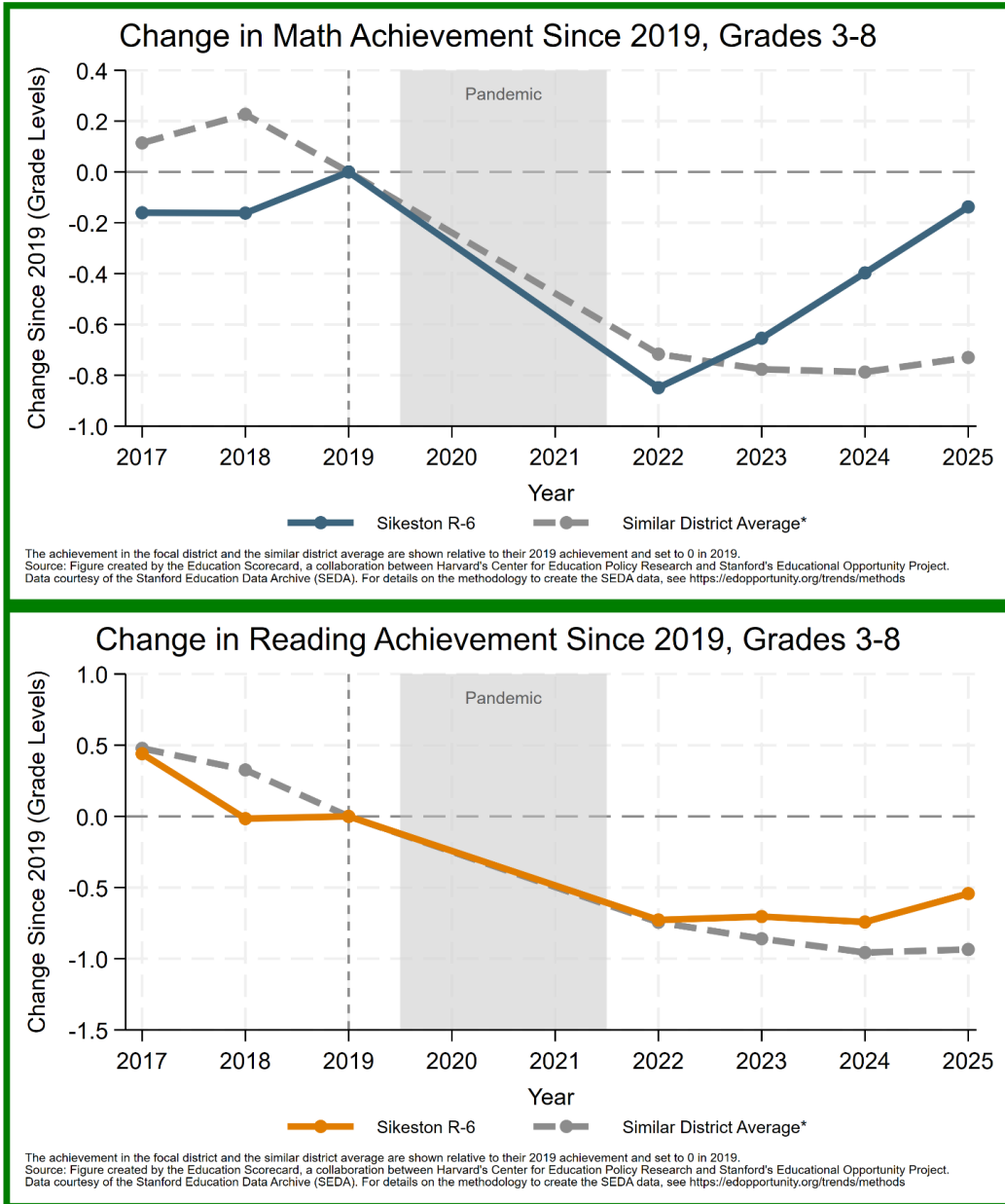


Sikeston Public Schools R-6
Sikeston, MO

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Rising Faster than Similar Districts in Math & Reading



*Similar Districts: Kennett 39, Hollister R-V, Boonville R-I, Lafayette County C-1, Forsyth R-III



Student Demographics:

Total student population: 3,225
Economically disadvantaged: 70%

Three largest racial demographics:

White: 53%

Black: 33%

Two or more races: 9%

Shannon Holifield, Superintendent

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- “In Sikeston, we believe that academic success is impossible without first protecting the learning environment through strong classroom management and high expectations for student engagement. By empowering our teachers to own the curriculum development process and their classrooms, we have created a unified 'Sikeston Way' that ensures every student has access to rigorous, standards-aligned instruction and high expectations for behavior.”

Background:

Sikeston Public Schools R-6 serves a small, rural community in the Missouri Bootheel region. The district's commitment to academic growth is evidenced by a strategic focus on protecting the learning environment and aligning curriculum directly to Missouri's state standards. By shoring up expectations for both behavior and academics, Sikeston has laid the groundwork for sustained growth in core subjects.

Strategies for Success:

Teacher-led curriculum and assessment:

- The district has continuously updated and maintained [its own curriculum](#) for over a decade. Over the last four years, with the guidance of Dr. Janie Payle, teachers have the development of the curriculum through a continuous, four stage process: Planning and Writing (identifying targets and creating units), Reviewing (including the vertical team and community feedback), Adoption (board examination), and Revising (incorporating strategies and assessment changes after one year of implementation).
- All units are designed to be topical or skills-based and must include essential questions, big ideas, Tier 3 content-based vocabulary, and research-based teaching activities.
- Building leaders and staff are tasked with ensuring alignment between the “Written” (targets and units), “Taught” (daily strategies and activities), and “Assessed” (common diagnostic and summative measures) curriculum.
- Teachers develop assessments aligned to MAP Growth and Missouri's high school End-of-Course (EOC) questions to accurately gauge progress toward priority standard competency. These assessment results are used during weekly data team meetings to determine immediate instructional next steps and intervention needs.
- Each course includes a pacing guide that maps out content over the school year, including buffer days to allow for differentiation and additional instructional support.

Structured learning environment:

- Recognizing that curriculum improvements cannot succeed without effective classroom management, the district implemented its Champion Teaching initiative with Dr. Janie



EDUCATION SCORECARD

Pyle. This framework is based on the work of [Doug Lemov](#), which emphasizes student engagement and high accountability.

- Nearly all Sikeston teachers and administrators have been trained in Champion Teaching, as well as bus drivers, secretaries, and all support staff to ensure a consistent environment of support and discipline across the district. Through this initiative, the district has coined the phrase “The Sikeston Way.”
- By standardizing classroom management, the district has enabled teachers to maximize instructional minutes, facilitating more frequent small-group work and whole-group explicit instruction with less disruption.

Strategic interventions and community partnerships:

- Sikeston leverages federal funding and innovative state pilot programs to provide targeted support for high-need student populations.
- The district employs “Title Teachers,” dedicated reading and math interventionists who work in Title I schools in the district to provide supplemental support for students who are below grade level.
- To support the science of reading, the district incentivized elementary and middle school teachers, academic coaches, and administrators to participate in the free LETRS® training provided by the state as part of its [Read. Lead. Exceed initiative](#).
- Sikeston was selected as the only district in Missouri to host a Star Academy, a nearly \$1 million “school within a school” for at-risk eighth graders that utilizes hands-on, project-based learning tied to local trade and industries. In the 2025-2026 school year, its first year of operation, the Academy enrolled 80 students.
- The district operates a Career and Tech Center that serves eleven sending schools, which partners with the Sikeston Chamber of Commerce to align technical training with local workforce needs.