

Southern Local Junior/Senior High School

38095 State Route 39

Salineville, OH 43945

Principal: Dallas Saunders

Highlights

- In 2009, Southern Local Junior/Senior High School was identified as one of Ohio’s persistently lowest-achieving schools and began to implement the Ohio Improvement Process. In July 2011, the school received a School Improvement Grant (SIG).
- The school developed Teacher-Based Teams and a Building Leadership Team to engage teachers in the turnaround process. The teams began to systematically collect and analyze data to strengthen teaching and learning.
- The principal and associate principal began to conduct instructional walkthroughs known as Rounds. Through these walkthroughs, coupled with data analyses, the administrators and staff selected areas for professional development.
- The school expanded its use of technology, provided a digital period for remediation, and increased opportunities for taking courses through community college and university partnerships.
- As a result, after the 2012–13 school year, the school’s report-card rating was upgraded to *Continuous Improvement*.
- The 2013–14 school year is the final year for the SIG. The district and school will continue with the teams and Rounds to further strengthen teaching and learning.

Introduction

The Southern Local School District is a rural district encompassing an agricultural area on the eastern border of Ohio. It is a one-building district with an elementary and junior/senior high school in different wings. In 2009, Southern Local Junior/Senior High School was identified as one of Ohio’s persistently lowest-achieving schools, based on low graduation rates and low passage rates on Ohio’s Graduation Tests (OGTs). As a result, Southern Local began to implement the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP). It received support for this effort via a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in July 2011.

- ◆ Grades 7–12
- ◆ 457 Students
- ◆ 97% White
- ◆ 3% Other
- ◆ 54% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- ◆ 19% Special Education
- ◆ Schoolwide Title I

Consequently, the district underwent a fundamental shift in its perspective on education and focused on making sure students learned the standards by emphasizing learning targets and helping students understand what they needed to learn and why it was important. The district also wanted to expand opportunities for students and show them options after graduation beyond the agricultural heritage of the community. In addition, through SIG, the school refined its use of the OIP by means of vertical alignment of the District Leadership Team (DLT), the Building Leadership Team (BLT), and Teacher-Based Teams (TBTs) and strong instructional leadership.

Leadership Teams

In June 2011, the State Support Team (SST) worked with district and school leadership to develop an action plan for vertical alignment of leadership teams. This plan includes quarterly DLT meetings, monthly BLT meetings, and monthly department or TBT meetings. The DLT includes the superintendent, the elementary and secondary building administrators, and the district federal programs coordinator. The BLT comprises the facilitators from each TBT, building administrators, and the district federal programs coordinator. The social studies facilitator leads the BLT. The TBTs are subject-based teams led by a facilitator (e.g., a department chair). **This team structure provides teachers with opportunities to participate in decision making and the allocation of resources.**

The TBTs and BLTs provide a systematic process to collect and analyze data, and create action plans based on the data. The TBT facilitators collect individual student data from formative, benchmark, and teacher-developed assessments. Similarly, the BLTs gather and examine data at the subject level. At the BLT meetings, each facilitator presents data specifically indicating the percentage of students on the pathway to proficiency for the OGTs for high school and the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAAs) for grades 7 and 8. As a team, facilitators then discuss strengths, weaknesses, and specific strategies for implementation. They also discuss adult practices to ensure that strategies and programs are implemented consistently and uniformly across the school.

The BLT and TBTs use the OIP 5-Step Process:

- Step 1—Collect and chart adult implementation and student performance data
- Step 2—Analyze adult implementation and student performance relative to the data
- Step 3—Review and/or refine the building-focused action steps relative to the data and TBT needs
- Step 4—Establish buildingwide implementation and monitoring actions for Step 3
- Step 5—Define adult and student data for review at next meeting

Focus on Instruction

With the implementation of the Transformation Turnaround Model through the SIG, the principal became more deeply aware of his importance as an instructional leader. He strongly emphasized instructional improvement. With the associate principal, he began daily instructional Rounds (also referred to as classroom walkthroughs) to ensure that instructional strategies were being used with fidelity. Each week they focused on a particular strategy or instructional approach (e.g., the co-teaching model or student objectives). They then used data to determine if the strategy was working and what, if anything, needed to be changed.

As part of the increased focus on instruction, teachers and the principal participated in targeted professional development opportunities. To build staff cohesiveness, all teachers participated in ongoing professional development centered on concepts from the book *Transforming School Culture* by Anthony Muhammad. In addition, the principal participated in the Principals' Leadership Academy provided by the Ohio Department of Education in collaboration with The Ohio State University. Finally, the state transformation specialist provided ongoing mentorship for the principal throughout its grant period.

The SIG also made it possible for the school to expand its use of technology. The district provided teachers with iPads and interactive whiteboards. Students began to use smartphones to assist in their classwork. Furthermore, the school designated a digital period that could be used for online learning options, such as credit recovery, electives, college courses for juniors and seniors, and intervention support.

Collaboration With External Partners

The school has collaborated with universities and regional education service centers (ESCs) for a range of programs and opportunities. Undergraduate psychology and education students from Kent State University and Bowling Green University teach a seventh-grade summer camp curriculum and volunteer as literacy mentors for middle schoolers as part of Southern Local's Project MORE. Eastern Gateway Community College gives high school students online course opportunities. The Virtual Learning Academy through Jefferson County ESC provides an online academy for students who are homebound for medical or disciplinary reasons, are taking advantage of postsecondary or dual credits, and/or are enrolled in seniors-to-sophomores programs.

The Columbiana County ESC supplies the school with consultants, student behavior supervisors and coaches, intervention support personnel, and intervention teachers. This ESC also provides planning and implementation of professional development, teacher mentoring programs, and substitute training. The students who are interested in a technical career have the opportunity to attend the Columbiana Career and Technical Center and complete high-school credit while earning a certificate in a trade.

Evidence of Success

Since the implementation of the OIP, the Ohio report-card rating increased to *Continuous Improvement* with 11 of 17 indicators and a Performance Indexⁱ of 94.9. According to the principal, as a result of using Accelerated Reader and Math as common formative assessments, student achievement in those areas improved. In spring 2013, after using the Accelerated Reader and Math programs for two years, the average scaled score in Reading was 905, with average grade equivalent of 8.3. In Math, the average grade equivalent was 11.3; the average scaled score was 834 for students in grades 7–12.

ⁱ This calculation measures student performance on the Ohio Achievement Assessments and Ohio Graduate Tests at grade levels 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 (OGT). This ranking helps determine possible state interventions, which include a portion of the Title I funding directed to interventions and implementation of the OIP.