

Wisconsin Special Education  
State Improvement Grant (SIG)

SIG Evaluation: Stage I Report  
Executive Summary

Prepared by

Center on Education and Work  
James R. Frasier, Ph.D.

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## Overview

The Wisconsin Special Education State Improvement Grant (SIG) is a five-year \$6.5 million award from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The Wisconsin SIG provides the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) with funding to reform and to improve systems that provide professional development, technical assistance, and dissemination of knowledge for children and youth with disabilities. Wisconsin's SIG is a collaborative effort of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), parents, schools and community members, as well as institutes of higher education, Wisconsin Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA's) and other agencies to improve the outcomes and opportunities for children with disabilities from birth to age 21. Specific SIG projects are targeted to improve results for children with disabilities in three areas: Early Childhood (Birth to 5), Early On-Going Collaboration and Assistance (EOCA) ages K-12, and Effective Transition Activities to Post Secondary Education and Employment (ages 14-21). Of particular note, parents are a valued work-partner within and across all three areas of Wisconsin's SIG projects.

The SIG has three goals. These goals are congruent with and supportive of the Wisconsin State Improvement Plan for Special Education.

*Goal I.* Conduct professional development and technical assistance for all stakeholders to increase and enhance inclusive early learning environments, improve student outcomes, and enable successful transitions of students with disabilities from school to post-school life.

*Goal II.* Develop a statewide interagency service system that supports children with disabilities, birth-to-21, by forming critical collaborative partnerships.

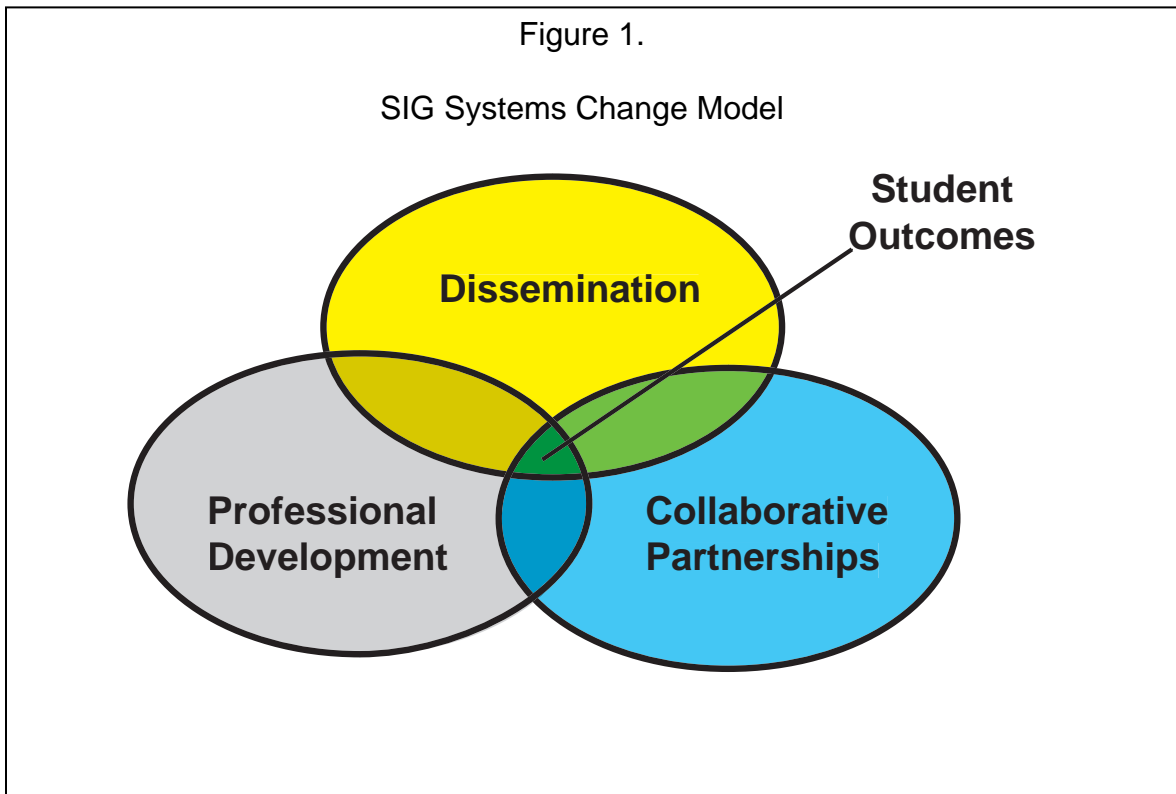
*Goal III.* Implement a coordinated state dissemination system that provides educators, parents, collaborative partners, and other stakeholders with timely information and training on best practices and research-based strategies to improve teaching, learning, and results for children and youth with disabilities.

Among the US Office of Special Education Program's specifications for awarding SIGs is the "call for collaboration of multiple individuals, agencies, and institutions with a shared commitment to systemic reform. According to the 1997 Amendments to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), certain contractual partnerships are required--specifically, those with Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and with state agencies other than the State Education Agency (SEA)".<sup>1</sup> In order to reform and improve its systems for providing educational, early intervention, and transitional services, the Wisconsin DPI is implementing the Wisconsin SIG Systems Change Model (shown in Figure 1 on the next page) to influence how its partners (i.e., contractors) work together throughout the 5 years of SIG funding. First, the Wisconsin SIG proposes to deliver research-based reform activities through uniquely designed professional development, collaborative partnerships that build seamless coordination of birth to 21 services, and dissemination systems that ensure the products and research-based practices continue to be promoted and used beyond the grant period. Second, the Wisconsin SIG System Change Model acknowledges that technical assistance (professional development and training, and dissemination projects) are integral components of work. The third component of the systems change model seeks to improve how SIG technical assistance and dissemination projects are conducted by requiring SIG partners to

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluation of State Program Improvement Grant (SIG) Program: Year 3. Prince, M., Tanner, A., Bryant, K., and Fiore, T. August 2003. Report prepared by WESTAT under Grant #H329A000003 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.

“collaborate” with other SIG partners. This emphasis on collaboration is a dramatic change from how work has been performed by Wisconsin’s DPI consultants, as well as the individuals who are responsible for SIG related work contacts. That is, the emphasis is on changing how work has traditionally been performed using *individual* project work groups to work being performed using *collaborative* project work groups.



During the first two years, 23 SIG projects were contracted with selected individuals, organizations, and institutions of higher education throughout Wisconsin. Responsibility for managing each cluster of projects is the responsibility of three Special Education Consultants who form the Wisconsin SIG management Team: 1) the DPI Special Education Early Childhood (Birth to 5) Consultant, 2) Early On-Going Collaboration and Assistance (EOCA)

Consultant, and 3) the Effective Transition Activities to Post Secondary Education and Employment Consultant.

The Wisconsin SIG is a complex and multi-faceted undertaking that encompasses twenty-three interdependent --- yet independent --- SIG projects. Each project is led by an individual(s) retained with a separately negotiated work contract. Actual project-related work is conducted in geographically distributed locations within Wisconsin. Work contexts vary from individual contractor homes in small rural towns to the offices of a parents' organization within the inner city of Milwaukee.

A major challenge of the evaluation is to develop a strategy for periodically gathering and analyzing data to provide information about each project's performance and progress towards achieving intended SIG outcomes. The 23 SIG projects by project cluster and by project title are listed on the next page.

### **Purpose of Evaluation**

The Center on Education and Work (CEW) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been contracted to provide a 5-year evaluation of Wisconsin's SIG. The evaluation has two purposes:

- To provide the Wisconsin State Director of Special Education and the SIG Management Team Leader with information that will inform their decisions regarding on-going implementation of the SIG over five years.
- To provide Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction information to determine the power of Wisconsin's SIG Systems Change Model to positively impact work productivity and desired outcomes.

## List of 2002 – 2004 SIG Projects

### Early Childhood Projects:

1. Pre-Service Training Programs
2. Centralized Professional Development System
3. Parent Leadership through PALS and Pre-Service Partnerships
4. Parent Education
5. Early Childhood Program Support
6. Birth to 3 Transition Project
7. Expansion of LRE Planning and Implementation Mini-Grants
8. Expansion of Pre-School Options Project
9. Expansion of Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI)

### EOCA Projects

10. Develop and administer needs assessment survey
11. Training for Historically underserved families/parents
12. EOCA Professional Development and Tool Assistance Kit
13. Develop research-based Teaching Intervention Toolkits
14. Develop “Use of Data in EOCA” Training Kit
15. Conduct EOCA Action Research Training
16. Develop guide for involving parents in EOCA

### Transition Projects

17. Parents in Partnership Training
18. Development of Opening Doors To Transition Guides
  - >Introductory Handbook
  - >Transition and the IEP
  - >Transition and Community Services
19. Opening Doors to Self-Determination and Self-Adequacy
20. Expand Capacity of Wisconsin Technical College System Transition Specialists
21. Expand Capacity of Wisconsin Secondary Transition Initiative
22. Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy
23. Training Employers to Increase Employment of Graduates with Disabilities

## **Stage One SIG Evaluation**

The focus of Stage One SIG implementation spans the first two years of the Wisconsin SIG. During these first two years, SIG Team Managers have focused on managing work under contract to their partners (consultants, consulting firms, institutions of higher), refining and aligning individual SIG work products to maintain consistency of message, negotiating unexpected changes in personnel, and recruiting and hiring new personnel to replace those who left for another job or needed to be replaced for inadequate performance. SIG Management Team work also focused on clarifying and/or redefining intentions about what work should be accomplished as originally delineated in the SIG proposal. In addition, the four SIG “Celebrations” facilitated by the SIG Management Team Leader engaged 60+ SIG partners and provided opportunities and forums for key stakeholders and project contractors to discuss and share promising practices of collaboration within the three SIG work clusters: Early Childhood, EOCA, and Transition.

### **Identifying Vital Signs**

In the second and third quarter of Project Year 1, the evaluator in consultation with each member of the SIG Management Team (Early Childhood, EOCA, and Transition) and the SIG Management Team Leader formatively identified vital signs. Working in one-on-one meetings with each of the SIG Management Team members, project-by-project the evaluator asked four questions about each of their respective SIG projects (see page 3 for a list of the SIG projects):

- Who are the stakeholders that will be impacted by this project?
- How will the stakeholders know you are working on this project?

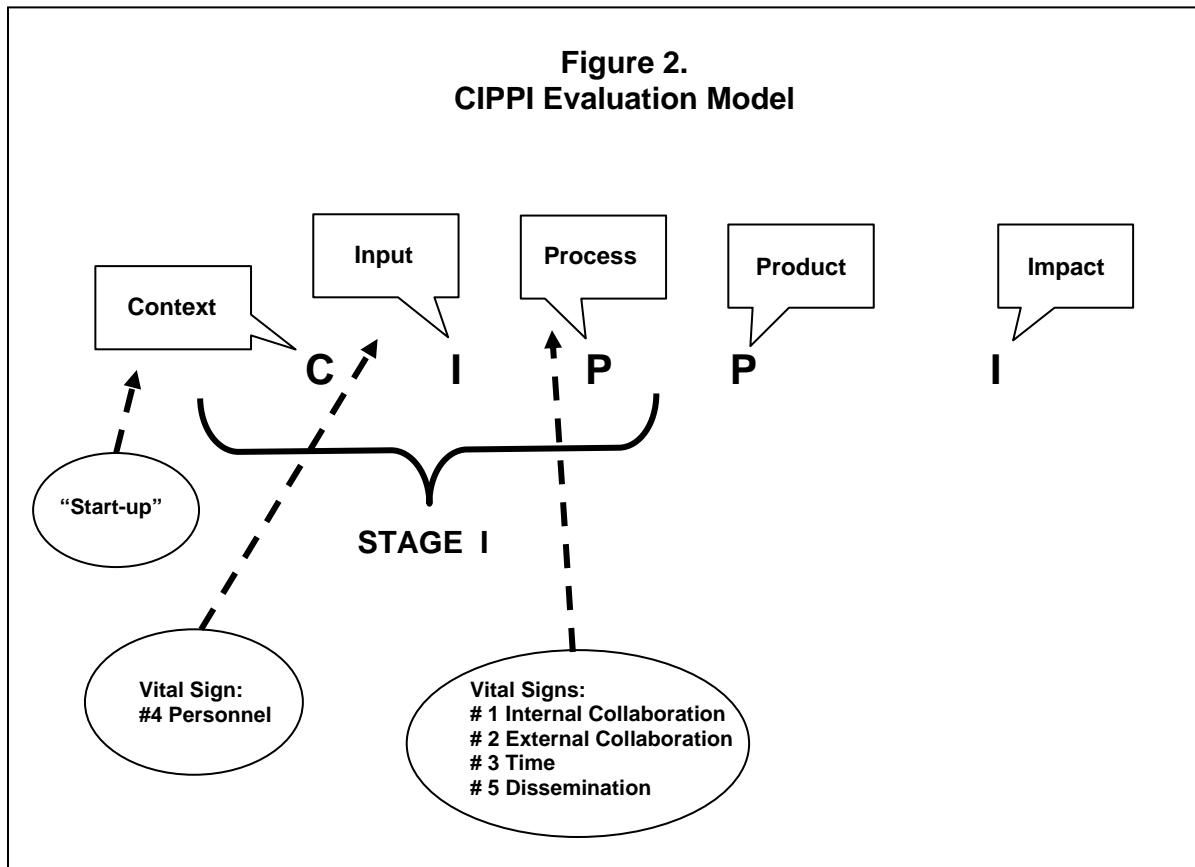
- How will you know whether the SIG partner is progressing in work to achieve completion of this project?
- What are the potential points of failure in achieving completion of this project?

After all SIG projects had been discussed using the above four questions, the evaluator analyzed the responses and prepared a set of 7 Vital Signs (graphically shown in Figure 2). After presentation and discussion with the SIG Management Team and the SIG Management Team Leader, agreement was reached on five vital signs for surfacing data relevant to understanding whether what was *intended* to be accomplished was *actually* accomplished during the “start-up” Stage of the SIG life cycle (see Figure 2, page 7). The five vital signs focus on the gathering of data related to the first “I” and the first “P” of the CIPPI model. Alignment of the vital signs with the CIPPI model and Stage I of the SIG life cycle is graphically shown in Figure 2 on the next page.

### **Construction of the Vital Sign Survey**

To minimize the intrusiveness of data collection activity and minimize the time required by SIG Project Leaders to provide information for purposes of the evaluation, the evaluator proposed a mail survey for each of the 23 projects. Working one-on-one with each member of the SIG Management Team to determine what data sources (e.g., parents, collaborating partners, dissemination records, etc.) would be requested to provide information, the evaluator created a survey template that allowed for flexibility and customization of individual surveys for each of the 23 SIG projects. Use of the template provided a structured format for collecting information and data analyses relevant to each vital sign, within each SIG project cluster, and across all 23 projects. Each survey was formatively developed by the evaluator in collaboration with each member of the SIG Management Team. The Vital

Sign Survey was administered in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Project Year 1 and again in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Project Year 2. An example of the Survey is provided in Attachment A.



**Vital Sign #1.** *To identify discrepancies in the quality of internal collaboration among and within each of the three work group's contractors, a "narrative" form of a peer rating scale was selected for use within the survey to determine inter-rater agreement. Of particular note, each SIG Team Manager identifies the individuals who are "expected" to collaborate with one another, not the evaluator or by some form of random assignment.*

In the SIG Evaluation Survey, the Project Leader is asked to rate the quality of his/her efforts to collaborate with other Project Leaders within their respective SIG work group (Early

Childhood, EOCA, Transition). The format for one vital sign question and rating scale completed by each Project Leader is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.**

**Vital Sign Survey Question and Rating Scale  
Joe Doe Questionnaire**

**Vital Sign #1: Within SIG Partner Collaboration**

You are responsible for the SIG Project “Expansion of Pre-School Options”. How you undertake efforts to ensure this expansion may impact or influence the work of another SIG partner. Please rate the QUALITY of your collaborative activity --- as specifically related to your project --- with each of the following individuals:

Sally Doe – Pre-Service Training Programs (circle one)

I have not collaborated with Linda about my project	I don’t collaborate with Linda enough to rate the Quality of my collaboration with her about my project	Poor Quality	Good Quality	Very Good Quality	Excellent Quality
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An example of instructions, questions, and rating from Sally Doe’s Questionnaire assessing the quality of John Doe’s effort to collaborate with her is shown in Figure 4 on the next page. By comparing John’s rating of his quality of effort to collaborate with Sally against the rating of Joe’s experience with the quality of collaborative effort he has experienced from Sally, agreement or *discrepancy* regarding collaboration between these two individuals within the same SIG work group is determined for each individual identified by their respective SIG Management Team leader.

Figure 4.

Vital Sign Survey Question and Rating Scale  
Sally Doe Questionnaire

There are many other SIG partners that are responsible for implementing Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) projects. Other ECSE partner efforts to collaborate with you about their respective projects may influence and/or impact your SIG-related work. Please rate the QUALITY of the following SIG partners' efforts to collaborate with you about matters related to **their** SIG project.

John Doe is responsible for the SIG Project "Expansion of Pre-School Options". How John undertakes efforts to ensure this expansion may impact or influence your SIG related work. Please rate the QUALITY of John's efforts to collaborate with you about matters related to **his** expansion of the Pre-School Options project (circle one):

Joe has not collaborated with me about his project	Joe does not collaborate with me enough to rate the Quality of his of her effort to collaborate with me about her project	Poor Quality	Good Quality	Very Good Quality	Excellent Quality
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**Vital Sign #2.** *To identify discrepancies in the quality of expected external collaborators undertaken by each of the 23 SIG contractors, the SIG Evaluation Survey requests each Project Leader to rate the quality of their effort to collaborate with especially selected individuals who are not within their respective SIG work group cluster and/or who do not receive SIG dollars. Of particular note, their respective SIG Team Manager identifies the *non-SIG* individuals with whom the contractor is "expected" to collaborate, not the evaluator or by some form of random assignment. An example of Vital Sign #2 request for information is shown in Attachment A, SIG Evaluation Survey, page 6.*

**Vital Sign #3.** *To identify discrepancies in managing each project to-plan, individual contractors are asked to indicate in their especially constructed SIG Evaluation Survey*

whether their project work is progressing behind schedule, on-time, or ahead of schedule. This vital sign is of particular importance because many within SIG work group cluster activities related to each product are very often complementary to another product or service being developed within another SIG work group cluster. The format for requesting this information is not customized for each SIG Evaluation Survey. This information is requested and reported for each of the three SIG work clusters by each individual SIG contractor (see Attachment A, SIG Evaluation Survey, page 7).

**Vital Sign #4.** *To identify discrepancies in personnel related matters within each of the 23 projects that have a direct impact on the vital signs of “collaboration” and “time”, the Vital Sign Survey has 5 questions requesting specific information about each project. The set of 5 questions are directly related to the Input (I) of the CIPPI evaluation model; adequate number of staff for the project, adequacy of project staff skills, need for additional project staff training, and anticipated project staff retention over time. This information is requested in “yes” and “no” responses by each contractor, with an opportunity/request to report additional information for each inquiry. The format for requesting this information is not customized for each SIG Evaluation Survey and can be reviewed in Attachment A, SIG Evaluation Survey, pages 8 and 9.*

**Vital Sign #5.** *To identify discrepancies in expected and actual dissemination efforts about each of the 23 SIG projects, target audiences are identified by each SIG Management Team member for each of their respected projects. As shown in Attachment A, SIG Evaluation Survey, page 10, each contractor is asked to identify stakeholder groups in which information has been provided about their project to-date (note; the second administration of the Survey requested identification to stakeholder groups within the previous 12 months). Of particular*

note, 1) each contractor's respective SIG Team Manager identifies the target audiences with whom the contractor is "expected" to provide information, *not* the evaluator or by some form of random assignment; and 2) each contractor provides via mail actual materials used in providing the information; such as pamphlets, letters, URLs for web sites, list serve messages, links to other web sites, newspaper clippings, name of organization and date of speech delivery, etc.

### **Vital Sign Survey Results Stage One**

The SIG Evaluation Survey was administered on two separate occasions to all contractors who were directly responsible for one of the 23 SIG projects; during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of SIG Project Year 1 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Project Year 2. Results presented in Table 1 on the next page are aggregate data from the first and second administration of the Survey.

#### **Vital Sign #1: Internal Collaboration**

*Calculation of collaboration ratings.* The following procedures were followed to calculate Average Ratings for Project Leader and Peer Project Leader Quality of effort to collaborate.

1. The qualitative response to each question for Vital Sign #1 (the respondent circled one of six answers) was converted into a numeric value using the following scale:

- 1 = No collaboration
- 2 = Not sufficient collaboration to rate the quality of effort to collaborate
- 3 = Poor Quality
- 4 = Good Quality
- 5 = Very Good Quality
- 6 = Excellent Quality

2. Calculation of Project Leader average ratings for all 23 SIG projects involved three steps:

1) adding the converted numeric values for every individual identified as a person with whom the Project Leader was expected to collaborate with; 2) dividing the total by the

number of individuals providing the rating; and 3) recording the resultant number as being the overall average for the 23 SIG Project Leaders' Quality of Effort to collaborate with other Project Leaders about their SIG project related work.

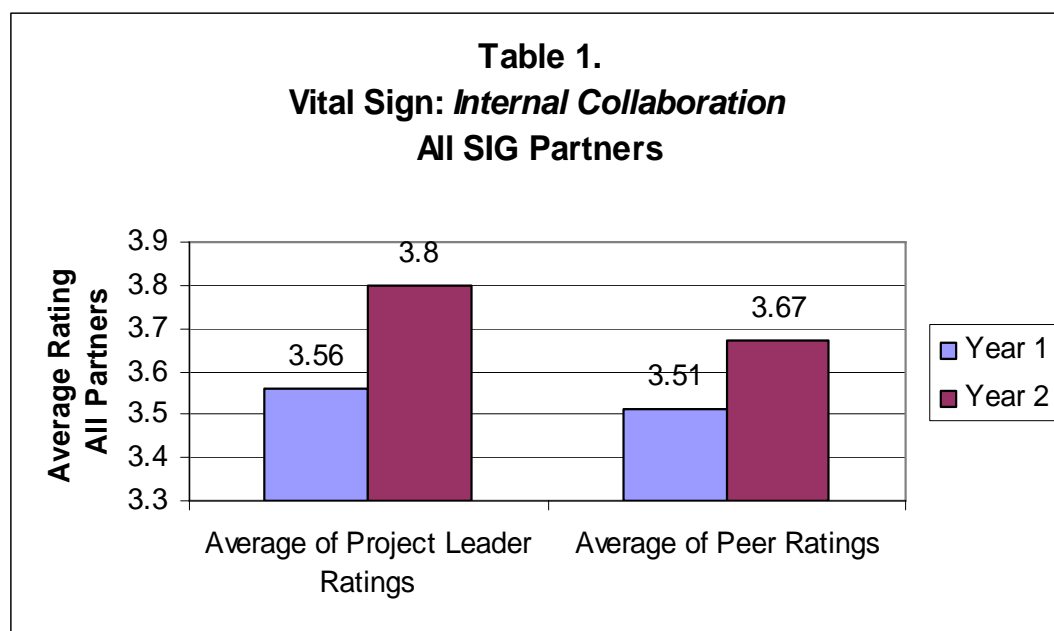
3. Calculation of Project Leaders' Quality of Effort to Collaborate as experienced by other Project Leaders (i.e., Peer Project Leaders) involved three steps: 1) adding the converted numeric values of Peer Project Leader ratings of Project Leaders who were expected to collaborate with them about their projects; 2) dividing the total by the number of individuals providing the rating; and 3) recording the resultant number as being the overall average for the 23 SIG Project Peer Leaders' rating of other Project Leaders' Quality of Effort to collaborate with them about their projects.

*Results of calculations.* A comparison of Project Year 1 Project Leaders' overall average rating for Quality of effort to collaborate with other Project Leaders (i.e., Project Leaders who were especially identified by the SIG Management Team) against Project Year 2 overall average ratings of those Project Leaders especially identified by the SIG Management Team revealed only a slight improvement (see Table 1 on the next page). [When viewing Table 1, it is important to remember that a rating of 3 = Poor and 4 = Good]

Similarly, a comparison of Project Year 1 Project Peer Leaders' overall average rating for Quality of effort to collaborate exhibited by Project Leaders against Project Year 2 Project Peer Leaders' overall average ratings of Project Leaders' Quality of effort to collaborate revealed only a slight improvement (see Table 1 on the next page).

*Discussion.* The general trend of Internal Collaboration (i.e., Quality of Effort to collaborate among Project Leaders) over the 5-Year Wisconsin SIG, when regularly and systematically collected at 9-month intervals, informs Project Management of impending

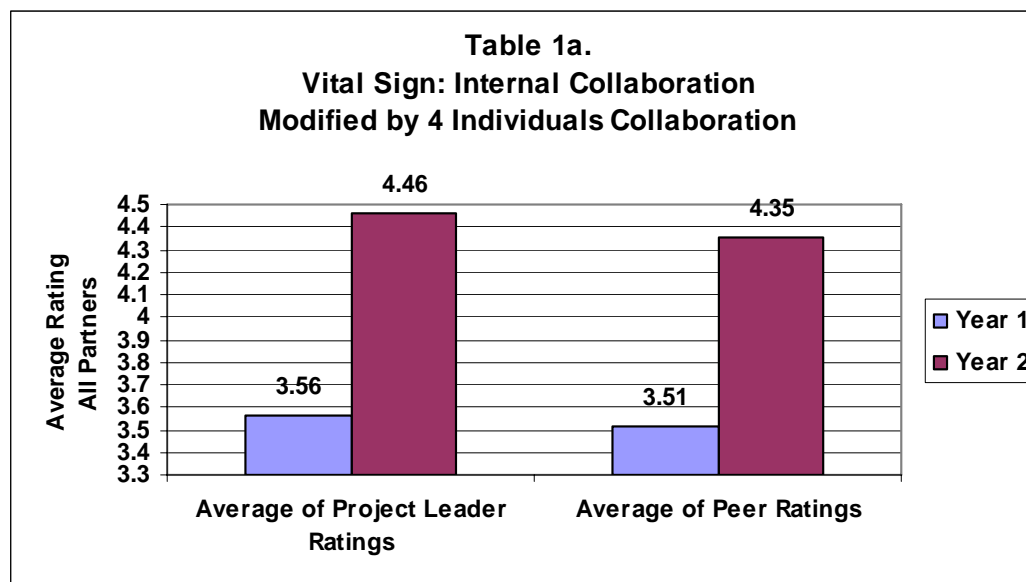
shifts or continuation of a trend in overall strength of the Wisconsin SIG initiative. Although the gain was positive, the Internal Vital Sign calculations (i.e., 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of Project Year 1 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Project Year 2) revealed only an incremental gain.



Interestingly, *disaggregating* 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Project Year 2 data into the three clusters of SIG projects (i.e., Early Childhood, EOCA, and Transition) reveals 4 Project Leaders self-reported ratings of “No Collaboration” with other Project Leaders. And, their respective Peer Project Leaders independently reported that the Project Leaders had “No Collaboration” with them. Of particular note, each of the three SIG Management Team work clusters had one such Project Leader and one of the three had two Project Leaders. Disaggregate data for Vital Sign #1: Internal Collaboration can be reviewed in the attached individual SIG Reports: Early Childhood, Attachment B; EOCA, Attachment C, and Transition, Attachment D.

From another perspective, recalculation of the averages for Internal Collaboration – by changing the “No Collaboration” ratings of Project Leaders and their respective Peer Project

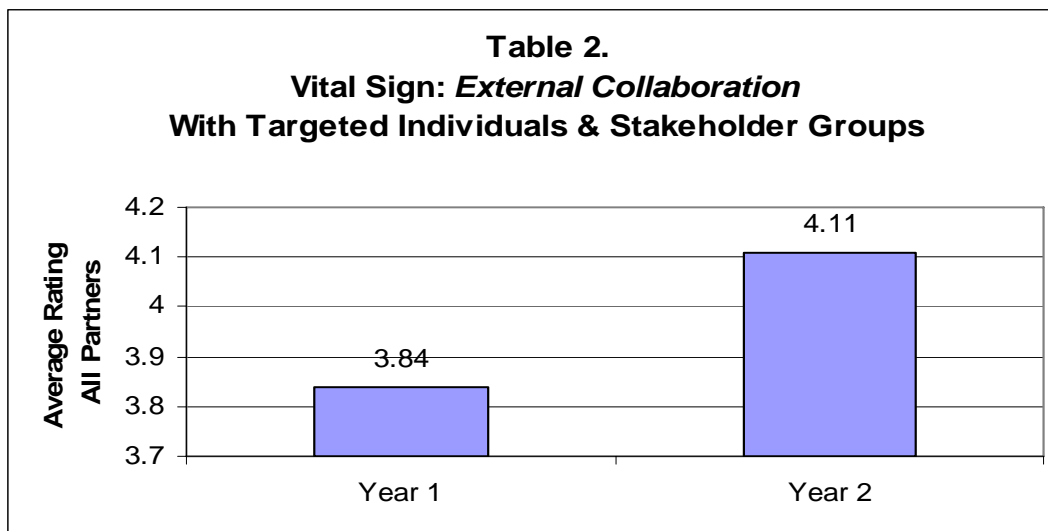
Leaders to “Excellent Quality” – would dramatically change the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Project Year 2 aggregate averages as shown below in Table 1a.



### **Vital Sign #2: External Collaboration**

In January 2003, the First Wisconsin SIG Celebration signaled the Department of Public Instruction’s intention to broaden the scope of collaboration beyond the work of individuals formally contracted to deliver products and services under contract. Forty one (41) Collaborative Partners from institutions of higher learning, disability organizations, State Department of Public Instruction, state and federal divisions, advocacy group representatives, and specially invited individuals committed to ensuring the success of the 5-Year SIG systemic change initiative attended the Celebration. *Vital Sign #2: External Collaboration*, provides SIG Project Management with insight about each Project Leader’s quality of effort to collaborate with “Collaborative Partners” specially selected by their respective SIG Management Team Member (i.e., Early Childhood, EOCA, and Transition).

Results presented in Table 2 are aggregate data from the first and second administration of the SIG Evaluation Survey. The method of calculating the average for each Survey administration were the same as the steps described in the Vital Sign #2: Internal Collaboration section immediately above.



*Results of calculations.* A comparison of Project Year 1 Project Leaders' overall average rating for Quality of effort to collaborate with *external individuals* (i.e., non-SIG funded collaborators, stakeholder consumer groups, non-DPI divisions in state government, federal agencies, etc.) against Project Year 2 overall average ratings revealed a full point improvement from "Poor" to "Good" (see Table 2 on the previous page). [When viewing Table 2, it is important to remember that a rating of 3 = Poor and 4 = Good.]

*Discussion.* When interpreting the general quality of effort by SIG project leaders to collaborate with *external* collaborating partners, the use of an average is of particular benefit for recording the extent to which what was intended to be accomplished was actually accomplished. The general trend of External Collaboration (i.e., Quality of Effort to collaborate with non-SIG funded collaborating partners) over the 5-Year Wisconsin SIG,

when regularly and systematically collected at 9 month intervals, informs Project Management of impending shifts or continuation of a trend in overall strength of the Wisconsin SIG initiative. The quality of Project Leaders' efforts to collaborate with especially selected external collaborators revealed a positive increase from the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of Project Year 1 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Project Year 2.

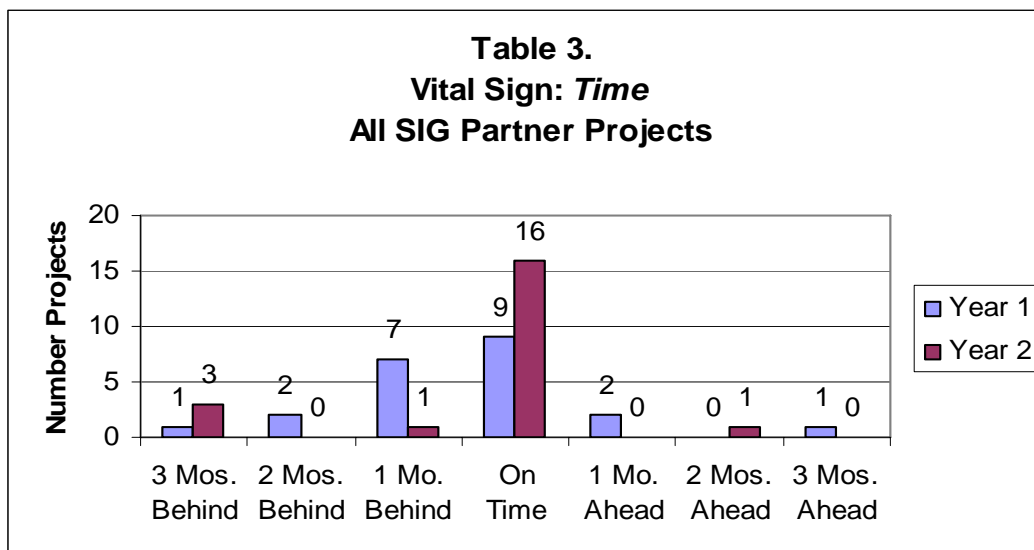
Interestingly, *disaggregating* 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Project Year 2 data into the three clusters of SIG projects (i.e., Early Childhood, EOCA, and Transition) reveals about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the expected collaborations did not occur with external collaboration partners especially identified by each of the SIG Management Team members. Disaggregate data for Vital Sign #2: External Collaboration can be reviewed in the attached individual SIG Reports: Early Childhood, Attachment B; EOCA, Attachment C, and Transition, Attachment D.

### **Vital Sign #3: Time**

One of the major challenges in managing multiple projects when they have been intentionally placed within a collaborative work context is executing each project's work to-plan. In the initial meetings with each SIG Management Team member to identify the set of vital signs, the question that prompted the most discussion was "What are the potential points of failure in achieving completion of this project? (See page 11 for list of the questions). Among the potential points of failure most often expressed was related to project work being completed on time and to-plan.

*Results of calculations.* In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of Project Year 1, Project Leaders reported 18 of 22 projects (one project leader did not report) were either "on-time" or within  $\pm$  one month of being "on-time". In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Project Year 2, Project Leaders reported 17 of 21

projects were either “on-time” or within  $\pm$  one month of being “on-time”. Three projects were more than 3 months behind schedule, and one project was 2 months ahead of schedule.



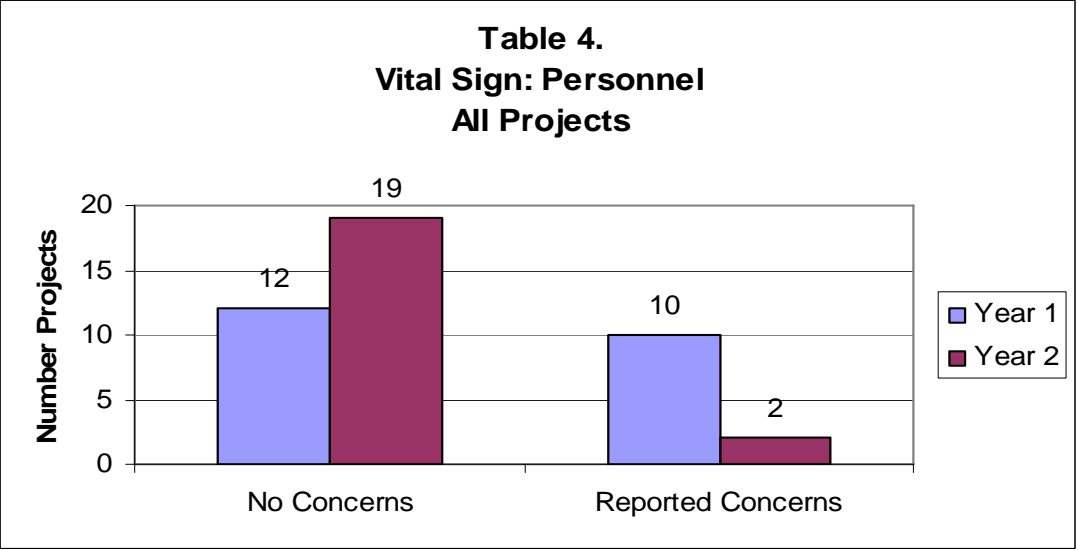
*Discussion.* When interpreting the general timeliness of work being completed to-plan, the use of a timeline of progress across the 23 projects is of particular benefit for recording the extent to which what was *intended* to be accomplished was *actually* accomplished. The general trend of projects being managed to-plan over the 5-Year Wisconsin SIG, when regularly and systematically collected at 9 month intervals, informs Project Management of impending shifts or continuation of a trend in overall strength of the Wisconsin SIG initiative. Almost two years into the SIG work, about 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the 23 SIG projects appear to be in difficulty when viewed from the perspective of being managed to-plan.

*Disaggregating 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of Project Year 2 data into the three clusters of SIG projects (i.e., Early Childhood, EOCA, and Transition) reveals two of the three projects more than 3 months behind schedule are from the EOCA work cluster. Disaggregate data for Vital Sign #3: Time can be reviewed in the attached individual SIG Reports: Early Childhood,*

Attachment B; EOCA, Attachment C, and Transition, Attachment D. At the request of the SIG Transition Manager, two Project Managers were not mailed a SIG Evaluation Survey.

**Vital Sign #4: Personnel.**

To identify discrepancies in personnel-related matters within each of the 23 projects that have a direct impact on the vital signs of “collaboration” and “time”, the Vital Sign Survey has four questions requesting specific information about each project: adequate number of staff for the project, adequacy of project staff skills, need for additional project staff training, and anticipated project staff retention over time. As shown in Table 4, only two Project Leaders reported project related concerns at the second administration of the SIG Evaluation Survey in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Project Year 2.



*Discussion.* During the first 3 quarters of Project Year 1, a considerable amount of time and effort was expended by project personnel during the “start-up” months of the Wisconsin SIG. As work was negotiated and contracts for services committed, the alignment of personnel to actual implementation tasks seemed to create an uncertainty about one of the five personnel

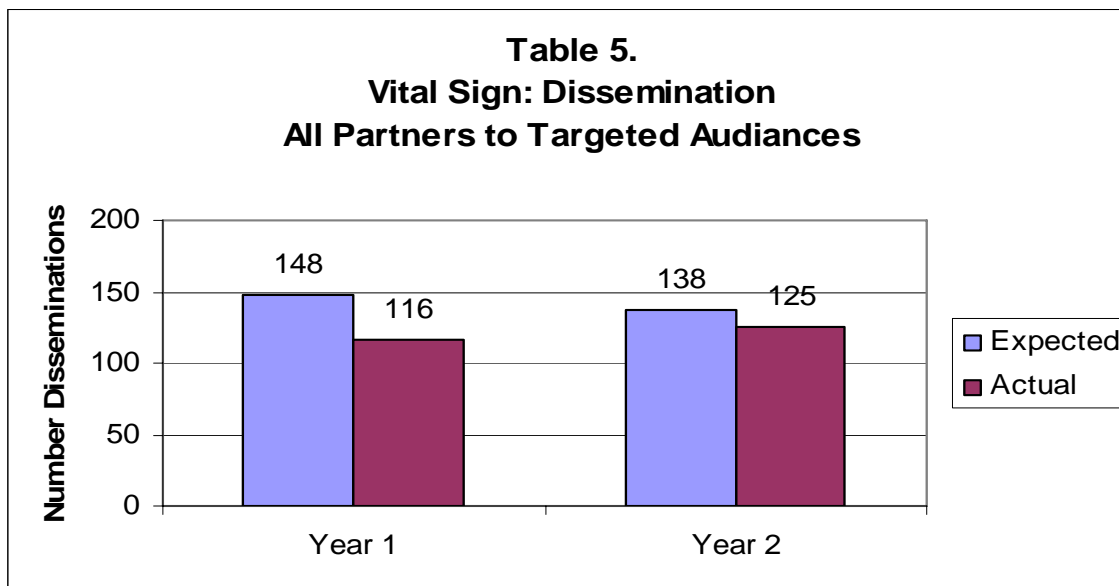
indicators across all 23 SIG projects: stability of project personnel. Virtually all of the personnel concerns expressed in Project Year 1 were about the retention of personnel in the upcoming year.

The dramatic drop in concerns at the second administration of the Survey in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Project Year 2 provides a strong indication that concerns about retention of project staff appears to be of less concern. One of the two personnel-related concerns in the second Survey was written into the Personnel Section: “Two individuals have the skills but lack the willingness to collaborate”. The other concern was about waiting for the arrival of a person who had recently been hired to replace an individual who had left for another job

#### **Vital Sign #5: Dissemination**

Goal III of the SIG grant seeks to implement a coordinated state dissemination system that provides educators, parents, collaborative partners, and other stakeholders with timely information and training on best practices and research-based strategies to improve teaching, learning, and results for children and youth with disabilities.

During Stage I of the SIG project life cycle, dissemination activity was targeted to *informing* key stakeholder groups about their respective SIG project, information and training materials currently under development and plans for implementation of research-based training and distribution of materials. A list of key stakeholder groups, target audiences, annual state meetings, LEA meetings, annual conferences, and other information distribution channels was generated by each Project Leader’s SIG Manager (See example in Attachment A on the last page of the Survey). As summarized in Table 5 on the next page, in excess of 100 targeted dissemination efforts about SIG related projects were made by the 23 Project Leaders in Project Years 1 and 2.



### **Recommendations**

The Wisconsin SIG is a collaboration of multiple individuals, agencies, and institutions with a shared commitment to systemic reform. In order to reform and improve its systems for providing educational, early intervention and transitional services, the Wisconsin DPI is using a systems change model (shown in Figure 1 on page 3) to influence how its partners (i.e., Project Leaders under contract) work together throughout the 5 years of SIG funding. The Wisconsin SIG has completed two years of design and development work and is beginning to deliver research-based reform activities through professional development and collaborative partnerships.

In many respects, the Wisconsin SIG partners are in the process of developing an appreciation for the power of forming critical collaborative partnerships to develop a statewide interagency service system that supports children with disabilities, birth-to-21. The extent to which this is emerging appreciation is nurtured by the SIG Management Team

within their respective work groups and across work groups as the work processes shift from design and development to dissemination of products and research-based practices will weigh heavily upon whether these efforts are successfully institutionalized.

*Recommendation #1. Semi-annual “celebrations” that gather all SIG Partners together should be continued in Project Years 3, 4 and 5.*

The energy and ability of the SIG Project Team Leader to muster and guide the development of a collaborative spirit within and across all work groups is evident. The SIG Project Leader’s enthusiasm and continued focus on creating a collaborative spirit at these gatherings substantively supports and influences a sustaining spirit for how SIG partners view their work together. A moment of reflection captured by the evaluator at one of these “celebrations” seems to convey the intensity and quality of the semi-annual celebrations:

“I am really enjoying these celebration meetings. I am amazed at how much is going on outside of my immediate area of responsibility within SIG. The best part is hearing about what others are doing and having a new insight about my – or their – work and how I can collaborate with them.”

Celebration Attendee

*Recommendation #2. A Dissemination Roadmap should be developed by the SIG Management Team with assistance from a third-party facilitator.*

As the work processes shift from design and development to dissemination of SIG products and research-based practices, the inherent danger will be to take the road most easily traveled in the past. The development of a Dissemination Roadmap with the assistance of a third—party facilitator who is familiar with selecting strategies for implementing and sustaining collaboration will be critical in deterring the temptation to avoid dissemination efforts that

require communication, planning, and collaboration across SIG work groups, as well as between and/or among individual Project Leaders.

In reality, how limited resources available for dissemination are utilized may well influence the intensity of dissemination activities. Leveraging collaborative relationships identified through development of a SIG Dissemination Roadmap is essential for successfully institutionalizing SIG products and research-based practices to improve the educational results of children and youth with disabilities in Wisconsin.