Merrillville High School

Creating a Community of Life-long Learners

"There is abundant research linking higher levels of student achievement to educators who work in the collaborative culture of a professional learning community."

-Rick DuFour, 2011

SLC Grant

The U. S. Department of Education's Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) program awards grants to local educational agencies to support the implementation of SLC's and activities to improve student academic achievement in large public high schools. SLC's include structures such as freshman academies, multi-grade academies organized around career interests or other themes, "houses" in which small groups of students remain together throughout high school, and schools within-a school, as well as personalized strategies for student success such as student advisors and mentors.

The School City of Hammond, Merrillville School Corporation, and Tri-Creek School Corporation created the *Lakeshore High School Project* to implement smaller learning communities (SLC's) within their respective high schools. This consortium was awarded $2,746,206 by the U. S. Department of Education in 2007. The project is coordinated through the *Lakeshore Alliance for Student Success, Inc. (LASS)*, an educational non-profit organization comprised of member school corporations and partner universities from Lake, LaPorte and Porter counties from northwest Indiana.

Year 4 of SLC's

Over the past four years, the administration and teaching staffs of the four high schools (Hammond, Morton, Merrillville, and Lowell) have developed and implemented a series of unique academy structures to meet the needs of their students in grades 9-12. The school academies are headed by common groups of teachers who are responsible for working together to monitor student progress and respond to student needs.

Career academy themes vary across the schools and include math and science, performing arts, technology, and health sciences. Each high school also is implementing programs designed to prepare all students for postsecondary education and careers through participation in college credit and advanced placement courses, with a specific focus on addressing the needs of low-income students and their families.

Some of the performance measures unique to Merrillville High School, as well as shared performance indicators for the four high schools, include:
- Local and common assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics
- Other standardized student measures of mathematics and ELA achievement
- Course credits earned towards graduation
- ACT WorkKeys data
- College credits earned while in high school
- Technology used in teaching and learning
- Career and technical education data
- Graduates pursuing postsecondary education and training
- Student and staff survey data
- Curricular alignment with power standards
- Model lessons
- Shared instructional calendars
- Development and use of common assessments
- Shared professional development activities for teachers and staff

This document is an executive summary of the most recent student performance data available from the Indiana Department of Education documented in the year 4 annual SLC school and external evaluation reports (2011-2012).

Accomplishments

Merrillville High School documented the following accomplishments in Year 4 of the grant, 2011-2012:

Objective #1
Increase the number of graduates entering post-secondary education to graduation rate to 90%+ within 5 years
- Maintained the attendance rate at 96.2%
- Maintained the dropout rate at less than 1% of student enrollment
- Academic Honors diplomas conferred increased by 6% to 23%
- 72% of the Class of 2012 are said to be pursuing post secondary education
- 50 students participated in Adult Education classes, with 12 being awarded diplomas

Objective #2
Student Achievement: Literacy (reading, writing, speaking)
- 10th grade cohort students improved by 2.1% with 70.4% meeting the end-of-course state standards in English in 2011-2012,
- Students earned 3,851 credits in English in the past school year,
- RTI is utilized to identify students in need of intervention or credit recovery
- Credit recovery in place for all Freshman and Sophomore Academy students
- 349 students enrolled in the alternative education A+ program
- 139 students participated in AP English courses similar to prior years
- 62 of 139 students or 45% of students enrolled in AP English courses earned college credit
- 308 students were enrolled in Honors English courses
- Formative assessments in writing were implemented for students of the English 10 team
- All students continued to take the SRI formative assessment in reading
- Advanced and proficient readers increased from fall, 2011 to spring, 2012 by 11% as measured by SRI
- Students scoring Basic and Below decreased by 9% from fall, 2010 to fall, 2011 as measured by SRI
- About 530 sophomores and 560 juniors took the PSAT exam
- Online support continued for students through the Expert 21 career-based literacy program
- Fast ForWord program continues to aid student achievement in English

Objective #3
Student Achievement: Mathematics
- 10th grade cohort students maintained the 88% benchmark previously achieved in 2011 on the math end-of-course exam

- 3,201 math credits were earned by students in 2011-2012
- 54 students enrolled in AP math courses
- 11 of 54 or 20% of students enrolled in AP math course earned college credit
- 188 students enrolled in math honors courses, with 84 eighth graders also participating in honors math
- students taking honors math continued to increase in 2011-2012 over prior years
- math placement tests in place as part of the 9th grade formative assessment program
- Algebra teachers continued to adjust and modify curricula based upon student needs and best practices
- Middle school students now take Algebra in 7th or 8th grade

Objective #4
Student Achievement: Technology & 21st Century Literacy
- Online credit recovery program used by students resulted in a decrease of students enrolled in alternative education
- More students took the SAT exam in 2011-2012 than in previous years
- 1,759 college credits were earned in 2011-2012 by Merrillville High School students
- 80% of students surveyed said to have technology at home
- Technology in use by students includes: Fast ForWord, on-line formative assessments, graphing calculators, website development in business classes, clickers to participate in on-line quizzes, PowerPoint presentations, YouTube videos, Pirate News Network (PNN) television programming, e-learning, language learning modules, and Moodle to track class assignments and homework.
- 268 of 545 students or 49% of the Class of 2012 enrolled in a 4-year college/university program
- 109 of 545 students or 20% of the Class of 2012 enrolled in a 2-year college or trade/vocational program
- 17 of 545 students or 3% of the Class of 2012 enrolled in the military
- In all, 72% of the Class of 2012 were pursuing post-secondary education

Objective #5
Student Disposition (teamwork; goal setting, etc).
- Each student has a 4-year plan completed with a counselor
- Incoming freshmen complete career awareness activities, such as COIN
- Counselors meet with students annually to monitor student progress and goal attainment
- Behavior Matrix established centered on safety, respect and student responsibilities

- 85 upperclassmen continued to mentor approximately 800 freshman students in 2011-2012
- Student mentors were trained at St. Joseph College by Merrillville staff
- Financial resources still noted as an impediment to college admissions

Objective #6
Career Academies
- 170 students enrolled in a career exploration course in 2011-2012
- 70 students attended the Gary Area Career Center
- Students have the options to attend one or two-year programs at Gary Area Career Center
- Programming at Gary Area Career Center includes CAD, culinary arts, Auto tech, radio & TV broadcasting, early childhood, and welding
- 602 freshmen completed their 4-year plans of study
- all freshmen and sophomores participated in Career Day activities
- Expert 21 support program in place for on-line access to career exploration
- Middle school students participated in the Chamber of Commerce's Reality Store career exploration program
- 5 students participated in an internship program
- Juniors took the WorkKeys exam, with 84% or 464 of 552 students earning a bronze or better certificate
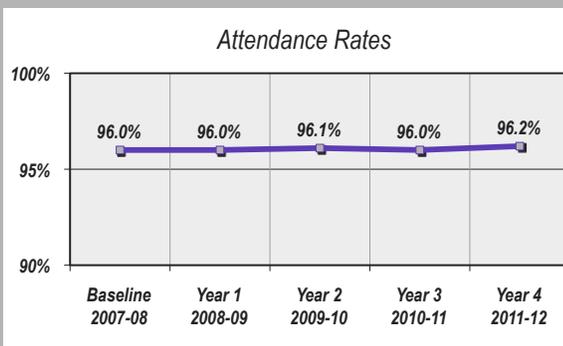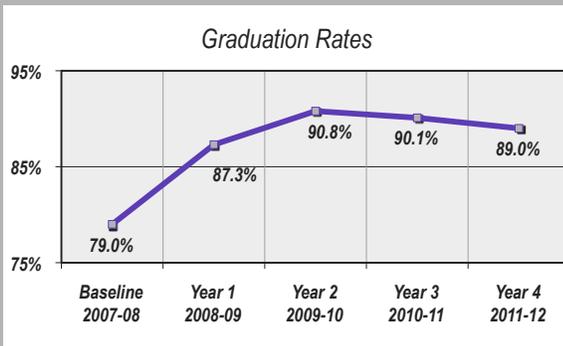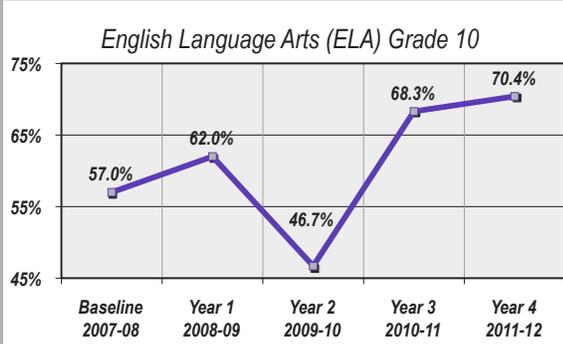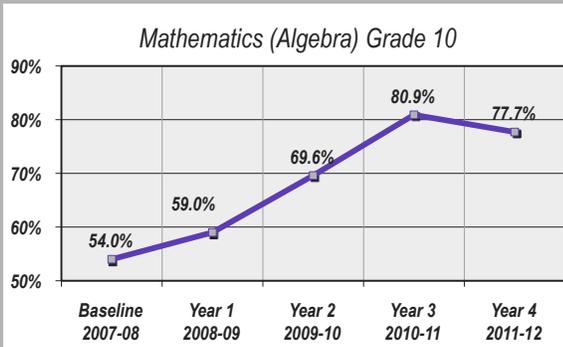- Middle school students visit the high school to explore options in information technology

Objective #7
Implementation Strategies: Project Management & Professional Development
- Common planning time for all teachers of freshmen students
- Biology teachers have constructed a common instructional map
- Completed instructional map and common assessments for Spanish I
- All teachers trained in higher order and critical thinking skills through the Quadrant D lesson plan process
- English 9 and 10 have implemented on-line formative assessments
- Merrillville High School set annual performance goals in the areas of improving student reading levels, attendance, ECA passage rates, and pervasiveness of SLC initiatives
- Early release days continue for teachers to plan instruction
- New teacher week-long training session prior to the start of the school year, as well as periodic professional development opportunities throughout the school year
- The Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) monitors student and staff progress in meeting individual, departmental and school goals

Q&A

Shared Performance Indicators

Mathematics (Algebra) Grade 10

	Baseline 2007-08	Year 1 2008-09	Year 2 2009-10	Year 3 2010-11	Year 4 2011-12
	54.0%	59.0%	69.6%	80.9%	77.7%

English Language Arts (ELA) Grade 10

	Baseline 2007-08	Year 1 2008-09	Year 2 2009-10	Year 3 2010-11	Year 4 2011-12
	57.0%	62.0%	46.7%	68.3%	70.4%

Graduation Rates

	Baseline 2007-08	Year 1 2008-09	Year 2 2009-10	Year 3 2010-11	Year 4 2011-12
	79.0%	87.3%	90.8%	90.1%	89.0%

Attendance Rates

	Baseline 2007-08	Year 1 2008-09	Year 2 2009-10	Year 3 2010-11	Year 4 2011-12
	96.0%	96.0%	96.1%	96.0%	96.2%

How did Merrillville High School do on the common high school performance indicators reported by the Indiana Department of Education for 2011-2012, the 4th year of the SLC program?

Mathematics & Language Arts

- As shown in the chart on the left, 77.7% of the 10th grade cohort passed the end-of-course assessment (ECA) in mathematics in Year 4 (2011-2012) as compared to 69.4% for the state. This was a slight decrease of 3.2% from Year 3 (2010-2011), but still a significant overall gain of 23.7% from the baseline year (2007-2008).
- 70.4% of the 10th grade cohort passed the end of course assessment (ECA) in English Language Arts (ELA) standard in Year 4 (2011-2012) compared to 77% for the state. This was an increase of 2.1% over the previous year, and an overall increase of 13.4% since the baseline year of 2007-2008.
- 65.6% of the 10th grade cohort passed both the end of course assessment (ECA) standards in mathematics and Language Arts as compared to 70.6% for the state. This was similar to the previous year performance of 66.8%, and an overall increase of 21.8% since the baseline year performance of 45% achieved in 2007-2008.
- The rate for Merrillville graduates passing Indiana's end of course assessment was 91.5% in Year 4 (2011-2012), similar to the 92% recorded in the baseline year of 2007-2008
- 28% of the students passed the Advanced Placement (AP) tests compared to 44.6% for the state, with 26% of the graduates taking an AP exam in Year 4 (2011-2012)
- The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) average score was 871 for this high school compared to 997 for the state. This is consistent with data from previous years
- The actual number of 12th graders taking the SAT increased to 69.2%, an increase of 20.2% since the baseline year of 2007-2008

Graduation & Attendance Rates

- The graduation rate of 89.0% in Year 4 (2011-2012) was an increase of 10.0% since the baseline year of 2007-2008
- The attendance rate of 96.2% in Year 4 (2011-2012) was similar to data from previous years
- 19% of the graduating students earned Academic Honors diplomas in Year 4 (2011-2012)
- 69% of the graduates earned Core 40 diplomas
- 82% of graduates were said to be pursuing college education
- No 9th grade students were retained in 2011-2012, similar to baseline year data
- 22 students were reported as dropping out of school in Year 4 (2011-2012), similar to the Year 3 (2010-2011) number of 12
- 773 student suspensions occurred while
- 13 students were expelled in Year 4 (2011-2012)

Findings

In year 4 of the grant, 2011-2012, statistical evidence confirmed by multiple data sources verified the following claim statements:

- Progress has been made in 100%, or 7 of 7 of the shared performance objectives for the four SLC high schools,
- Complete implementation has occurred in 13 of 15 or 87% local performance indicator categories for the respective high schools, and
- The remaining 13% or 2 of 15 local performance indicator categories are currently in progress of being implemented in the schools.
- Exemplary sustained efforts and fidelity to implementation was noted by the Merrillville High School staff in continuing the SLC program strategies for year 4 of the grant.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided by the independent external evaluator for consideration by the leaders and staff of the Lakeshore High School Project SLC program grant:

1. Faculty Use of Data

In year 5 of the grant, a concerted effort is needed in having teachers utilize available and existing data to make informed decisions about teaching and learning on a regular basis to improve student performance.

2. Local Assessment in Language Arts & Mathematics

Additional work is needed in aligning and refining curricula to meet state standards of learning, including the development and implementation of local/common assessments to ensure postsecondary success by graduates.

3. Tracking of College Prep and Career Readiness Data

Continued efforts are needed to collect data that identifies college credits earned by students while in high school as well as post-graduate enrollment in 2-year college, 4-year university, military and technical training programs.

4. Administrative Leadership

Continued exemplary leadership, ownership and involvement by the administrators of the four high schools are necessary to sustain the level of success in achieving the SLC program objectives, and to further enhance student performance. Continued allocation of human, time and financial resources must be coordinated at the district-consortium, district and school levels to support goal attainment and student achievement targets.

Contact Information

U. S. Department of Education
Smaller Learning Communities
High School Program
(202) 205-1909
smallerlearningcommunities@ed.gov
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/slcp/index.html

MERRILLVILLE
MERRILLVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION
We Strive for Excellence

Merrillville Community Schools
Administrative Services Center
6701 Delaware Street, Merrillville, IN 46410
Phone: 219.650.5300 | Fax: 219.650.5320
http://merrillville.schoolwires.net/site/default.aspx?PageID=1

Mark B. Sperling, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
sperling@mvsc.k12.in.us

Mike Krutz, Principal, Merrillville High School
mkrutz@mvsc.k12.in.us

Lorri Covaciu, Director, Secondary Curriculum & Instruction
lcovaciu@mvsc.k12.in.us

Edward Schoenfelt, Executive Director
Lakeshore Alliance For Student Success Inc.
(219) 309-6120
schoenfelteddeb@yahoo.com
http://www.mvsc.k12.in.us/lass/

Dennis W. Rudy, Ph. D.
Lakehouse Evaluation, Inc.
New Buffalo, MI
(269) 208-5757
drudy@lakehouse.org
www.lakehouse.org