

	1500 Highway 36 West Roseville, MN 55113		
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Systemic Middle Level School Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model **Application for Pilot Site**

The Minnesota Department of Education is launching a two-year initiative with a variety of supports for middle level school redesign. Promoting individual middle level school improvement plans is a priority while recognizing that one redesign model does not fit all schools. We also recognize how difficult it is to redesign a complex middle level school while trying to educate a diverse student population for a growing global economy.

Aligned with the “Systemic High School Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model initiative,” which began in 2006, this new pilot program for systemic middle level school redesign will continue the laboratory approach to redesign by selecting 4 middle level schools that will serve as pilot schools to plan, implement, and evaluate innovations and improvements in targeted outcome areas identified by the research. While the Department does not have the resources to be able to offer grant funding, we are committing MDE staff support and assistance to this promising approach that focuses on systemic redesign.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) invites public middle level schools to apply to participate in “Systemic Middle Level School Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model.” The purpose of this redesign initiative is to identify middle level school partners poised for change and willing to implement substantive school improvements over a two-year period. Participant schools will gather, analyze, and utilize multiple sources of data; develop strong, effective, change-oriented leadership; and implement results-based programs and strategies that address the six core components of the initiative. A committee of middle level principals and other experts provided feedback during the creation of the Systemic Middle Level Redesign Framework. Research-based core components include:

- Rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students
- Personalized learning environment for each student
- Highly effective teachers and instruction
- Effective leadership
- Safe and healthy school environment
- Data use for improvements in a timely and ongoing manner

The goal of this pilot initiative is to create a model group of Minnesota middle level schools committed to significant school redesign resulting in increased student engagement and academic achievement. A proposal scoring rubric is attached to this document.

The initiative will cover the period from October 2010 to October 2012.

Initiative Benefits

Schools participating in the Systemic Middle Level School Redesign initiative will receive a range of benefits and services from the Department of Education and McREL (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning) through the North Central Comprehensive Center (NCCC).

- **Knowledge of Research-based Instructional and Leadership Strategies**
 Professional development sessions and on-site assistance will feature improvement strategies derived from McREL’s meta-analyses of instruction, schooling practices, and principal leadership. In the

Systemic Middle Level School Redesign initiative, these strategies will be taught and implemented in the context of both the school's own priorities and the Systemic Middle Level School Redesign initiative.

- **Regular, On-Site Support**

Throughout the initiative, McREL/NCCC and MDE staff members will work collaboratively with leadership teams from each participating middle level school to implement improvement strategies that will lead to increased student achievement.

- **Improvement Strategies that Fit Your School**

School teams will learn how to select and implement improvement strategies that have the highest likelihood of succeeding in their school. Teams will choose ways of meeting improvement goals that match the needs of their students and are compatible with existing programs.

- **Increased Leadership Capacity**

The middle level school redesign initiative will promote and develop shared leadership. Learning to take advantage of the skills and knowledge of all stakeholders is critical to school improvement and helps the school make the best possible decisions.

- **Skills for Long-Term Success**

One of the main goals of the middle level school redesign initiative is to develop schools' capacity to manage change and continue the important work of school improvement after the program has ended. Schools will learn to identify areas of concern, choose appropriate interventions, identify and manage the effects of change, and evaluate results on a long term basis.

(The middle level schools participating in the Systemic Middle Level School Redesign initiative will receive services that if purchased through McREL would be valued at approximately \$15-20,000 per year. A stipend is not included at this time.)

Overview

The Minnesota P-16 Education Partnership determined a vision for the education of Minnesota students and presented the following charge to the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Working Group: *...develop a clear and concise definition of readiness for postsecondary education and high-skill, high-wage employment in Minnesota and a plan to disseminate that definition across the state. This definition of readiness should identify the academic content knowledge and the habits of mind that students need not only to gain admission to a postsecondary institution or to secure high-skill employment, but to succeed once they are in college or on the job. Minnesota's readiness definition should be designed to provide the state's diverse students, families, educators and communities with understandable and actionable information that can be used to guide preparation for life after high school. It should promote both individual student success and systemic change across schools, districts and the state as a whole.* The Systemic Middle Level School Redesign initiative supports this work.

This initiative also aligns with the work of Minnesota's College- and Career-Ready Policy Institute (CCRPI) team that has identified policy recommendations for ensuring that all students in Minnesota graduate prepared for college and careers—a goal that is captured in the following vision statement:

In 10 years, every Minnesota high school graduate will be prepared to earn a postsecondary credential or degree leading to successful career-track employment.

The intent of this middle level school redesign initiative is to assist sites in achieving this vision by providing intensive, research-based technical assistance in the six core components of the initiative.

Selected sites will demonstrate a readiness to change and commit to on-site coaching in collaboration with McREL/NCCC and MDE. Redesign plans, aligned with current site plans, will be developed by site teams in accordance with data-determined needs in the six core components. Technical assistance to each

site will be tailored to address site-specific challenges and goals. In addition, principals will be trained with the “Success in Sight” Model, as a cohort group, to support and lead their site’s redesign plan.

All Minnesota public middle level schools are invited to apply.

Pilot Site Requirements

Selected sites will address targeted core components of the initiative over the two-year period, including the following required features: 1) an advisory structure to support personalized learning; 2) an academic/ career plan for all students; 3) a site leadership team; 4) a data-driven improvement planning process; 5) staff trained and utilizing assessment for learning; 6) school leaders monitoring and providing feedback on classroom practice; (7) administration of the EXPLORE test and use of the results, and, 8) a plan to communicate progress to the broader community.

The following specific elements are also required:

- Attendance by principals at 5 days of training at MDE during the 2010-2011 school year and the 2011-2012 school year (see timeline)
- Commitment by staff to on-site coaching and to implement improvements
- Attendance by all site team members at a data workshop
- A desire to address the six core components of the initiative
- Develop or refine current site plan to include targeted core components; over the two-year course of the initiative, sites must implement, measure, document, evaluate, and report out results of efforts to address these outcomes
- Agree to serve as a model to other Minnesota middle level schools through a public sharing of strategies and results

Required Application Components

1. Cover letter of application signed by the chairperson of the school board, superintendent, middle level school principal, teacher association president, and parent representative
2. Statement of assurances form (attached)
3. Pilot Site Requirements form (attached)
4. Interest in Addressing Core Components form (attached)
5. Statement from principal (not to exceed 600 words) that describes an experience managing or leading change

Application Submission

Sites should fax applications to 651-582-8876 or mail applications by September 15, 2010 to the following address:

Jacqui McKenzie
Center for Postsecondary Success
Minnesota Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113

Selection Process

A review team of representatives from the following organizations will be invited to consider applications and make final selections:

MDE
MASSP
MASA
MSBA

Proposed Timeline

2010-2011	
September 15, 2010	Application due at MDE
October 1, 2010	Sites selected and notified
October 27, 2010	Principal training
November 17, 2010	Data Workshop at MDE (all selected site teams)
December 2011	Principal training On-site school team support provided
February 2011	Principal training On-site school team support provided
April 2011	Principal training On-site school team support provided
Summer 2011	Principal training On-site school team support provided: Review 2010-2011 data

2011-2012	
September 2011	Principal training
October 2011	On-site school team support provided
December 2011	Principal training On-site school team support provided
February 2012	Principal training On-site school team support provided
April 2012	Principal training On-site school team support provided
Summer 2012	Principal training On-site school team support provided: Review 2011-2012 data

Scoring Rubric

Section 1-2:	Cover Letter/ Statement of Assurances <i>Form</i>	10 points
Section 3:	Pilot Site Requirements <i>Form</i>	20 points
Section 4:	Interest in Addressing Core Components <i>Form</i>	50 points
Section 5:	Principal Statement- Change <i>Narrative</i>	20 points

Total Points: 100

Statement of Assurances

The signatures below indicate agreement to the following requirements:

1. Attendance by principal at five days of training at MDE during the 2010-2011 school year and the 2011-2012 school year (see timeline)
2. Commitment by staff to on-site coaching and implementation of improvements
3. Attendance by all site team members at a data workshop
4. A desire to address the six core components of the initiative
5. Develop or refine current site plan to include targeted core components; over the two-year course of the initiative, sites must implement, measure, document, evaluate, and report out results of efforts to address these components
6. Agree to serve as a model to other Minnesota middle level schools through a public sharing of strategies and results

_____ School Board Chairperson

_____ Superintendent

_____ Middle Level School Principal

_____ Teacher Association President

_____ Parent Representative

Site: _____

Section 3: Pilot Site Requirements

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Currently in place:</i>	<i>If not in place, willingness to implement:</i>	<i>If feature is in place at your site, provide brief description:</i>
An advisory structure to support personalized learning	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	
An academic/ career/ graduation plan for all students	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	
A site leadership team	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	
A data-driven improvement planning process	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	
Staff trained and utilizing assessment for learning	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	
School leaders monitoring & providing feedback on classroom practice	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	
Administration of EXPLORE test and use of the results	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	
A plan to communicate progress to the broader community	Yes___ No___	Yes___ No___	

Site: _____

Section 4: Interest in Addressing Core Components of MN Systemic Middle Level Redesign

Component	Current Data/ evidence <i>(where are we now)</i>	Explanation of Importance to Site
1. Rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students		
2. Personalized learning environment for each student		
3. Highly effective teachers and instruction		
4. Effective leadership		
5. Safe and healthy school environment		
6. Data use for improvements in a timely and ongoing manner		