

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the Southwest Missouri State University Institute for School Improvement to conduct an evaluation of Missouri's Select Teachers As Regional Resources (STARR) program. Overall program impact on teachers' professional development was examined as well as the impact on teaching and learning.

The STARR program's primary focus is to provide professional development opportunities to educators (teachers and administrators) throughout the state of Missouri. Located at nine different university sites, STARR teachers work collaboratively, cooperatively and in partnership with DESE, their host universities, area schools and other DESE initiatives, including but not limited to the Regional Professional Development Centers, MAP Program, and Accelerated School.

This research report presents analyses of data provided by 392 educators across the state of Missouri and twenty-five 2000-2001 STARR teachers. Survey questionnaires were designed to collect perceptual data regarding the Missouri DESE STARR program with regard to organization, supervision, and working relationships with other agencies. This report also contains content analyses of ten focus group interviews conducted with educators familiar with the STARR program in each of the Regional Professional Development Center service areas. Focus group participants consisted of educators from school sites identified by each respective RPDC as highly involved in professional development.

## **METHODS**

### **Survey Questionnaires**

The SMSU Institute for School Improvement surveyed a random, proportional sample of 990 PK-12 educators statewide stratifying on geographic location (i.e., RPDC region). The sample of educators was drawn from DESE CORE Data. Survey questionnaires (see Appendix A) were mailed to all 990 educators on December 8, 2000 with a second mailing made on January 16, 2001; producing a return rate of 39.6%.

On November 3, 2000, the STARR teacher survey questionnaires (see Appendix B) were distributed to twenty-five of the current STARR teachers, yielding a 96.2% return rate. This survey questionnaire was designed to investigate the program's impact on STARR teachers as well as their perceptions of the program's impact on educators who have participated in professional development provided by STARRs.

The intent of this method of data collection was to aggregate data defining the overall STARR program effectiveness along with the program's impact on teaching and learning. All respondent data were entered into SPSS PC+ for statistical analyses. Demographic data were analyzed by comparing frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations across regions as well as state totals. Statistical tests of significance were computed when appropriate.

## **Focus Group Interviews**

The SMSU Institute for School Improvement conducted ten focus group interviews designed to examine a number of issues regarding the STARR professional development program. Focus group interviews were conducted from September 6, 2000 to January 23, 2001, in each of the nine Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) regions. Focus group participants consisted of educators identified by local RPDC staff as working in schools that are highly involved in professional development. These educators included elementary, middle, and high school classroom teachers in addition to area administrators, each having some level of involvement with the STARR program. The purpose of the ten focus groups was to generate information about the STARR program, the perceived impact the program has had and is having on teaching and learning throughout Missouri and to validate the survey questionnaire used in this evaluation. In addition, two focus group interviews were conducted with current STARR teachers on November 3, 2000.

Focus group interviews followed a semi-structured protocol consisting of ten questions for educators and eleven for current STARR teachers (see Appendix C). Each focus group interview protocol was developed by the Project Investigator with the assistance of the research evaluation team. Focus group interviews lasted approximately 40-45 minutes, and each group was asked the same questions with follow-up questions based on individual group responses. Sessions were tape recorded, and facilitators also made field notes. Tapes and notes were content analyzed using the constant comparative method of data reduction and association. Appendix D contains the focus group protocol used in each of the focus group interviews along with the field notes recorded.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Survey Questionnaire Descriptive Data – STARR Educator Participants**

#### **Return Rates:**

As Table 1 and Figure 1 demonstrate, the 990 surveyed educators were chosen from a state population of 64,819 educators. Stratifying on the nine RPDC geographic locations, proportional samples were taken from each region equal to the same ratio of educators to state totals in that region. This produced a sample representing 1.5% of all educators statewide. Of the 990 educators surveyed, 392 (39.6%) returned questionnaires. The highest return rate was from respondents in Region 9 (CMSU = 48.5%) with 33 of the 68 teachers sampled returning questionnaires. The lowest return was from respondents in Region 4 (TSU = 20.7%) with a sample size of twenty-nine educators and the number of returned questionnaires equal to six. The remaining return rates for each region are as follows: UMC (45.9%), UMKC (45.0%), NWMSU (42.0%), UMR (41.2%), SMSU (40.7%), SEMO (40.0%), and UMSL (33.4%).