

Testing Positive

MIDDLE START GRANTEE SCHOOLS IN THE DELTA OUTPACE THE STATE'S ACHIEVEMENT AVERAGES IN EVERY MEASURE

Poverty, race, ethnicity and immigration status are not in themselves determinative of student achievement.

[All] at-risk children are capable of seizing the opportunity for a sound basic education if they are given sufficient resources.

Justice Leland DeGrasse
Supreme Court of the State of New York

Justice DeGrasse's statements are as accurate for the Mid South as they were for New York when the progress of Mid South Middle Start schools is examined over the last four years. By providing the students and teachers the resources they needed to stimulate learning and master skills, academic achievement has been on the rise in all of the Middle Start schools in our region. In fact, the latest study of four years of statewide high-stakes testing data shows Middle Start school results in all three states surpassed the state averages across the board.

In February, Mid South Middle Start received the achievement data analysis for Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi's statewide assess-

ment testing from 2001 through 2004. The Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois in Champaign – an independent evaluator – conducted the scientific-based analysis of the results from the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP); the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP 21); and the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT). Although each state's assessment program highlights different middle-grade levels, they report on comparable subject areas. The analysis compared student achievement in the Mid South Middle Start schools with outcomes for the state's averages and also with a comparison group of similar schools.

The study shows that Mid South Middle Start students, over a four-year period, **outperformed their peers in the state** and in comparison groups of schools in every measure of the assessment tests. Middle Start grant schools showed the largest achievement gains in reading, language, and math despite having a higher percentage of free or reduced price meal students than the state averages of middle-grade schools. Shown over a four-year period, Middle Start dem-

onstrates its effectiveness in raising the academic achievement levels of high-poverty middle-grades schools. George Penick, president of the Foundation for the Mid South, was not surprised by the results. "The most powerful thing to me about Middle Start is that, although it was only active in the poorest schools in the poorest parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, the achievement gains in Middle Start schools surpassed not only the control group of schools but the state averages as well."

"The tremendous academic success of the Middle Start grantee schools is evidence of the effectiveness of the school reform model," says Mid South Middle Start project director, Barbara Hunter-Cox. "We know how to support middle-grade schools as they make the changes that assure academic achievement will increase, but now we must find a way to make more schools involved."

Congratulations to the Mid South Middle Start grantee schools and their students for a job well done! For more information on the test results please refer to the FMS website <www.fndmidsouth.org>.

DOLLARS AND SENSE: A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY IN MIDDLE START SCHOOLS!

Mid South Middle Start has awarded **\$1,255,000 in grant funds** and approximately **\$1,030,000 in school-based technical assistance services** to **27 grantee schools in the Delta**. Serving some of the poorest schools in the region, these funds were directly tied to the implementation of each school's improvement plan which focused on the improving both curriculum and instruction.

Mid South Middle Start has also provided grantee schools with fiscal resources totaling **\$286,174.59 to provide direct professional development** to over **542 teachers**. These were long-term training opportunities designed to improve instruction resulting in an increase in academic achievement of the middle grades students.

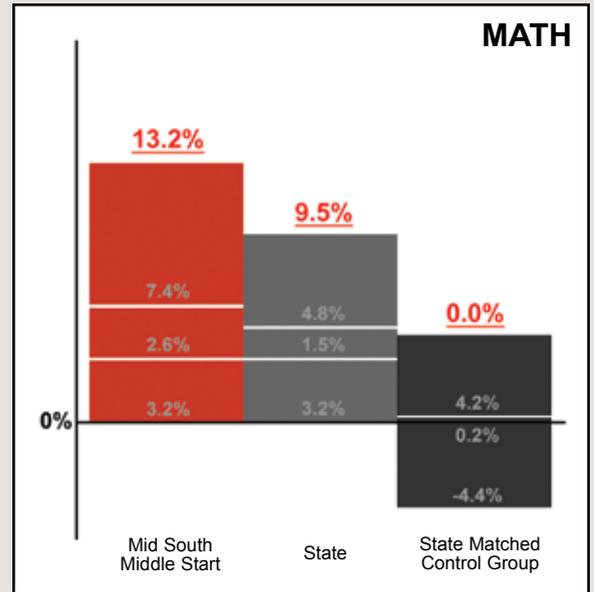
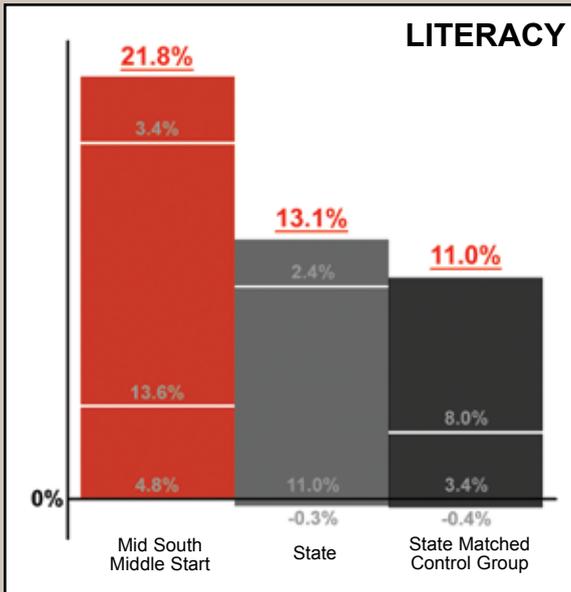
With direct services to teachers, Mid South Middle Start improved the educational opportunities for over **10,225 Delta students** of which approximately **83% participated in their school's free or reduced lunch program**.

% FREE / REDUCED LUNCH	ARKANSAS	LOUISIANA	MISSISSIPPI
STATEWIDE	52%	59%	67%
MATCHED CONTROL GROUP	72%	73%	88%
MID SOUTH MIDDLE START	74%	73%	89%

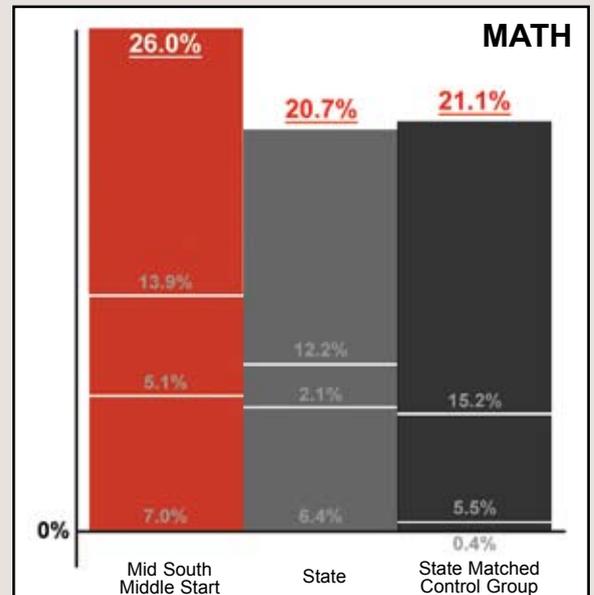
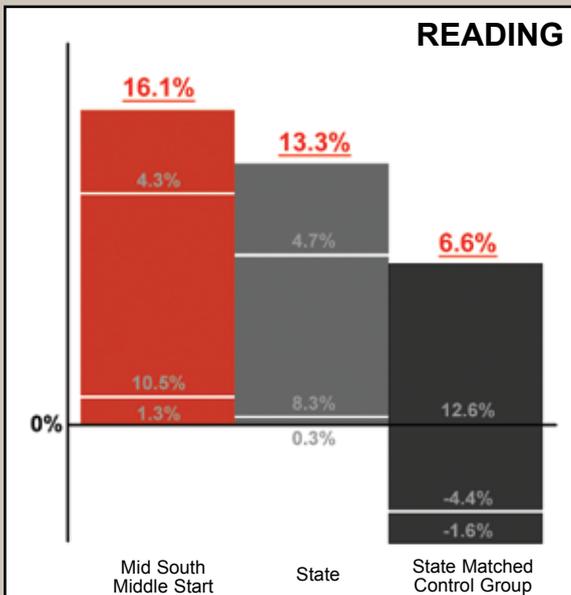
ACHIEVEMENT ANALYSIS FOR STATEWIDE TESTING FROM 2001 - 2004

PERCENTAGE GAIN OVER FOUR YEARS FOR 8TH GRADE STUDENTS IN MIDDLE START SCHOOLS, SCHOOLS STATEWIDE, AND STATEWIDE COMPARISON GROUPS.

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While Louisiana results show Mid South Middle Start students outperformed their peers in all measures, the state changed its test between 2001 and 2004 and an accurate assessment based over a four-year period could not be graphed.