

Illinois ASPIRE – South

Alliance for School-based Problem-solving and Intervention Resources in Education

To: Regional Superintendents of Schools
District Superintendents
Special Education Directors

From: Melissa Bergstrom, Co-Director
Michael McCollum, Co-Director

Date: April 25, 2006

Subject: Illinois ASPIRE - South

We are pleased to announce Illinois ASPIRE (Alliance for School-based Problem-solving and Intervention Resources in Education) - South, an initiative funded by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Details about the project and its training and technical assistance services are contained herein, and we ask that you share this information with building principals, parents, and others in your area.

Grant Award

In February of this year, ISBE awarded a \$1.9 million grant over a five-year period to Southern Illinois University to establish the Illinois ASPIRE - South Center. SIUE will be the fiscal agent and house the project administrative staff. Services to schools will be provided through both SIUE and SIUC.

This new ISBE initiative is funded through a State Personnel Development Grant under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Kathryn Cox of ISBE is serving as Statewide Project Director. In southern Illinois, the joint SIUE/SIUC grant proposal was developed in concert with a partnership group representing Regional Offices of Education, school districts, special education cooperatives, and parent groups. A Leadership Council composed of this group and others representing the vast geography of Southern Illinois has been formed to advise the project and insure equity of school participation.

Mission & Goals

The overall mission of the project will be to establish and implement a system of personnel development that will increase the capacity of school systems to provide early intervening services, aligned with the general education curriculum, to at-risk students and students with disabilities, as measured by improved student progress and performance.

To accomplish this mission the following specific goals have been outlined:

- A. To establish a Regional Partnership to advise, insure equity, and share resources for the project.
- B. To provide professional development and technical assistance to schools related to early intervening services, response to intervention (RtI) and standards-aligned instruction and assessment. This will include elements of Flexible Service Delivery, the Standards Aligned Classroom Initiative and Reading First.
- C. To increase the participation of parents in decision-making in schools.
- D. To incorporate the professional development content into Institute of Higher Education general and special education preservice curricula.
- E. To evaluate the effectiveness of project objectives.

Access to Project Resources & Training – Elementary School Focus

Please note in the mission statement the term “early intervening services.” The primary focus of this project is the elementary school level, especially K-3 with an emphasis on reading improvement. However, middle schools and high schools are also welcome to participate in the training offered by the project.

This is a multi-year project and services will be offered to schools at least until September 30, 2010. The project staff will work to insure that school districts throughout the 41 counties of southern Illinois are aware of project activities and how to access these initiatives.

Opportunities to participate in Illinois ASPIRE - South Center services will be available during each year of this project. The Leadership Council, which advises this project, recognizes the diversity of school districts in our region and is committed to equity in the delivery of services. Each school’s participation in the Center services is optional.

Commitment to the Initiatives

District level administration (superintendent and others), building level administration (principal and others), teacher, and related services staff commitment to the Center initiatives are critical to success. In school districts in Illinois and other states that have implemented this process, building level teams consisting of the principal, grade level representation of teachers, special educators, related services staff, parents, and local

coach have served on school leadership teams that attend training, share information with their school staff, and lead implementation activities at the local level.

With a focus on school-based problem solving, early intervening services and RtI, the training activities will require a significant commitment of time and resources at the local level if schools are interested in the implementation of the Center initiatives. This includes the allocation of time for a local implementation coach.

Training and Technical Assistance Services

The following is a description the trainings that will occur during the spring/summer of 2006 and the academic year of 2006-07. The trainings are designed to phase in the initiative over time. The specific dates and locations for Phase I, II, and III trainings will be disseminated in a later communication.

A. Kick-off Conference – May 31, 2006, Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn

The enclosed announcement provides an overview of the initial Illinois ASPIRE South Center event. The primary goals for this conference will be to introduce:

- The services of the Illinois ASPIRE - South Center
- The critical features and rationale for school-based problem solving, early intervening services, and RtI
- Ways to access the Center's services.

An expected outcome of this training will be that district and school decision-makers will be able to make an informed decision about whether or not they would like to send school representatives to the Phase I Training – Consensus Building.

B. Phase I Training – Consensus Building

The Phase I Training will be available to schools across Southern Illinois and will be held in geographically accessible sites. The training will focus on school-based problem solving and RtI content knowledge, rationale, and projected outcomes. This will include the following topics:

- Critical features and rationale of school-based problem solving and RtI
- Federal and state rules and regulations
- Research on existing programs/services
- Thinking differently

An expected outcome of this training will be that attending school representatives will facilitate their school staffs' understanding of school-based problem solving

and RtI, needs that will be addressed, and expected outcomes. The school staff must reach a consensus to proceed in the implementation of school-based problem solving and RtI and submit an application to the Illinois ASPIRE – South Center to advance to Phase II Training.

C. Phase II Training – Building Infrastructure

Phase II Training will be available to school leadership teams with an accepted application. The number of teams may be limited. Selection will be based upon the application materials and representative geographic locations. Training will focus on a comprehensive needs assessment and building infrastructure. Training topics will include:

- Problem-solving and decision-making process
- School-wide and small group scientifically-based instruction
- Data collection and technology for data management

Expected outcome of this training will be that the school leadership teams will address the needs assessment and structures to support the implementation of scientific instruction and data-based decision-making.

D. Phase III Training – Implementing Practices

Phase III Training will be available to school leadership teams that have successfully implemented Phase II activities. Training will focus on logistics, procedures, processes, and practices for implementing a comprehensive three-tier intervention model. Topics will include:

- Logistics, procedures and practices
- Roles and responsibilities
- Alliances with parents

The expected outcome of this training is the systematic implementation of school-based problem solving and RtI.

Demonstration/Data Collection Schools

Each year of the project, approximately four elementary schools that house at least grades K-3 will be selected to participate in Phase I, II, and III Training as demonstration/data collection schools. Schools that would like to be a demonstration/data collection school must complete and return the enclosed request for proposals (RFP) by June 9, 2006.

Schools interested in participating at this level must agree at the onset to commitments required for success as outlined in the RFP. In return for this commitment, schools participating at this level will receive more comprehensive assistance and supports from the project. Center regional coordinators will provide specific technical assistance on site to assist in implementation. District/cooperative coaches will also receive extensive follow-up training and support from the regional coordinators. Resources to enhance parent participation will be provided. Data management systems through DIBELS or AIMSweb will be provided by the Center. Access to project revenue for substitutes, materials, and stipends will be available. Project assistance will continue until September 30, 2010.

For More Information or Questions

Please visit the Illinois ASPIRE website at <http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/illinois-aspire.htm> or contact one of the following staff members.

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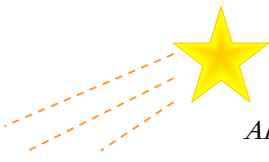
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Enclosures:

Kick-off Conference Registration
Demonstration/Data Collection Site Request for Proposals



Illinois ASPIRE – South

Alliance for School-based Problem-solving and Intervention Resources in Education

TO: Eligible Applicants

FROM: Illinois ASPIRE [Alliance for School-based Problem-solving and Intervention Resources in Education] – South Center

DATE: April 25, 2006

SUBJECT: Request for Proposals (RFP): School Demonstration/Data Collection Sites

General Information

Eligible Applicants: Public school districts, public university laboratory schools approved by the Illinois State Board of Education and charter schools are eligible to apply, provided they are located in the geographic area served by the Illinois ASPIRE – South Center, as shown on the map in Appendix A. Proposed demonstration/data collection schools must house at least grades K-3. Although demonstration districts may contain Reading First schools, schools currently funded through the Illinois Reading First Initiative are not eligible to serve as data collection sites for this project.

Number of Sites to be Selected: It is estimated that 4-6 demonstration/data collection schools from different districts will be selected in the southern Illinois region for the 2006-07 school year. Additional sites will be solicited during the operation of the project.

Start Date: It is estimated that services to the demonstration sites will begin in the summer of 2006.

Application Deadline: Applications must be received by June 9, 2006. Mail the original and 5 copies (six in all) to Illinois ASPIRE – South Center, SIUE Campus Box 1147, Edwardsville, IL 62026. No FAX copies of proposals will be accepted.

Informational Meeting: All prospective applicants are invited to attend the project kick-off conference held at the Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn on May 31st from 9:00 to 2:00. An informational meeting on the RFP will be held at this event from 2:15 – 3:15. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions about the intent or interpretation of this RFP. Attendance is encouraged but not required.

Contact Persons: For more information about this RFP, contact Melissa Bergstrom at 618.650.3182 or Michael McCollum at 618.650.5182.

Background

In September 2005, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) received a 5-year State Personnel Development (SPD) Grant issued by the U.S. Department of Education under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. To implement the objectives of the SPD Grant Project, in February 2006, ISBE funded four Illinois ASPIRE Centers—one in the city of Chicago and one each in the northern, central and southern parts of the state. Southern Illinois University Edwardsville was funded to operate the Illinois ASPIRE – South Center, which serves districts in the counties shown on the map in Appendix A.

The overarching goal of the Illinois ASPIRE Grant Project is to:

Establish and implement a coordinated, regionalized system of personnel development that will increase the capacity of school systems to provide early intervening services, aligned with the general education curriculum, to at-risk students and students with disabilities, as measured by improved student progress and performance.

The professional development and technical assistance will focus on designing and providing early intervening services, with an emphasis on reading instruction that is scientifically research-based; progress monitoring; response to intervention (RtI) and standards-aligned instruction and assessment. Existing ISBE initiatives will provide the foundation for the content of the training and technical assistance provided by each Illinois ASPIRE Center. These initiatives include the Flexible Service Delivery Project, the Standards-Aligned Classroom Initiative and Illinois Reading First. A brief overview of each follows.

Early Intervening Services and Flexible Service Delivery (Flex) Project. Under IDEA 2004, LEAs are allowed to use up to 15% of their IDEA Part B flow-through funds to develop and implement early intervening services for K-12 students not identified as needing special education or related services but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in the general education environment. IDEA 2004 also provides that, when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, an LEA may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures.

From 1998 through 2005, ISBE supported the Flex Pilot Project to use a school-based problem-solving approach to providing early intervening services to students at risk of academic failure while monitoring student progress using response to intervention (RtI). A multi-year evaluation of the project showed promising results for students who received such services.

Standards-Aligned Classroom (SAC) Initiative. Since 2000, ISBE has provided funding for the SAC initiative to support the ISBE goal of assisting educators in applying the principles and practices of a “Standards-Led” Educational System to improve teaching

and learning. SAC is a highly effective, cost-efficient professional development initiative involving teachers and administrators, the immediate goal of which is to equip teachers with the support, resources, knowledge and skills to align classroom-level assessment and instruction with the Illinois Learning Standards. Given that research shows that the quality of instruction has an impact on student achievement, the ultimate goal of the initiative is to improve student achievement to the extent it is measured by local and state assessments that are aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards.

Illinois Reading First. According to the report of the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002), evidence suggests that 90% of children identified as having specific learning disabilities are so identified because they have not been taught to read. Given the wide body of research on reading and its impact on student performance, it is incumbent to improve reading instruction in schools. The Reading First program targets high-poverty, low-performing schools that house at least kindergarten through grade 3 and are committed to carrying out activities that will result in the following: (a) implementation of high-quality reading program based on scientifically-based reading research, (b) on-going assessment and progress monitoring, (c) clear expectations for reading achievement, (d) coherent instructional design and (e) scientifically based intervention strategies.

To enhance project reliability and to ensure that evaluation can be conducted at the school and student levels, school demonstration/data collection sites will be identified within selected school districts located in the geographic area served by each Illinois ASPIRE Center. Thus, the purpose of this RFP is to establish four to six such demonstration/data collection sites within the Southern Region. These sites will receive professional development and technical assistance services from the Center and, in turn, be required to fulfill certain requirements, as discussed below under Program Specifications.

Program Specifications

Services to Southern Region Demonstration/Data Collection Sites: Schools selected as data collection sites will receive the following services from the Illinois ASPIRE – South Center.

- A minimum of 6 training events during the 2006-2007 academic year;
- Access to financial support for participants – substitute teacher and stipend reimbursements;
- Access to financial support for a student assessment and progress monitoring database (e.g. AIMSweb or DIBELS);
- Training for district and/or cooperative coaches

For purposes of compliance with Section 511 of P.L. 101-166 (the “Stevens Amendment”), applicants are advised that approximately 73 percent of the funds for this program are derived from federal sources.

Demonstration/Data Collection Site Commitment: In order to receive the services delineated above, districts submitting an application under this RFP must agree to the requirements set forth in “Commitments Needed for Success” in Appendix B. These include certain district- and school-level administrative, financial and personnel commitments, as well as parent involvement and data collection and reporting requirements.

Proposal Requirements

Each proposal must include the information specified below in a narrative format, in the order in which it is presented. The narrative must be double-spaced using a 12-point font and should not exceed 10 pages.

1. **District and School Commitment:** Proposals must outline specific activities the district and school will carry out in order to meet the requirements specified in Appendix B. Letters of agreement/commitment from the individuals listed below must also be submitted as attachments to the proposal. Refer to Appendix B for the minimum required content of these letters.
 - a) District superintendent
 - b) Director of special education, and
 - c) Principal of the school identified as a data collection site.
2. **District and School Demographic Data:** Proposals must include an outline of the district’s and demonstration/data collection school’s demographic data. See Appendix C “Data Collection Site – District and School Demographic Data” document for the minimum required content for this section.
3. **Statement of Need and Expected Outcomes:** Proposals must describe the district’s and data collection school’s needs that will be addressed through participation in the project, including specific gaps, barriers, or weaknesses. Proposals must also identify measurable student, school and district outcomes, tied to the identified needs, that will result from participation as a demonstration/data collection site.
4. **District and School Experience with Initiatives and Programs:** Proposals must describe the district’s and data collection school’s current and/or previous level of involvement in and extent of implementation (e.g., beginning, intermediate, fully implementing) of academic and/or behavioral initiatives and programs. Include information on any reading initiatives implemented to date in the district and/or school. Specify any existing curriculum-based measures (e.g., DIBELS) or data collection tools (e.g., AIMSweb®) currently in use. In addition, discuss any involvement the district and/or school has had with the following ISBE-funded projects:
 - Flexible Service Delivery Project

- Standards-Aligned Classroom Initiative,
- Illinois Reading First,
- Project CHOICES,
- Illinois Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project,
- Emotional and Behavioral Disorders/Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (EBD/PBIS),
- Parent Mentor Project and/or Statewide Parent Technical Assistance Center, and/or
- STARNET

If the district and/or school has not been explicitly involved with the projects listed above, but has been involved with educational systems reform or any elements of the initiatives, please describe those experiences.

Proposal Review

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated according to the criteria listed below.

- 1. District and School Commitment (20 points):** The proposal demonstrates clear administrative, programmatic and fiscal commitment (including the required letters of commitment) and capacity to fulfill the demonstration/data collection site requirements as set forth in Appendix B.
- 2. District and School Demographic Data (10 points):** The proposal provides detailed and current demographic data as set forth in Appendix C, thus providing a clear picture of the district's and school's performance status on the indicators delineated therein.
- 3. Statement of Need and Expected Outcomes (15 points):** The proposal clearly defines the district's and school's needs that will be addressed through participation as a demonstration/data collection site and provides convincing evidence that without assistance from the project, these needs would not be met. The proposal also delineates projected student, school, and district outcomes that: a) are measurable, b) are clearly linked to the identified needs and c) will result in systems change and an increased capacity to support students' learning in the general education environment.
- 4. District and School Experience with Initiatives and Programs (5 points):** The proposal describes in detail the level of district and school involvement in academic and/or behavioral initiatives and programs, resulting in a comprehensive picture of the district's and school's current systemic capacity.

Awards will be considered on the basis of total points. It is important that a diversity of students and districts be represented in the operation of the demonstration/data collection sites. Therefore, after all applications have been evaluated against the criteria above and

have received a final score from 0 to 50, additional factors will be considered prior to selection of the sites. Districts and schools will be selected to establish sites that are diverse with respect to:

1. Size of districts (i.e., small, medium, and large),
2. Geographic location and applicant type (i.e., rural, urban, suburban) and
3. Student population demographics.

It is anticipated that final decisions with regard to selection of demonstration/data collection sites will be made by the Illinois ASPIRE - South leadership council no later than June 30, 2006.

Appendix A

Regional Professional Development Center Areas



APPENDIX B

Commitments Required for Success

The Illinois ASPIRE function is to provide training and technical assistance to schools in Illinois that are committed to systems change. This change will require district and building level support and leadership. District level support typically leads to greater increments of improvement in data and sustainability of the processes. The information below outlines the commitments of the Illinois - ASPIRE, the districts and the schools.

In addition to the Illinois ASPIRE - South Center services listed on page 3 of this RFP, the Center will:

1. Prepare the district and school with district- and school-level planning and overviews to staff (i.e., administrators, building staff) and parents.
2. Support integration of existing and potential district and school initiatives.
3. Provide team training.
4. Conduct on-site technical assistance.
5. Afford access to and training on data systems for decision-making and reporting.
6. Train teams/coaches in use of data tools.
7. Train and consult with school and district leaders on strategic planning based on data.
8. Provide support to ensure parent involvement in planning, training and implementation activities.

District administration will commit to:

1. Implementing research-validated practices to support student achievement and systemic changes necessary to implement the problem solving and RtI model.
2. Identifying a local coach to receive training and guide the implementation of the efforts within the demonstration school. This person may be a district or cooperative employee. Specify the percentage of time this individual will devote to this position. If this individual will be supporting multiple schools, specify the total amount of time for this role for the demonstration school.
3. Developing and implementing a plan to ensure parent involvement with implementation efforts at the district and building levels.
4. Designating funds to adequately support implementation, including partial financial support for scientifically-based progress monitoring software (e.g., AIMSweb® or DIBELS, SWIS).
5. Annually providing district report cards and local education agency (LEA) profiles.
6. Reviewing the district's special education procedural manual and take steps to ensure it reflects problem solving and RtI, and submitting the manual to an independent evaluation by highly qualified persons.
7. Developing a dissemination strategy to increase visibility.

Building administrator will commit to:

1. Implementing research-validated practices to support student achievement and systemic changes necessary to implement the problem solving and RtI model.
2. Establishing a goal in the School Improvement Plan to implement research-based reading practices and utilize data for decision-making to improve student achievement.
3. Identifying and organizing a school leadership team that is representative of the building grade level faculty and support staff and parents (consisting of individuals with collective knowledge and experience in leadership, curriculum, data-based decision-making and systems change); one member of this leadership team must be identified as the Internal Coach.
4. Being an active team participant (attend trainings and team meetings).
5. Securing agreement from the faculty to commit to training and practices and to review academic and/or discipline data for decision-making.
6. Reallocating resources based on data outcomes.
7. Providing time and resources for the coach to effectively support implementation.
8. Budgeting funds for supplies, materials, travel and substitutes for team trainings/meetings, etc.

School leadership team will commit to:

1. Implementing a team-based, problem-solving process to provide interventions for all students at the universal, targeted and intensive levels.
2. Participate in trainings and networking meetings (minimum of 6 days per school year).
3. Meet twice monthly and develop intensive teams as needed.
4. Work collaboratively with parents and ensure their involvement in planning, training and implementation activities.
5. Use and submit required data on a regular basis (satisfaction surveys and critical components checklists quarterly; AIMSweb or DIBELS, SWIS, school report card, child count data and parent surveys annually).
6. Collect and use data on at least a monthly basis for decision-making purposes.
7. Develop an annual action plan for activities based on analysis of collected data.

Appendix C

Data Collection Site District and/or School Demographic Data Outline

- Grade levels served (school site must at least house grades K-3)
- Total student enrollment
 - By grade
 - By race/ethnicity
- Number and percentage of students with disabilities
 - By grade
 - By disability type
 - By race/ethnicity
 - Analysis of disproportionality in the identification of students as eligible for special education, if available
- Educational environment/least restrictive environment data for students with disabilities
 - By age/grade
 - By disability type
 - By race/ethnicity
 - Analysis of disproportionality in placement of students, if available
- Socioeconomic makeup of student population, i.e., number and percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch
- Title I status (non-Title I, Title I targeted assistance, or Title I schoolwide)
- Illinois Reading First status (non-Reading First schools only)
- Student performance on state assessment in reading
 - For all students
 - By grade level
 - By race/ethnicity
 - For students with disabilities
 - By grade level
 - By race/ethnicity
 - By disability
 - Analysis of performance gap between students with and without disabilities
- AYP status for general population and subgroups