

## **Missouri Student Success Network Case Statement**

### **Executive Summary**

Faced with low student achievement, poor attendance, and increasing dropout rates that are brought on by poverty and a wide range of other factors, many schools throughout Missouri are searching for new and effective ways to meet the needs of at-risk students. Too often, however, schools lack the knowledge, skills, or resources that are needed to create an effective range of interventions. What is needed is a broader network of support, one which engages the entire community in focused strategies to provide the academic, behavioral, social and emotional supports that at-risk students need to succeed.

The Missouri Student School Network (MSSN) Enhanced School Improvement Model provides such a template for schools and communities to identify and support the individual needs of at-risk students and families. The model helps create capacity to enable schools and families to communicate across agencies through a prevention and intervention framework. As outcomes in several Missouri school districts demonstrate, this collaboration ultimately promotes student success within the school and community.

MSSN focuses on school districts with academically deficient schools. It identifies the needs of students and teachers in those districts and works to build community collaborations that are committed to providing the resources and supports needed to address issues and increase student achievement. MSSN's approach creates Student Support Teams to coordinate needed services and supports for at risk children; Structure Support Teams to provide professional development and support services to help teachers better understand and respond to students' needs; and Community Interagency Teams that facilitate early identification and intervention to address identified needs of at-risk students and families. The results include marked improvements in student academic performance, reductions in referrals for assistance, enhanced effectiveness of service delivery, and a better school experience for all involved.

Dissemination of the MSSN Enhanced School Improvement Framework will ultimately increase student performance statewide by supporting those students who struggle in the traditional school environment. Collaborative efforts in Missouri communities and schools will lead to a more efficient system of providing academic and behavioral supports for increased student achievement.

## Introduction

The challenges faced by Missouri schools today are many, and increasing.

Across the United States, an estimated 1.2 million students drop out of high school each year — 7,000 every day! Each year's class of dropouts will cost the country over \$200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue (Catterall, 1985). In many cases, those who drop out are predestining themselves for a life of poverty, unemployment and possibly incarceration. In today's workplace, only 40% of adults who dropped out of high school are employed, compared to 60% of adults who completed high school and 80% of those with a bachelor's degree (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c). High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a). Seventy-five percent of America's state prison inmates are high school dropouts; 59% of federal prison inmates did not complete high school (Harlow, 2003).

Missouri's challenges mirror the national data. Despite intensive and laudable efforts of educators in Missouri, and despite the number of resources that have been poured into instructional improvement over the last decade, a significant number of schools continue to face enormous challenges as they struggle to raise test scores and to close the achievement gap. According to the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the average scale score in reading for Missouri 8<sup>th</sup> graders did not differ significantly from the average scores in 1998. The percentage of students who scored at or above the *proficient* level for both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders was not significantly different than the number scoring at or above *proficient* in 1992 (4<sup>th</sup>), 1998 (8<sup>th</sup>), or 2005 (4<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>); for both grade levels only about one-third of students scored in the *proficient* range or above. The achievement gap between 1992 and 2007 narrowed only slightly for Black students in comparison to White students, and little change was also seen in the gap between students who were eligible for free-and-reduced lunch and those who were not.

Confronted with statistics like these, community members may tend to point fingers at local school districts, demanding that they do more to address these problems. School leaders are asked to place more emphasis on student performance and academic accountability, consistent with the requirements of No Child Left Behind, at a time when funding for needed resources is stagnant or declining in relative terms. While schools are primarily accountable for students' academic achievement, they are being asked to address problems over which they have little or no control. An estimated 70% of the factors impacting students' school performance are beyond the control of the schools to impact directly. "Non-academic barriers" outside of the school walls, such as family conflict, lack of parent engagement, mental health issues, and community violence, typically have as much or more to do with how well a student performs. It is no surprise, therefore, that at least 40 Missouri school districts are currently considered "on the accreditation bubble."

Schools and districts are ill equipped to tackle these larger community and family issues alone. While families have the primary responsibility for the well-being of their children, many are not equipped to deal with the situation, due to a lack of knowledge or other supports. Educational leaders, therefore, must look to community-based resources, such as youth development organizations, mental health agencies, and family support systems, to provide the needed support and interventions for students to target these barriers to learning.

Child wellbeing and academic outcomes cannot be achieved independent of each other. The responsibility for the healthy development of youth is owned by all community stakeholders. Schools, families, and communities must work together to achieve the long-term outcomes of healthy development and success for all students. School and district leaders must create effective partnerships and linkages that support and enhance school and community resources in support of overall healthy development, academic achievement, and school success.

The Missouri Student Success Network (MSSN) was founded in 2003 to help districts enhance student performance. MSSN is a nonprofit alliance of public and private organizations, agencies, and professionals working together to support successful learning and development of children and young adults at risk or in crisis. To accomplish this mission, MSSN:

- Provides support for the design, implementation and evaluation of programs and services.
- Identifies resources and/or provides staff development for those who implement programs and services.
- Establishes quality indicators/standards for programs and services.
- Influences state policy regarding programs and services.

MSSN believes that each child and young adult can achieve success if he/she has a family network of support, policy makers who have their best interest in mind, uninterrupted access to quality program, and an advocacy organization that speaks on his or her behalf. MSSN further believes that collaboration among agencies and institutions serving children and young adults leads to improved services, that services and programs must be grounded in "best practices" and research, and that effective professional development is essential to providing quality services to students at risk or in crisis.

This new way of doing business promises to address heretofore unmet needs, including program and service gaps. As these needs are met, and as the gaps are bridged and filled, children, youth and families will benefit, and, in turn, school communities will see improved results. More specifically, effective partnerships have been shown to contribute to enhanced student outcomes, such as increased academic achievement, student attendance, graduation rates, and social and emotional development. They have resulted in enhanced safety and school climate, increased opportunities for pro-social involvement, and increased parent and family engagement. School and community resources have been maximized and services have been better integrated and accessed. Overall community commitment and buy-in has also been enhanced, as seen through the passage of school levies, enhanced community trust of the schools, and increased resources.

To date, MSSN has implemented its approach in the Caruthersville, Moberly, Hancock Place, Fayette, Nixa, Jennings and Wellston School Districts. Additional districts have been identified as needing support, pending MSSN's ability to secure new and ongoing sources of funding. For example, many of the individuals representing community agencies/service providers on the Inter-Agency Team for Hancock Place also work with the Bayless, Lindbergh and Affton School Districts, creating tremendous opportunities for expanding the program to those school districts.

### **Understanding the Need**

In 2008, 12,034 students (4.2%) dropped out of school in Missouri. Many of these were at so-called "dropout factories," as 15% of the high schools in the U.S. have been found to produce 50% of the dropouts (Balfanz and Legters). Ninth grade appears to be the "make or break year" as more students fail 9th grade than any other grade in high school. A disproportionate number of students who are held back in 9th grade subsequently drop out. By the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or even during the first semester, powerful key indicators exist — absenteeism, course performance, accumulated credits — that can predict whether students will complete high school.

While the focus tends to be on high schools, there is evidence that student performance in reading and attendance as early as third grade predicts dropout potential. Research also demonstrates other early indicators of dropping out of high school:

- Earning an F in English or math during 6th or 8th grade;
- Low grades or attendance in 4th grade;
- Retention in any grade during grades K-8;
- Earning a failing mark for class behavior in middle school; and

- Significant drop in attendance beginning in 6th grade.

These indicators do not provide insight into root causes of dropping out such as:

- Individual predictors: gender, race/ethnicity, immigration status, disabilities, abuse and neglect;
- Attitudinal and behavioral predictors: mobility, misbehavior, low educational aspirations; or
- Family and community predictors: family structure (SES, single-parent), parent involvement in learning.

Nor do these indicators provide insight into school factors, such as social composition, size, teacher quality, academic and social climate, including school safety. Consequently, even those who stay in schools may be at risk, due to a variety of economic, social, family and behavioral challenges. If these young people fail in school, the consequences for them and the communities in which they live can be long lasting and dire, as described below.

#### Personal Income & Employment

- A new high school dropout in 2000 had less than a 50% chance of getting a job; that job earned less than half of what the same job earned 20 years ago
- Lack of education is strongly correlated with welfare dependency and incarceration.
- A survey conducted in 2003 found that only 40% of adults who dropped out of high school are employed, compared to 60% of adults who completed high school and 80% for those with a bachelor's degree (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).
- High school graduates, on average, earn \$9,245 more per year than high school dropouts. (Employment Policy Foundation, 2002).
- In 2000, the median earnings for black females with a high school diploma and no college were \$20,000 less than the median earnings for black females with a bachelor's degree or higher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).

#### Crime

- A one-year increase in average education levels would reduce arrest rates by 11% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).
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- A 1% increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs, or about \$2,100 per each male high school graduate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).

#### Literacy

- The cost to taxpayers of adult illiteracy is \$224 billion per year (National Reading Panel, 1999).
- U.S. companies lose nearly \$40 billion annually because of illiteracy (National Reading Panel, 1999).
- For juveniles involved in quality reading instruction programs while in prison, recidivism was reduced by 20% or more (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).

#### Teen Pregnancy

- Teen girls in the bottom 20% of basic reading and math skills are five times more likely to become mothers over a two-year high school period than teen girls in the top 20% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).
- Male and female students with low academic achievement are twice as likely to become parents by their senior year of high school compared to students with high academic achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).

### Teen Mortality

- The U.S. death rate for those with fewer than 12 years of education is 2.5 times higher than the rate of those with 13 or more years of education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).

### Community Economic Development

- Cutting the number of dropouts in half would reap \$45 billion in revenues and decreased costs.
- The estimated tax revenue loss from every male between the ages of 25 and 34 years of age who did not complete high school is approximately \$944 billion. (Thorstensen, 2004).
- Students from low-income families have a dropout rate of 10%; students from middle-income families have a dropout rate of 5.2%, and 1.6% of students from high-income families dropout. (NCES, 2002).
- An after-school program costing \$10,038 produces benefits of \$89,000 to \$129,000 per participant (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003d).
- Increasing minority students' participation in college to the same percentage as that of white students would create an additional \$231 billion in GDP and at least \$80 billion in new tax revenues (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

### **Finding Solutions**

For at-risk students and families, the key to improvement is more than academic support, it is an inclusive collaborative effort of all community resources. "Each year spent in poverty reduces by two percentage points a child's chance of graduating from high school." (Randall Grayson, 2002, [www.visionrealization.com](http://www.visionrealization.com)). This provides an opportunity to link educational reform initiatives to collaborative community support structures.

Unfortunately, several barriers often exist that may prevent these collaborative community support structures from being formed.

- First, school leaders with little experience in agency collaboration may be resistant to outside help, fearing they may lose control or believing that they can best address the problems with in-house solutions.
- School leaders are often wont to advertise that problems even exist; to do so may raise further concerns in the community and possibly impact support for future funding requests.
- Even when leaders are open to collaborative efforts, there are numerous policy barriers to agency collaboration at the state and local level. Breaking down these agency "silos" to accomplish true collaboration is a slow and tedious process.
- Addressing mental health issues for at-risk students is not a priority for most schools nor is it seen as having a direct effect on student achievement. Many schools do not have a systematic process (Student Support Teams) in place to implement prevention strategies associated with mental health and achievement issues. Those that do often are limited to data collection and analysis on a macro level and thus fail to use the data to identify and address individual student issues.

Perhaps most important, state funding for schools has failed to keep up with rising costs, resulting in ongoing cutbacks in programs and services. Professional development and training for faculty and staff have been postponed or significantly reduced. Counselors are managing overly large caseloads. Classroom teachers have little time to devote to students with special needs. Even in those schools that have developed "student care teams" that focus on at-risk students, few have the staff or resources necessary to use their data effectively or drill down to the individual student level.

Schools are being asked to deal with challenges for which they lack the necessary resources. They cannot do it alone. What is needed is a system that connects schools, parents and community agencies to a statewide network of support focused on increased success of Missouri's at-risk students. MSSN can provide that system, with proven results.

MSSN partners with Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Department of Mental Health, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Georgetown University, St. Louis University, Ohio State University, Head Start, Missouri Department of Social Services – Children’s Division, The Children’s Trust, Center for Advancement of Mental Health Practices in Schools (CAMHPS) at University of Missouri and Practical Parenting Partnerships. Together, they work to support at-risk children and families in Missouri.

### **Program Goals and Objectives**

In order to increase the potential for Missouri’s at-risk students to succeed, MSSN pursues the following goals:

1. Develop and implement a clearly articulated system of support through coordinated services between Missouri communities and state agencies.
2. Link schools and community inter-agency teams in a collaborative process of early identification and intervention to address identified needs of at-risk students and families.
3. Develop a sustainability framework for MSSN.

Program objectives include:

- A. Provide support for the design/implementation/evaluation of programs and services in local school districts.
- B. Identify resources and/or provide staff development for those districts that implement programs and services.
- C. Assist professionals and agencies in determining barriers to the success of children and young adults in their care.
- D. Determine available resources and strategies and those that need to be developed to address and/or remove those barriers.
- E. Establish quality indicators/standards for programs and services.
- F. Influence state policy regarding programs and services that affect the success of children and young adults at risk and in crisis.
- G. Develop regional structures to implement the work of MSSN.

### **Program Approach**

MSSN’s approach is driven by the need for schools and communities to work together to identify and provide the services that at risk students and their families need to overcome barriers to academic and developmental success. Student Support Teams, Structure Support Teams for teachers, and Community Interagency Teams (juvenile officers, judges, etc.) all need to be developed or improved with expanded capacities. Building capacities within and between systems ensures true integration, so that a continuum of care is accessible to each and every child.

MSSN has conducted audits of at-risk services provided by school districts with a focus on increasing student achievement through attendance, retention, credit analysis, intervention strategies, support systems, identification procedures, and transition processes. This has included data analysis of student performance, professional development, use of community resources, and alternative/support programs. MSSN staff have also analyzed research related to working with at-risk students and has catalogued support services in communities.

Based on this research and analysis, MSSN has found that the three most important strategies for a school to ensure success for its students are Student Support Teams, community engagement, and professional development. These three elements form the basis for MSSN’s Expanded School Improvement Framework, which is already being successfully used in urban and rural districts across the state.

### Enhanced Student Support Teams

Critical to the Enhanced School Improvement Framework is the establishment of an Enhanced Student Support Team (ESST) in each school building, with a mechanism for linking teams across buildings and across districts. The goal of the ESST is to strengthen and support the individual student by developing and implementing an individualized action plan, using strategies that are school-based or community-based, depending on the availability of resources most likely to enhance that student's success. The key feature is that the ESST examines the whole child—social-emotional-behavioral health, physical health, academic health, and environmental health (i.e., family and community factors).

The ESST is a viable process for helping schools identify, adopt, adapt, implement, and evaluate evidence-based, school-wide, classroom and individual student interventions. It provides a place to discuss student concerns in a supportive, open environment. Members of the ESST share a common mission: to strengthen and support students who are having difficulty *in or out* of school. The ESST intervenes *as early as possible* when there is concern over a student's success and, through a clearly articulated process, identifies concerns, assesses the situation, searches for, selects and implements strategies, and evaluates those strategies. Research on student support teams indicates that this proactive process reduces the number of referrals to special education, reduces rates of grade retention, and increases academic achievement (Buck, Polloway, Smith-Thomas, & Cook, 2003; Flugum & Reschley, 1994; Myers & Kline, 2002).

The ESST is a regular education function, not a special education function, so it is accessible to ALL students in the community. Although referrals typically come to the ESST from concerned teachers or parents, referrals may come from any segment of the community. Thus, although the ESST is based in the school setting (both public and private), it functions as a single point of access in the community for the support of all children.

### Professional Development

For school-based staff to address the unique, yet expansive, needs of at-risk students, they need access to continuous and consistent learning and support. The MSSN initiative is designed to create strong and effective links among the diverse groups working with at-risk youth and their families in order to keep them engaged in school and succeeding academically. Educators have access to high quality professional development around current best practices in healthy youth development. This work is facilitated by MSSN and other practitioners who are experienced in working with at-risk children and families.

Comprehensive and supported professional development enables schools and agencies to work collaboratively to develop a common language, identify research-based interventions, and to develop a system of coordinated services. Development activities are aligned with the National Staff Development Standards and are job-embedded, research-based, and results-driven. Each of the 12 NSD standards is addressed through the development of learning communities that include school and agency personnel.

### Community Engagement

Schools and community agencies need new capacities to work together effectively. In Missouri, as in other states, services are often fragmented and incoherent. Gaps are commonplace. They are evident in schools, community agencies, and especially in the working relationships between schools and agencies. These gaps are especially visible in poor, rural communities, but they also exist when programs and services are abundant. These gaps are predictable and understandable because community-based systems and services and school systems tend to be independent entities with separate policies, governance, missions, goals, accountabilities, and reporting requirements.

The Expanded School Improvement Framework is designed to optimize both academic and behavior interventions and supports within the school by linking them to community-based services. Collaboration

recognizes that each member of the community has a unique mission and role to play. It maximizes the resources available to respond to the multiple needs presented by children and their families. Working together, the school, families, child serving entities, and employers in a community can achieve a comprehensive, coherent, cohesive, and feasible service system of support to enhance the academic, social-emotional learning, development and well being of children, youth and entire families. The process expands the boundaries of school improvement, incorporating health, mental health and other services as an improvement resource and priority. At the same time, this approach strengthens and stabilizes families and communities, increases safety and security, decreases youth involvement in risky behaviors, and raises the level of overall health in each community. Best of all, the Enhanced School Improvement approach prevents fragmentation, competition, duplication, and wasted resources, and produces results that are greater than if the partners worked in isolation.

### **The Enhanced School Improvement Process**

The Enhanced School Improvement process is a four-phase approach that is customized based on individual school district and community needs. The process begins when school district leadership (board and administration) invites MSSN to work with them to address the needs of at-risk and underperforming students.

#### ***Phase I – Discovery*** (Current Status/Gap Analysis)

As a first step, MSSN:

- Conducts onsite interviews with school staff, community leaders, parents, students and agency representatives.
- Conducts observations of current student and family support processes.
- Analyzes current district policies and procedures.
- Catalogs current programs and initiatives.
- Collects survey data (if necessary) to determine most pressing at-risk issues.
- Delivers a report of findings including “opportunities for improvement”—recommendations supported by best practice research.

#### ***Phase II – Customization & Design***

Once the issues and barriers to success have been identified, MSSN works with school and community leaders to:

- Develop an implementation plan and timeline.
- Develop or enhance building Student Support Teams.
- Develop or enhance Community Inter-agency Teams.
- Develop or enhance a process for data collection and analysis.

#### ***Phase III – Professional Development***

As previously noted, professional development of school and community agency staff is critical to the success of the Enhanced School Improvement process. MSSN’s role is to help:

- Develop a professional development plan and timeline.
- Provide staff development for key school and community stakeholders (including parents).
- Provide follow-up “coaching” to facilitate implementation of new knowledge and skills.

#### ***Phase IV – Evaluation***

The long-term success of this approach requires a comprehensive and ongoing process to measure, evaluate and refine the elements of the process to ensure that it is effectively addressing the needs of students, families, schools and collaborative teams. To that end, MSSN:

- Develops and implements a structure for evaluating student support systems.
- Develops and implements a structure for evaluating the progress of at-risk populations at community, school district, building, classroom, and individual levels.



- Provides formal and informal progress reports.
- Conducts evaluations of effectiveness of school/community supports.

Key to the success of the Enhanced School Improvement process is the recruitment of a local process “champion” in each targeted district. This champion may come from the school setting or from the community. In Caruthersville, it has been a retired librarian who has taken the lead in bringing together disparate local agencies to work with the school on identified issues. The leadership and involvement of a champion from the local community ensures ownership, commitment and long-term sustainability of the process within the district being served.

### **Benefits/Results**

To date, the Enhanced School Improvement Framework has been piloted and field-tested in seven Missouri school districts and communities, in rural, suburban and urban locations. A total of 431 principals, superintendents, administrators, staff, parents, school board members, and community agency staff have participated in various aspects of the program.

Initial surveys and evaluations indicate that, within the first year of implementing the process, there is significant and measurable improvement on several indicators:

- 32% of at-risk students referred for supports showed improvement and needed no further assistance (early intervention).
- Referrals for at-risk support services were reduced by 50%, as more situations were addressed within the classroom prior to referral (prevention). Participants cited “teamwork” as a powerful positive outcome of the program.
- Participants overwhelmingly agree that the referral process in these districts is more effective.
- Statistically significant increases were seen across schools in the measurement of teachers’ perceptions of collective efficacy, the school climate, students’ pro-social behaviors, available supports for students at-risk, parents’ support of education, and colleague support.
- There was a statistically significant increase in how parents viewed their child’s overall school experiences. Several specifically cite positive impacts on students as a major strength.

In addition, MSSN has demonstrated an effective process for developing effective and efficient Student Support Teams in school buildings, and linking them with Community Interagency Teams that support schools in working with students at-risk of school failure. A training format and materials have been developed for these teams to use. Policy issues presenting barriers for alternative schools have been identified and MSSN has participated on State Advisory Committees to address issues and needs of at-risk students and their families.

One teacher in Moberly summed it up when she said, “We’re making sure students are no longer falling through the cracks.” Another, in Caruthersville, added: “This is long overdue. It’s the most important group I’ve worked with in 20 + years.”

### **Dissemination**

MSSN is committed to sharing the results and lessons learned from the Enhanced School Improvement process with educators, agency staff and community leaders. Over the past two years, MSSN has participated in conferences and workshops sponsored by DESE at which school representatives received informational packets and presentations from MSSN staff. Information included data, research-based instructional strategies for working with at-risk students, a listing of regional and county contacts from support agencies in Missouri, and information on the benefits of collaboration. Workshop topics covered issues facing administrators of alternative schools and provided networking opportunities as well as strategies for improvement. MSSN also partnered with DESE on a Drop-Out Prevention Summit in April

2009. Additional conferences were held with Practical Parenting Partnership, Health and Senior Services, State Social Workers, Missouri Administrators of Alternative Schools Association, and others.

In partnership with the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, MSSN helped develop a web site to provide connectivity with all public schools in Missouri, administrators in each building, at risk coordinators, and other support personnel. MSSN leadership actively participates as a member of the DESE Advisory Committee of the Missouri Integrated Model (MIM) and the DESE MSIP Advisory Committee that has recommended the development of a process for early identification and prevention services for at risk children and youth. MSSN is also a member of the State Advisory Committee for the Missouri Center for Safe Schools and participates in the design and implementation of safe practices for children and youth.

### **Organizational Background and Capacity**

The Missouri Student Success Network is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization created in 2003 to address the issues of students and families at risk of school failure. The original goals of the organization were to reduce dropout rates of Missouri students, develop a collaborative network with local, state, and national organizations to promote dropout prevention and improve student performance, and provide professional development opportunities focused on shaping school environments to ensure that all students receive quality educational programs and services to which they are entitled.

MSSN is an outgrowth of the Alternative Schools Network Association (ASNA), which was a nonprofit organization incorporated in September 1997. ASNA represented a network of public school districts, private schools, charter schools, individual alternative schools, dropout prevention programs, and other community and state agencies in Missouri that provided support services for students at risk of school failure, and their families. The ASNA mission was to coordinate, strengthen, and increase the effectiveness of educational programs and services for "at risk" and "difficult to educate" students. In September 2003 the Missouri Student Success Network was created to expand the scope and services of the former ASNA.

MSSN's board of directors is comprised of individuals who represent various regions of the state, along with representatives from agencies and institutions that provide services to students at risk of school failure and their families. Participating agencies and organizations include: Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education; Department of Health & Senior Services; Department of Mental Health; Department of Social Services – Division of Youth Services & Division of Children's Services; Center for the Advancement of Mental Health Practices in Schools – University of Missouri; Educators from public, private and charter schools; Missouri Center for Safe Schools; National Association of Social Workers – Missouri Chapter; Office of Social & Economic Data Analysis; Office of State Courts Administrator; Practical Parenting Partnerships; and Youth in Need.

### **Key Staff**

MSSN's leadership team has extensive experience working with at-risk students and working with school districts in the design of system supports. These facilitators are:

- **Richard Phillips, Executive Director.** Mr. Phillips served as superintendent and assistant superintendent of schools for 14 years and served 14 years as director of the classification program for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. He provided the leadership for the creation of the Show-Me Curriculum Administrators Association and served as president of that organization for two years. In February 2005, Phillips was appointed to serve on the board of governors for Central Missouri State University. Mr. Phillips has a broad range of experience to facilitate statewide efforts to improve services to Missouri students.

- **Linda Washburn, educational consultant.** Ms. Washburn has 15 years of experience as a special education teacher in both small and medium size school districts in Missouri, special education administration at the state level for six years, special education administration at the district level in an urban setting for five years, and assistant superintendent of instruction for six years in an urban setting. Ms. Washburn brings a wealth of experience in curriculum development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for at-risk programs and services. She is well versed in differentiated instruction and developing programs based on individual needs of students. She also has expertise in data collection and analysis of individual student information on which programs are established.
- **Karen Weston, PhD, educational consultant.** Dr. Weston has worked for the Center for Advancement of Mental Health Practices in Schools at the University of Missouri-Columbia for over four years. She currently consults with them on grant activities, school services programming, curriculum development for both online and face-to-face courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and promotion of graduate student leadership in the area of school mental health practices. Dr. Weston holds a degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and her work is focused on helping educators be better prepared to address the social and emotional needs of children and promote positive development and well-being within the school context. Currently, Dr. Weston provides leadership for two large-scale initiatives that are designed to increase the academic and social-emotional success of all Missouri children.
- **Bill Elder, MSSN Board Member and Director of the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSED), University of Missouri-Columbia.** Dr. Elder holds a doctorate in Rural Sociology from the University of Missouri. His areas of interest include social change, communities and public policy, particularly public education. He is a former National Library of Medicine Fellow in Health Informatics. At OSED he is responsible for program leadership and works with projects concerning demographics, public school improvement, community information systems and program evaluation. He leads the evaluation and documentation of the MSSN Collaborative Network project. He also assists school districts and agencies in the assessment of current practices and provides technical assistance in the development of statewide and regional networks.

### **Budget**

With a recent elimination of state funding for the Enhanced School Improvement Program, MSSN is seeking corporate and foundation support to help sustain its programs in schools and communities across the state. MSSN needs \$150,000 in the short-term to avoid any service reductions, with a total estimated need of \$400,000 over the next three years. Support at these levels will ensure that ongoing programs in the Caruthersville, Moberly, Hancock Place, Fayette and Nixa School Districts will continue and that MSSN may be able to expand this successful program to other districts which request assistance.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability of the MSSN Enhanced School Improvement Model will be achieved through local commitments from the school district and community. Support will be sought from programs such as the Missouri Bright Futures Initiative, financial commitments from agencies involved in the collaborative effort at the state level, and corporate, foundation and individual support on a state and local level. DESE's Missouri Integrated Model will also provide an avenue of sustainability for this process as it is incorporated as a viable component.

### **Conclusion**

Evidence has shown that communities have an important role to play in supporting schools and families as they seek to help students succeed. No one school, family or community agency can do it alone; an integrated, collaborative support network is needed to ensure that children receive the supports and services they need. When collaborative efforts are adopted, there is greater accountability, less

redundancy, and significantly improved results. A coordinated, collaborative approach, such as that espoused by MSSN, enabled schools families and agencies to be more responsive to the needs of their children, and better able to support each child's learning in school in more effective ways.