Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001
- Improving reading strategies (Southwest Regional Education Lab and Dorothy Strickland)
- Content Enhancement Strategies, The University of Kansas

A five year professional development plan was developed for Cohort 1. Cohort 2 received three years and Cohort 3, two years of professional development. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: NSIG Professional Development Plan

Cohort 1	**1999-2000** **Awareness** **2days** PBS, School Evaluation Rubric, LDI planning	**2000-2001** **Behavior** **7 days** Overview, Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), PBS: secondary-tertiary interventions	**2001-2002** **Instructional Strategies** **7 days** Research Into Practice Series (RIPS), Framework of Poverty, Strategies	**2002-2003** **Support/Follow-up** **1 day** Cultures of Safety, Behavior, Reading Strategies	**2003-2004** **Support/ Sustain** **9 days** PBIS, Quantum Learning	**2004-2005** **Support/Sustain Demonstration/ Mentor sites**
		Cohort 2	**Awareness** **2 days** Induction new sites/ teams	**Behavior** **7 days** CBAM, PBS, Building Effective Schools Together (B.E.S.T.); *SER*/ LEA support for writing subgrants, PBIS: secondary-tertiary interventions PBS	**Instructional Strategies & Behavior** **14 days** RIPS, Poverty PBIS Cultures of Safety, Reading Strategies, Quantum Learning	**Support/Sustain Demonstration/ Mentor sites**
				Cohort 3 (GSEG & Supplement Supported)	**Behavior** **8 days** PBS	**Behavior** PBIS, Behavior Intervention Team (BIST)

What is Positive Behavior Support?

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a school-wide system of support that includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments. Instead of using a mix of individual behavioral management plans, a range of positive behavior support for all students within a school is implemented in areas including the classroom and non-classroom settings (such as hallways, restrooms). PBS is a research - based set of practices that applies a behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective teaching and learning environments. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for all children and youth by making problem behavior less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional. (See Figure 3.)

In the past, school-wide discipline has focused mainly on reacting to student misbehavior by using punishment-based strategies such as taking away privileges, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Research has shown that the use of punishment, especially when it is used without positive strategies, is ineffective. The PBS model advocates teaching, modeling, and reinforcing behavioral expectations and rewarding proactive, positive behaviors rather than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. The purpose of school-wide PBS is to establish a climate where appropriate behavior is the norm.

Researchers and evaluators have looked at the results of implementation of PBS in many schools across the United States and Nebraska. Implementation of PBS has resulted in decreases in problem behavior and increases in academic achievement (Lewis, Sadler, 2000; Scheffler & Aksamit, 2005; Sugai & Colvin, 1998); reduction in office disciplinary referrals (Nelson, Martella & Martella, 2002); and reduction of suspensions and expulsions (Sadler, 2000).

Key PBS Implementation Elements

PBS programs generally focus on five overarching strategies for implementation:

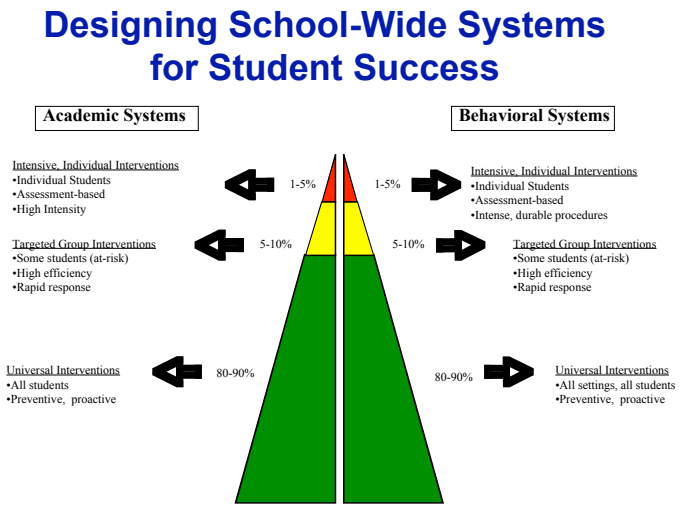
- developing behavioral goals;
- teaching and modeling positive behaviors inside and outside of the school setting;
- collecting data on student behavior, reviewing feedback on behavior in order to adjust strategies;
- conducting regularly scheduled professional development programs; and
- delivering tangible and social reinforcers (Beach Center on Disability, 2003).

Formula for Success: PBS Plus Instructional Support

Researchers have reported that when *both* behavioral and instructional supports are provided as in the NSIG project, improvements in academic performance are seen (Honer, Sugai & Vincent, 2005; Lewis, & Sugai, 1999, Schaughency & Goodman, 2003; Sugai, 2003). Figure 3 shows how behavioral and academic supports can contribute to student success.

Coupling powerful behavioral interventions and instructional strategies has been found to result in sustained gains in student achievement (Marzano, 1998; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). The remainder of this publication describes the outcomes of implementing PBIS resulting from the NSIG project.

Figure 3: Levels of Support



Source: OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support

NSIG Evaluation Methods

Evaluation of NSIG was conducted using three primary instruments and approaches: (1) the School Profile (*SP*) (Scheffler, et. al., 2000); (2) the School Evaluation Rubric (*SER*) (Nelson and Ohland, 1999); and (3) focus group interviews. The *SP* was completed annually in the fall to collect staff and student demographic data; information about resources available to respond to students' behavioral needs; student behavior data; and academic performance (i.e. participation in state assessments by students with disabilities and proficiency on state reading standards for students with and with-out disabilities).

The *SER* is a self-rating scale used annually by site staff to assess their status and needs in implementing five behavior organizational systems (Leadership team, school-wide, non-classroom, classroom, and individual) and one academic system as beginning, developing or exemplary. Based on this self-rating, action plans were developed and submitted as sub-grant applications to support local implementation of school-wide PBIS.

A series of four focus group interviews were conducted with the same four Cohort 1 and three Cohort 2 Leadership Teams. Teams were selected to ensure geographic, elementary -secondary, and urban-rural representation. Focus groups were done in year one of each cohorts' NSIG participation and again in years two and three. The final interviews for both cohorts were done in the last year of the project. In years one-three, focus group questions focused primarily on implementation issues for the purpose of program development and improvement. Because cohorts were inducted into NSIG at different points in time, data were analyzed and reported separately to identify and respond to the specific needs of the individual cohorts. As final year focus group questions were designed to solicit feedback regarding NSIG outcomes and sustainability issues, rather than implementation and program improvement issues, data for the two cohorts was combined for analysis.

NSIG Evaluation Findings

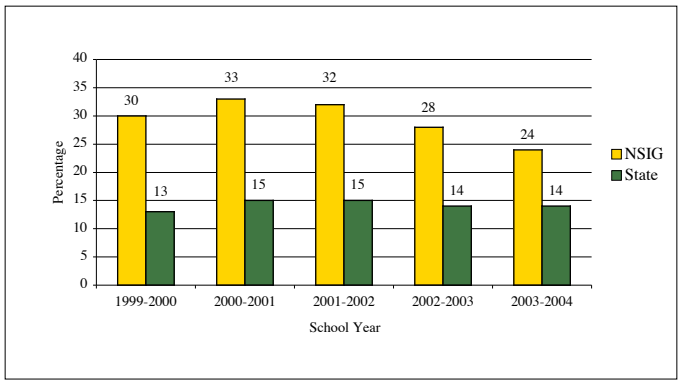
Cohort 1 Demographics

SP results for Cohort 1 are for elementary schools only because two district sites aggregated data across grade levels. During the five year project period, certified staff varied from 23-57 and non-certified staff varied from 5-40. The number of special education staff was 2-18, and there were 1-4 counselors/psychologists assigned to these sites. Between 61 and 67 % of elementary teachers had taught in the building for six or more years, and staff turn-over varied between 6 and 12 % annually, five-year $\bar{\chi}$ = 9%.

Student enrollment over the five years varied from 241-1007. Six of the eight schools were school-wide Title I buildings and two schools served targeted Title I students.

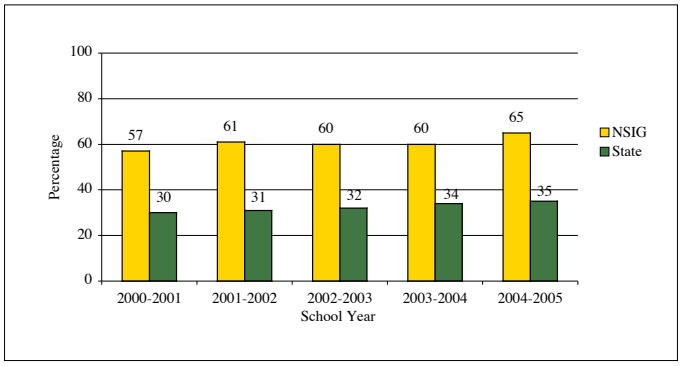
NSIG sites had appreciably higher student mobility rates compared to student mobility statewide. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4: Cohort 1 NSIG and Statewide Mobility Rates



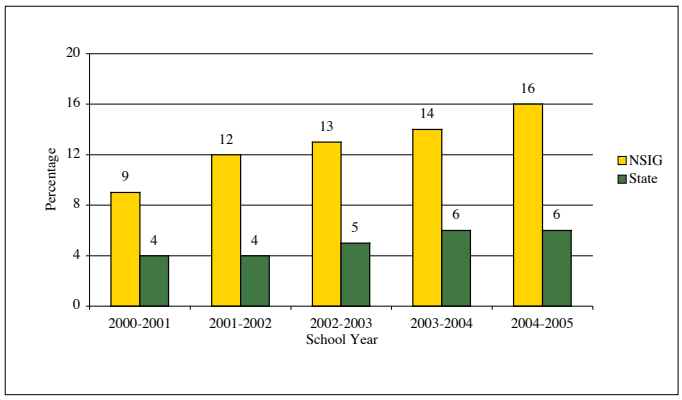
The percent of NSIG students receiving free/reduced meals was nearly twice that of schools statewide. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5: Percent of Cohort 1 NSIG and Statewide Students Receiving Free and Reduced Meals



NSIG Cohort 1 sites had over twice the percent of English Language Learners than schools statewide. (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6. Percent of Cohort 1 NSIG and Statewide Students Receiving Services as ELL.



NSIG Cohort 1 sites had a somewhat greater percent of students receiving special education services than schools across Nebraska throughout the five-year period. The percent of students with behavior disorders in Cohort 1 was twice that of schools statewide.

Cohort 2 Demographics

During three years of project participation, certified staff varied from 16-44 and non-certified staff varied from 1.5-19. The number of certified special education staff was 2-6, and 0-2 counselors/ psychologists were assigned to these sites. Sixty-six percent of teachers had taught in the building for six or more years. Staff turn-over varied between 0 and 27 % annually, with one school experiencing considerable turn over in staff during year two.

In Cohort 2, student mobility rates for NSIG sites were one-three percent lower than for schools statewide. NSIG schools had 6-12 percent greater students receiving free/reduced meals in each of the three years than did schools statewide. Annually, schools statewide had a greater percent of ELL students than these NSIG sites. The percent of students receiving special education services was similar for NSIG and schools statewide. Percentages of NSIG and statewide students verified with behavior disorders were the same (one percent) for years one and

two. Less than one percent (10 students) were identified with behavior disorders in the six schools in year three.

Results

Positive Outcomes Occurred for Staff

NSIG sites had considerable supports for students' behavioral needs *prior* to participation in the project. All sites used functional behavior assessment and school-wide behavior plans by the end of the grant. Use of behavior intervention teams, student mentoring, buddy classrooms, problem solving rooms and continuous environmental analysis also increased.

Cohort 1 and 2 sites made progress in implementing all *SER* systems over the years of participation. Table 1 shows the baseline and final implementation ratings for the *SER* for Cohort 1. At baseline, staff rated all five behavior systems as beginning or developing. The academic baseline rating was done in the spring of 2001 and was rated as developing by 100% of sites. By the final rating period (2004), the majority of sites rated the classroom, academic, and leadership systems as exemplary, while the remaining systems were rated as developing.

Table 1: Cohort 1 SER Implementation Ratings in Percents

System	Fall 2000			Spring 2004		
	Beg	Dev	Ex	Beg	Dev	Ex
Leadership	9	91	0	0	45	55
School wide	18	82	0	0	64	36
Non-classroom	36	64	0	0	64	36
Classroom	9	91	0	0	27	73
Individual	45	55	0	0	55	45
Academic	NA	NA	NA	0	45	55

Table 2 details Cohort 2 *SER* implementation ratings for the baseline (2002) and final (2004) rating periods. In the baseline year all five behavior systems were rated as beginning or developing. The academic baseline rating was done in the spring of 2003 and was rated as developing by 100% of sites. By the final rating period, the majority of sites rated all six systems as developing or exemplary.

Table 2: Cohort 2 SER Implementation Ratings in Percents

System	Fall 2002			Spring 2004		
	Beg	Dev	Ex	Beg	Dev	Ex
Leadership	33	67	0	0	67	33
School wide	67	33	0	0	83	17
Non-classroom	33	67	0	0	83	17
Classroom	67	33	0	0	83	17
Individual	50	50	0	0	100	0
Academic	NA	NA	NA	17	83	0

" Another thing it did for our school was bring us together as a school community rather than just our own little classroom each doing their own little things."

Focus Group Participants Described Changes That Occurred...

- Teachers used new behavior and instructional strategies, and developed a "bigger tool box" for meeting the needs of all students.
- Teachers shared instructional and behavior strategies and "coached" each other.
- Consistent language and expectations made rules easier to enforce; teachers were equipped to respond more appropriately, educationally, and respectfully to students.

- Teachers had increased classroom teaching time instead of having to address problem behavior.
- Teachers were informed by more and better student data, were able to track students' behavioral and achievement progress, thus overall classroom management improved.
- Student assistance teams were better prepared to provide appropriate student support, additional school-wide behavior and instructional supports were implemented.
- Teachers and student assistance teams had clearer policies and procedures for referrals and interventions so fewer students qualified for special education.

" Our whole school has changed over the last five years… and I think it's had an impact on our entire climate and the cultures of our schools."

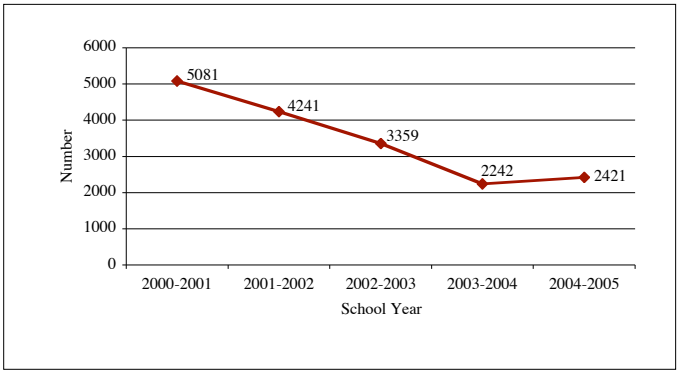
Focus groups reported PBIS helped with the school improvement process...

- "Going back to our 'be safe, be respectful, be responsible' that is one of our school improvement goals, so it is embedded into what we do as a district. We have an academic goal and then we have a behavior goal which is driven by the NSIG team and the individual building teams as far as the data collection and so forth… it's a big part of what we do [in the district]."
- "It's been amazing to see the consistency that has developed across the district as far as positive behavior support."
- "I think the culture's changed kindergarten through 12th grade. Now our kids recognize things that we're looking for, and I think that'd be true at the elementary, at the high school, all the way in between…."

Student Behavior Improved

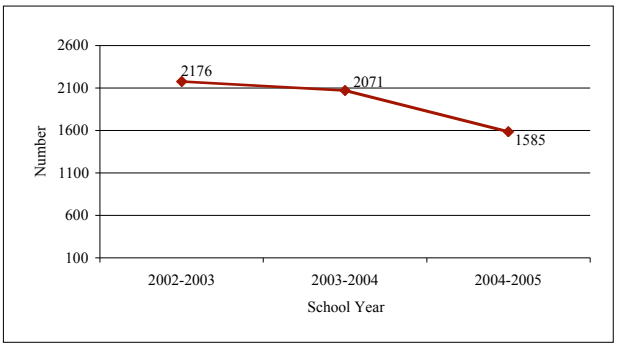
The frequency of Cohort 1 disciplinary office referrals fell substantially as shown in Figure 7. Overall, there was a 52% drop in office disciplinary referrals over the five-year period.

Figure 7: Number of Cohort 1 NSIG Student Disciplinary Office Referrals.



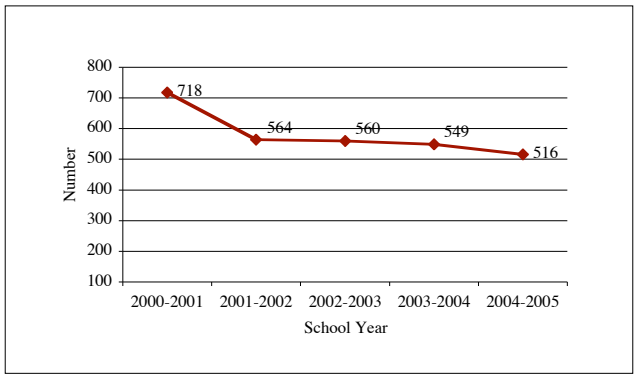
In addition, Cohort 2 disciplinary office referrals reduced by 27% over three years. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8: Number of Cohort 2 NSIG Student Disciplinary Office Referrals.



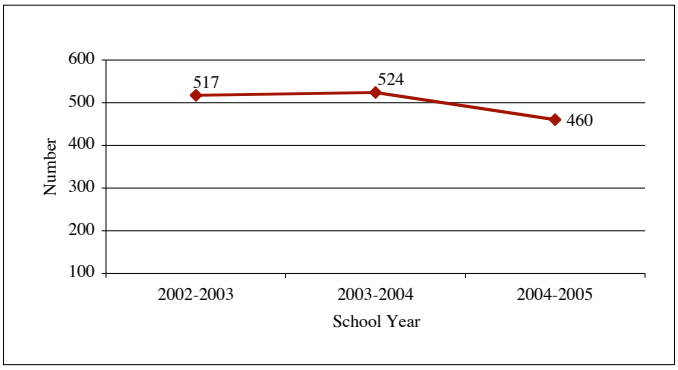
Student suspensions for Cohort 1 were reduced by 28% over the five years of participation. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9: Number of Cohort 1 Student Suspensions



Student suspensions declined 11% from baseline to the third/final year of participation in Cohort 2. (See Figure 10.)

Figure 10: Number of Cohort 2 Student Suspensions



Focus groups said all students…

- knew, understood, and repeated rules and expectations because of increased consistency and structure
- had fewer disciplinary office referrals and in-and-out of school suspensions
- were more focused and on-task, or able to refocus more quickly
- decreased violent and aggressive behavior by de-escalating their own inappropriate behavior before more severe consequences were necessary
- learned problem solving skills and helped hold one another accountable
- were more responsive to rules, and more respectful to each other and teachers/staff

Students with Disabilities…

- received the same treatment as non-disabled students
- may have benefited more from PBIS because some [students] especially need consistency and structure

" I think because they approach it school-wide, it doesn't single out kids with disabilities, but it allows them to be treated fairly and within the [same] process because the language is common. …it encompasses everybody in the building."

Student Achievement Improved

NSIG Cohort 1 fourth grade students' baseline reading proficiency was 10% lower than fourth graders statewide in year one. In 2004-2005, NSIG fourth graders reading improved slightly. (See Table 3.) Reading proficiency data was not collected by NDE in 2001-2002.

Table 3: Percent of Cohort 1 NSIG and Nebraska Fourth Grade Students Proficient on State Reading Standards

	2000-2001	2002-2003	2004-2005
NSIG	64	71	67
State	74	78	85

Between 94% and 100% of students with disabilities in the eight NSIG Cohort 1 elementary schools annually used regular district assessments of state reading standards, with or without accommodations. As shown in Table 4, NSIG fourth grade students with disabilities at the baseline measure (2000-2001) began with appreciably lower reading proficiency scores compared to students with disabilities state-

wide. Both students in NSIG sites as well as students statewide improved proficiency on state reading standards over the three data points.

Table 4: Average Percent of NSIG and Nebraska Fourth Grade Students with Disabilities Proficient on Reading Standards

	2000-2001	2002-2003	2004-2005
NSIG	30	41	43
State	49	55	65

Cohort 2 achievement results are not reported due to the small number of sites.

Focus Group Members from Both Cohorts Reported Improved Student Achievement...

- students improved scores in math, reading and writing
- fourth grade achievement scores increased 10%
- students were performing better overall on exams
- 81% of fourth graders were proficient or advanced on the state writing test
- one site improved academically at every grade level, between 30%-40% of sixth and seventh graders improved at least two grade levels and 96% of sixth graders showed improvement in reading

Family and School Interactions Improved

Focus groups noted that families...

- were implementing some of the PBIS strategies at home and this increased consistency for the children
- were more comfortable calling or coming to school with concerns and were more willing to listen to concerns from teachers
- had a better understanding of and supported school policies and procedures
- were more willing to actively participate in the development of IEP's
- were more positive about school in general and about "discipline" because policies, rules, and expectations were clear
- believed their children were safer at school

School personnel said they...

- sent documentation of student behavior to families and used this documentation as a communication "tool"
- found it easier to talk with parents about children's behavior and achievement because of simple and consistent rules and more daily communication.
- had more insight and compassion because of better communication
- were better able to create a "team relationship" with families

" There have been a lot of policy changes that have just become... made our school more uniform that everybody follows the same language, everybody follows the same procedures, and it can be communicated very easily to parents."

Evidence of Systems Change

Systemic change at the state, district, and building levels was and is an outcome of NSIG. NSIG aligned programs, and to some extent policies, at the *state* level. Originally, two program offices at the state level in NDE were involved in NSIG, Special Populations (special education) and Instructional Strategies. By the end of the grant the Office of Early Childhood (for children without disabilities); 21st Century Community Learning Centers; Title I, Part A- Disadvantaged; Title I, Part C, Migrant Education; Title II, Part A- Teacher and Principal Training; Title IV, Part A- Safe and Drug Free Schools; and title IV, Part B- 21st CCLC were involved. The

NDE in collaboration with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System, co-lead agency for Part C of IDEIA also began a PBS initiative in early childhood and early intervention .

As a result of implementing this model, *districts* scaled up PBIS from 8 to 84 buildings in Nebraska's largest school district, Omaha Public Schools. The second largest district, Lincoln Public Schools, began the scale up process in five new buildings of 54 and will complete scale-up during the 2007-2008 school year. Two rural districts, Valley and Nebraska City Public Schools, also took the content and process to scale in their districts.

Focus group participants said they had developed and implemented new knowledge and skills at the building level that resulted in improved outcomes for students with and without disabilities.

Both Cohort 1 and 2 *buildings* showed continuous improvement in implementing the six organizational systems of the *SER*. Cohort 1 rated most systems as developing at the end of three years of participation.

"There is no doubt we will continue what we learned, the strategies work, and are research-based. Teachers aren't going to let those things go, we have tool box to draw from."

Focus Groups Indicated PBIS Will Be Sustained

because the culture of the schools has changed...

- "Because of the culture that we've developed, we don't see it going away, it's built into what we do---embedded into what we do."
- "I'd be surprised if this died easily, its become a culture."
- "What we've learned from training is with us forever"
- "We don't think anything implemented from NSIG is dependent on money, we purchased the core information we needed, the rest was teacher driven and passed on to other teachers."
- "There is no doubt we will continue what we learned, the strategies work, and are research-based. Teachers aren't going to let those things go, we have tool box to draw from."

because staff will find fiscal resources to support sustainability...

- "The district will access Title II A funds… for books; [and funds] they have available for inservice"
- "If we need to go out and write other grants, we have a clear vision of what's needed for the next steps. It's building on the foundation that was laid"

because Leadership Teams will be expanded and new staff trained...

- "We're always trying to recruit new people to be on the Leadership Team. So I think if we can get some new people with new ways to use the things we've already doe also maybe how to advertise what we've already done and to get those things in place, that's always helpful."
- "For us the sustainability is bringing in the trainers that trained us…to train our whole staff."
- "…possibly we can have the people who are not on the team who are part of the staff who have been exposed to many of these things, get them involved too"
- "One of the things the district adopted as their focus for staff development is instructional strategies that will continue via the district not just within this building."

A Look to the Future...

The Nebraska State Personnel Development Grant (NSPDG) will improve systems for providing education and early intervention for children with disabilities. Broadly, the new grant will…

- provide a Leadership Development Institute for 10 new sites
- strengthen implementation of PBIS in 16 current model sites that were trained in PBIS
- expand implementation of PBIS to building-based EI/ECSE programs
- include before/after school and EI/ECSE staff on Leadership Teams for training, and
- support meaningful parent and community involvement.

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Recommended citation for this document:

Scheffler, M.L. & Aksamit, D.A. (2006). *Every Child Succeeds: Executive report: Nebraska State Improvement Grant: 1999-2006*. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Education.

The Nebraska State Improvement Grant was funded by the U.S. Office of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Grant # H323A000001-03.

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