



LESSONS FROM MICHIGAN  
ABOUT RESTRUCTURING  
SCHOOLS AND  
NEXT STEPS UNDER NCLB

## What Now?

# LESSONS FROM MICHIGAN ABOUT RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS AND NEXT STEPS UNDER NCLB

Restructuring” is the controversial last consequence under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for schools that fail to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward their state’s student achievement targets for five or more years. The sanctions associated with restructuring, from replacing the school’s staff to becoming a charter school, are drastic measures intended to transform schools and result in dramatic increases in student achievement. The federal law is silent, however, about what happens after schools have implemented restructuring for a year or more but have still not met AYP targets. Guidance in this area is needed because several states such as California and Michigan now have schools that have failed to meet achievement targets for seven or eight years in a row.

What happens after restructuring? Which schools are successful and which continue to flounder? What happens to these restructured schools if they continue to fail to meet achievement targets? Even though the federal government provides few suggestions, what are states doing and what could they do to help schools that have restructured but continue to have low student achievement?

To explore these questions, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) conducted a study from August 2006 through January 2007 in Michigan. This state had schools in restructuring earlier than other states because it had an accountability system in place before NCLB. Thus, Michigan was one of the first states in the nation to have schools fail to meet achievement targets for seven or eight consecutive years, placing them in years 6 or 7 of school improvement, respectively. These schools have implemented restructuring for a year or more but still failed to meet AYP targets.

To collect data for this study, CEP interviewed state administrators and reviewed restructuring documents. We also conducted case studies of restructuring at the local level through interviews with district administra-

tors, principals, and teachers in four school districts—two urban, one suburban, and one rural—and seven schools. The purpose of the study was to learn more about how restructuring has progressed and what the state is doing for schools that have moved beyond NCLB’s ultimate sanction. This report discusses what we learned.

The report is also a follow-up to studies done by CEP in 2004 and 2005 of schools undergoing restructuring in Michigan. We described our previous findings in two reports: *Makeovers, Facelifts, or Reconstructive Surgery: An Early Look at NCLB School Restructuring in Michigan* (CEP, 2004) and *Hope but No Miracle Cures: Michigan’s Early Restructuring Lessons* (CEP, 2005).

## Summary of Key Findings

Several key findings emerged from our analysis of restructuring in Michigan:

- ***About two-thirds of Michigan’s restructured schools raised achievement enough to meet adequate yearly progress targets.*** Based on 2005-06 testing, 64% of the Michigan Title I schools in restructuring planning or implementation—or 58 schools out of 90—improved student test scores enough to meet all AYP targets. Of these 90 restructured schools, all of which receive funds under the federal Title I program for disadvantaged children, 57%, or 51 schools, met all targets for two consecutive years and moved out of restructuring altogether in 2006-07. Seven schools met AYP targets for the first time based on 2005-06 testing but remain in restructuring until they make AYP for two consecutive years. Although this progress is encouraging, it is not clear to what extent the rising percentages of students scoring proficient on state tests are due to school improvement efforts and other instructionally related changes, and to what

extent they are due to federal and state policy changes that have made it easier for schools to demonstrate AYP.

- **Many more schools used turnaround specialists this year than did last year, while fewer schools replaced the principal or used the “any-other” option.** School and district strategies for restructuring shifted substantially from 2004-05 to 2005-06. In 2004-05, most schools (94%) reported using the option in federal law to carry out “any other major restructuring of the school’s governance that produces fundamental reform,” but in 2005-06, only 23% used the any-other option. Similarly, in 2004-05, 63% of schools reported replacing the principal as a restructuring strategy, while in 2005-06 just 8% reported doing so. During this period, schools increased their use of turnaround specialists: just 16% employed these specialists in 2004-05 compared with 72% in 2005-06. The shift can be explained, in part, by the influence of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) on the restructuring grant application process. Officials reported that some schools—such as those in Detroit, one of our case study districts—were required to use turnaround specialists and some were discouraged from replacing the principal or using the any-other option.
  - **Multiple strategies are still better.** As our 2005 report showed, getting out of restructuring takes more than simple fixes, such as replacing the principal or appointing a governance board. Although either of these steps alone would meet the NCLB definition of restructuring, our analysis showed that schools that reported implementing five or more reforms over the past two years were significantly more likely to exit restructuring in 2006-07 than those implementing fewer reforms. For example, one case study school, Brownell Elementary in Flint, Michigan, used four official Michigan restructuring strategies in 2004-05: employing a turnaround specialist, appointing a coach, turning the operation of the school over to the school improvement committee, and implementing any other major effort (which included creating a leveled school library and using flexible groups for instruction). In 2005-06, Brownell used two official Michigan restructuring strategies: appointing a coach (in this case two coaches) and turning the
- operation of the school over to the school improvement committee. In 2005-06, Brownell also realigned math instruction to state standards, added a new writing program, and continued initiatives started under the any-other option the previous year.
- **Grants help leverage change.** As in the past in Michigan, schools can apply for grants for school improvement from the Michigan Department of Education. The grants range from \$5,000 to \$45,000, depending on the size of the school and the reason it has failed to meet AYP targets. For 2006-07, grant funding is also available to intermediate school districts, which provide technical assistance to schools in restructuring. Grant applications must be approved by MDE, which gives state officials some control over the types of restructuring strategies chosen. While the majority of school and district officials interviewed for this study were appreciative of these grants, they also said their schools and districts were still struggling financially due to declining enrollment.
  - **The Michigan Department of Education audits schools in their fifth, sixth, or seventh year of NCLB improvement.** While the federal law is silent on what to do with schools that have restructured but continue to fall short of AYP targets, MDE has stepped in to take action. MDE conducted comprehensive school audits in 28 K-8 schools and 2 middle schools that were implementing restructuring but had failed to meet AYP targets in 2005-06 testing. The audits, based on Michigan’s School Improvement Framework, were designed to identify reasons for failure to meet AYP targets and to make recommendations for change.
  - **Financial difficulties hinder restructuring.** Due to population loss and a declining tax base, the state of Michigan faces budget shortfalls for 2006-07. In addition, Title I allocations for Michigan’s school districts this year totaled about 2% less than last year’s allocations. All case study districts felt the effects of Michigan’s dwindling funds. All also suffered from declining enrollments and, thus, from additional declines in revenue. The resulting financial pressures were as important as restructuring in influencing reforms, and at times limited the choices schools and districts could make about how

to increase student achievement. For example, Detroit officials were forced to close schools based not on school performance, as NCLB might advocate, but on finances. One Detroit school in restructuring closed in 2006-07, even though it had improved academic achievement enough to meet all AYP targets for the first time. Other case study schools were not able to implement all the reforms they thought were important due to funding constraints. Willow Run Middle School, for example, had to cut back on electives and switch from multi-grade teacher teams to grade-level teacher teams, even though multi-grade teams were part of the school's plan for restructuring and raising student achievement.

- **Case study schools had commonalities in reform efforts.** All case study schools and districts reported using a variety of strategies to improve achievement beyond their official restructuring strategy. These included using data to make instructional decisions, increasing teachers' collaboration, and sharing decision making at the school rather than relying on the principal alone.

## Study Methods and Background

This study is part of a series of CEP analyses of the No Child Left Behind restructuring process in selected states, conducted as part of our broader national study of NCLB. Previously, we issued reports on the restructuring process in Michigan for school years 2003-04 and 2004-05, in California for 2004-05 and 2005-06, and in Maryland for 2005-06 (CEP 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b). These reports are available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org). Future reports will follow for these states, and more states will be added.

We chose to focus our restructuring reports on Michigan, Maryland, and California because they had already begun implementing test-based accountability systems and calculating AYP under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, the federal law that preceded NCLB. As a result, these three states had schools reach the restructuring phase of NCLB as early as 2003-04—sooner than most other states. As more states see more and more schools enter restructuring, they can learn from the experiences of these states in the vanguard.

## STUDY METHODS

To conduct this third report on restructuring in Michigan, CEP turned to Caitlin Scott, the CEP consultant who did the first two Michigan reports. Scott interviewed state department of education officials and local administrators in districts with schools in restructuring. She also conducted case studies of four districts with schools in restructuring, primarily by interviewing district administrators, principals, and other staff and by reviewing district records. These case studies focused on the following four districts and seven schools:

- Detroit Public Schools, the largest district in Michigan, suffers from declining enrollment and currently serves about 119,000 students. Cerveney Middle School, Cleveland Middle School, and William Beckham Academy were the three schools involved in our case study.
- Flint Community Schools is an urban school serving about 18,000 students. Brownell Elementary in central Flint participated in our case study.
- Harrison Community Schools, a district of 1,800 students, serves a rural area in central Michigan. Larson Elementary and Hillside Elementary were the focus of our study.
- Willow Run Community Schools, a suburban district in Ypsilanti, Michigan, enrolls 2,600 students. Willow Run Middle School participated in our case study.

The Flint, Harrison, and Willow Run districts were involved in CEP's previous study of restructuring in Michigan. They had been selected from a list of districts submitted by the Michigan Department of Education in the summer of 2004. CEP chose these three districts because they represented an urban, rural, and suburban district and were all on track for implementing restructuring plans in 2004-05. For the current study, CEP added the Detroit Public Schools, the Michigan district with the most schools in restructuring. District personnel chose restructuring schools for participation in this study.

In addition to conducting interviews, Scott observed a day-long workshop held by the Michigan Department of Education in November 2006. At this workshop,

state administrators and consultants presented strategies for schools and districts in restructuring planning and implementation. Scott also reviewed state, regional, district, and school data and documents, such as state restructuring and school improvement policies, state records tracking restructuring implementation, state report cards, and state test score data. The interviews, observations, document reviews, and data analysis were conducted from August 2006 through January 2007.

The results described in this report should be interpreted cautiously because some schools may need another year or two of restructuring efforts before their work comes to fruition. Also, as explained below, Michigan made significant changes to its testing program in 2005-06, which affects AYP determinations.

### FEDERAL RESTRUCTURING MANDATES

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all states to test virtually all students annually in reading/language arts in grades 3 through 8, plus once during high school. It also requires all schools and districts to meet AYP targets that will place them on track for ensuring that 100% of students are academically proficient by 2014. AYP calculations are based on percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level on state tests, as well as on the percentage participating in state tests and other indicators. States must also provide consequences for schools and districts not meeting AYP targets. After five consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must plan for restructuring (referred to later in this report as year 4). After six consecutive years of not making AYP (year 5), schools must implement their plans. In this last consequence for failure to make AYP, schools and districts must choose from a menu of options designed to completely revamp the school. By federal law, these options include the following:

- Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school
- Reopening the school as a charter school
- Replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP
- Turning operation of the school over to the state, if the state agrees

- Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform

Some states already have many schools in restructuring, while others do not. As already noted, some states began calculating AYP based on data collected prior to NCLB to meet the goals of the IASA of 1994. Some states also had more mature testing and accountability systems than others and were better prepared to comply with the NCLB testing requirements. As a result, some states with well-established accountability systems, such as Michigan, California, and Maryland, had schools in restructuring as early as 2003-04, while other states with relatively new testing and accountability systems, such as Idaho and Oregon, have few schools in restructuring at this point. States such as Michigan and California also have schools that have been in school improvement for six or seven years, which is beyond the timetable set out in federal law. Under NCLB law, schools in restructuring must make AYP for two consecutive years before they can move out of restructuring. The NCLB statute and federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) provide no recommendations or regulations for schools beyond year 5, the implementation phase of restructuring. Michigan's approach of auditing these schools is discussed later in this report.

### CHANGES IN MICHIGAN'S TESTING PROGRAM

In the past two years, Michigan has made substantial changes to its testing program. For 2004-05, ED allowed Michigan to apply a confidence interval of two standard errors to each student's score. Student scores that fall within this interval were counted as proficient in AYP calculations. For 2004-05, without the confidence interval, 79% of elementary schools and 74% of middle schools would have made AYP. But with the confidence interval, that figure increased to 89% of elementary schools and 82% of middle schools, according to a chart created for Michigan's accountability plan. According to CEP's research, 46 states use some form of confidence intervals in their AYP determinations (CEP, 2006e).

In 2005-06, testing dates for the majority of students in grades 3 through 8 were switched from January to October, content standards and cut scores were revised, and more tests were added. Also in the fall of



2005, Michigan tested all students in math and reading in grades 3 through 8 in order to comply with NCLB, whereas in previous years students were tested in reading and math in grade 4, reading in grade 7, and math in grade 8. State officials emphasized that 2004-05 test results should not be compared with 2005-06 test results.

For testing in 2005-06, Michigan also changed the way AYP is calculated. Previously in Michigan, schools had to meet targets in all the grades tested in that school in order to make AYP. In 2005-06, Michigan devised a method of aggregating test data for all grades tested in a school. The state set target percentages of students performing at the proficient level or above on state tests for each of the grades 3 through 8, plus grade 11. Actual percentages of students reaching the proficient level are compared with the target percentages, weighted by grade level, and totaled. Positive sums mean that the school met AYP academic targets, while negative sums mean that the school did not meet the targets. Across the grade levels tested, reading targets range from 41% to 52% of students scoring at or above the proficient level, while math targets range from 43% to 59%.

## Michigan's Restructuring Strategies

### AYP RESULTS FOR SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING IN 2005-06

For the 2006-07 school year, 46 Michigan Title I schools, or about 2% of Michigan's 2,065 Title I schools, were in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring, based on their 2005-06 test scores. Of the 46 schools, none are in rural areas, and 20% are in suburban areas. The great majority, 80% of the schools, are in urban areas, with the city of Detroit accounting for 67% of the total. Included in the 46 is one charter school, in a suburb of Detroit. These percentages are similar to those in 2004-05, when 4% of schools in restructuring were in rural areas, 16% in suburban areas, and 80% in urban areas. Although the law gives schools up to a year to plan for restructuring, many schools in Michigan began implementing restructuring during their planning year, according to state and district officials.

The majority of Michigan schools in restructuring have raised the percentage of students scoring proficient on state tests since 2003-04, the first year schools in Michigan were placed in restructuring. As explained below, however, it is impossible to determine how much of these increases can be attributed to changes in student achievement and how much to changes in testing and other policies.

**Table 1** shows the percentages of schools in restructuring planning and implementation that were still operating and receiving Title I funds in 2006-07. The table also displays AYP outcomes. The total numbers of schools in restructuring for 2003-04 and 2004-05 are smaller than those reported in previous CEP studies. This is because schools have closed due to declining enrollment or have changed their Title I status. In 2004-05, for example, a previous CEP study reported that 133 Michigan schools were in restructuring planning or implementation, but 24 of these schools are now closed. In addition, two of the schools lost Title I funding due to changes in student demographics, while two low-performing schools that had not received Title I funds were added to the list of restructuring schools when their demographics changed and they received Title I funds. The percentages of schools meeting AYP targets for these years, however, have not changed substantially.

Although these results are promising, they should not be used to draw firm conclusions about school restructuring. The previously described changes in Michigan's testing policies, as well as other changes in the state's accountability plan and policy changes from the U.S. Department of Education, most likely made it easier for some schools to make AYP, even if nothing else at the schools changed. Even at schools where student achievement increased above the new confidence interval and enough students scored at or above the proficient level on the new tests to meet AYP targets, the extent to which these improvements can be attributed to restructuring alone is unclear. Factors that are not officially part of restructuring may nevertheless influence a school's ability to raise student achievement; examples include funding, school demographics, staff experience levels, community support, professional development, and the presence of additional reform strategies not related to the school's response to NCLB mandates.

**Table 1. AYP Results for Schools in Restructuring Planning and Implementation in Michigan, 2003-04 to 2006-07**

	Number of Schools in Restructuring Status <sup>1</sup>	Percentage Not Meeting AYP Targets on the Indicated Year's Test	Percentage Meeting AYP Targets on the Indicated Year's Test	Percentage Making AYP and Moving Out of Restructuring
2003-04	76	68%	32%	0%
2004-05 <sup>2</sup>	109	15%	85%	24%
2005-06 <sup>3</sup>	90	36%	64%	57%
2006-07	46	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Includes only those schools that were still open and still receiving Title I funds in 2006-07; therefore, numbers differ from previous CEP reports on restructuring in Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> For 2004-05 testing, Michigan added a confidence interval which made it easier for schools to meet AYP targets than in 2003-04 testing. So, it is difficult to determine how much of the increases in the percentage of schools meeting AYP targets between 2003-04 and 2004-05 are attributable to gains in student achievement.

<sup>3</sup> For 2005-06 testing, Michigan revised content standards of existing tests, added tests in additional grades, and changed its test administration from spring to fall. Therefore, it is difficult to determine how much of the increases in the percentage of students meeting AYP targets between 2004-05 and 2005-06 are attributable to gains in student achievement.

Source: Unpublished data from the Michigan Department of Education, November 2006.

**STATE FUNDING FOR RESTRUCTURING**

Funding for restructuring schools in Michigan has been affected by the state's overall decline in Title I allocations. After a dramatic increase in 2002-03, Michigan's funding for Title I, part A, has fluctuated, resulting in a net loss of funds from 2003-04 to 2006-

07. As shown in **table 2**, the amount of funding Michigan allocated to districts decreased by 2% from 2005-06 to 2006-07. Decreases in total Title I-A funding placed Michigan seventh among the states with the largest decreases (CEP, 2006d).

**Table 2. Total Title I-A Allocations for Michigan School Districts, 2002-03 to 2006-07**

	Title I, Part A Total Allocations to Michigan Districts	Percentage Change from Previous Year
2002-03	\$401,886,593	17.5%
2003-04	\$402,505,826	0.2%
2004-05	\$394,230,846	-2.1%
2005-06	\$407,767,329	3.4%
2006-07	\$399,512,126	-2.0%

Source: Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-6530\\_30334-127227--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-6530_30334-127227--,00.html).

The increase in 2002-03 was primarily due to a national increase in Title I-A funds. Between 2003-04 and 2006-07, however, Michigan experienced a net decrease in Title I-A funds, due chiefly to students leaving the state. Departures from Michigan are expected to continue. A University of Michigan study projects that Michigan will lose about 40,000 jobs over the next two years (Hornbeck, 2007).

States were required by federal law to set aside 2% of their Title I funds in fiscal year 2003 to assist districts and schools in improvement, including schools in restructuring. In 2004 and beyond, all states were required by federal law to set aside 4% of Title I funds for school improvement.<sup>1</sup> Since 2003-04, the Michigan Department of Education has used this Title I set-aside to offer grants to schools in various stages of NCLB improvement. Grants have ranged from \$25,000 to \$45,000. In order to receive the funds, districts and schools had to write grant applications specifically stating what would be done to improve the school, and the applications had to be approved by MDE officials. In some cases, grant funding was withheld until the district and school wrote a plan that satisfied MDE.

As in the past, the amount of funding schools received in 2006-07 varied based on the size of the school and the reason for low academic achievement, as shown in **table 3**. In total, MDE has set aside \$15 million for schools in improvement. Last year, the only schools eligible for grants were those in or just exiting the correc-

tive action or restructuring stages of NCLB. For 2006-07, schools that had been in improvement under NCLB for one or more years were eligible to apply, but schools exiting improvement because they have made AYP for two or more years were ineligible.

For 2006-07, a portion of the state set-aside for schools in improvement will also go to the state's Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), regional education agencies that provide professional development and other services to schools and districts. The reason for this switch is twofold, explained Yvonne Caamal-Canul, director of the Michigan Department of Education's Office of School Improvement. First, a regional agency can apply economies of scale, providing a sustained system of support for schools moving into and out of improvement status. Second, the move to a more regional approach reduces isolated and anecdotal successes, focusing instead on implementing wide-scale promising practices for all of the schools within a service area. Caamal-Canul said she had high hopes for a more regional, collaborative approach for schools in restructuring: "I know the ISDs are ready and willing to build effective support systems so that service delivery is more coherent and cost-effective. While some schools have used their funds based on a solid plan of improvement, others have not. I'm looking forward to creating a service delivery model in which all schools can expect a system of support as soon as they are identified for improvement."

**Table 3. School Improvement Grants in Michigan 2006-07**

Amount of Funding	School Eligibility
\$5,000	School failed to meet AYP targets for non-academic reasons only (test participation, attendance rates, graduation rates)
\$30,000	School has fewer than 1,000 students
\$40,000	School has between 1,000 and 1,500 students
\$45,000	School has more than 1,500 students

Source: Unpublished data from the Michigan Department of Education, November 2006.

<sup>1</sup> Although all states were required to set aside 4%, some were not able to do so because of hold-harmless provisions in NCLB, as explained in the CEP reports, *A Shell Game: Federal Funds to Improve Schools and Title I Funds—Who's Gaining and Who's Losing: School Year 2006-07 Update*, available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).



For the future, MDE is examining all the strategies that have been used to date and selecting those that have proved most effective. State officials said they are also trying to get schools to try strategies earlier so they can move out of improvement more quickly. For schools that continue to fall short of AYP targets after being in improvement for several years, “something must be done differently,” said Mike Radke, assistant director in the Office of School Improvement. He explained that MDE is building a partnership with ISDs to work with high-priority schools and is increasing monitoring in these schools. While this monitoring is not required by law, it is needed because, as a recent study of Michigan schools in restructuring reported, schools have not always followed through with their restructuring plans in Michigan (Plank & Dunbar, 2006).

#### STATE OPTIONS FOR RESTRUCTURING

To define restructuring more clearly, the Michigan Department of Education elaborated on federal options. Michigan also chose not to give districts the option of turning the operation of the school over to the state, as the federal provisions would allow. Michigan officials said this option was impractical for the state, due to small state staff and large numbers of schools in restructuring. **Table 4** lists Michigan’s elaboration on federal restructuring options and shows the percentage of restructuring schools selecting each strategy for 2004-05 and 2005-06. This Michigan list of options has been in place since 2004-05. The percentages of schools choosing various options do not total 100 since some schools used more than one restructuring strategy.

**Table 4. Michigan Restructuring Options and Percentage of Restructuring Schools Using Each, 2004-05 and 2005-06**

Federal Restructuring Options	Michigan Restructuring Options	Percentage of Schools Using Option, 2004-05 <sup>1</sup>	Percentage of Schools Using Option, 2005-06	Percentage Point Change 2004-05 to 2005-06
Enter into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school	Appoint/employ an independent turnaround specialist	16%	72%	56
	Appoint an outside expert to advise the school based on its school improvement plan	5%	4%	-1
	Turn the school’s operation over to a private management company	0%	0%	0
Any other major restructuring of the school’s governance arrangement that makes fundamental reform	Appoint/employ a coach from the Coaches’ Institute	17%	13%	-4
	Use an external research-based reform model	14%	11%	-3
	Turn operation over to the school’s School Improvement Committee/team	3%	10%	7
	Restructure the governance of the school by appointing a governing board	12%	6%	-6
	Decrease the management authority at the school level	3%	1%	-2

(Continued)

**Table 4. Michigan Restructuring Options and Percentage of Restructuring Schools Using Each, 2004-05 and 2005-06 (continued)**

Federal Restructuring Options	Michigan Restructuring Options	Percentage of Schools Using Option, 2004-05 <sup>1</sup>	Percentage of Schools Using Option, 2005-06	Percentage Point Change 2004-05 to 2005-06
Any other major restructuring (continued)	Implement a new research-based curriculum and provide appropriate professional development for all	4%	1%	-3
	Suspend the office of the principal; indicate how the school will be governed	1%	0%	-1
	Restructure the internal organization of the school	2%	0%	-2
	Extend the school year or school day for the school	0%	0%	0
	Implement any other major effort that significantly changes the governance of the school (other than those listed above)	94%	23%	-71
Replace all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP	Appoint a new principal	63%	8%	-55
	Replace most of the staff, including the principal	5%	6%	1
	Replace the staff relevant to the failure to make AYP	4%	0%	-4
Reopen the school as a charter school	Close the school and reopen it as a complete school of choice within district governance (i.e., a charter school that only district students can attend)	1%	1%	0
	Close the school and reopen it as a charter	0%	0%	0
Turn operation of the school over to the state, if the state agrees	Not applicable. The Michigan Department of Education decided that the state did not have the capacity to run individual schools in restructuring.	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Percentages are based on the 109 restructuring schools that are still in operation and still receive Title I funding in 2006-07.

Note: Many schools chose more than one option, so percentages total more than 100%.

Note: Responses are ranked according to the percentage of schools choosing each strategy within the federal options in 2005-06.

Source: Analysis by the Center on Education Policy, based on unpublished data from the Michigan Department of Education, November 2006.

Table 4 shows both some consistency in schools' choices as well as some major changes. Three of the options have never been used by any of the schools in restructuring in the past two years: "close the school and reopen it as a charter," "turn the school's operation over to a private management company," and "extend the school year or school day for the school." The most frequently chosen options shifted substantially from 2004-05 to 2005-06.

In 2004-05, the majority (94%) of restructuring schools chose the any-other option. This option includes a wide variety of possible changes, from breaking the school into smaller learning communities, to shifting to block scheduling, to forming professional learning communities among teachers. For 2005-06, the percentage of schools reporting use of this option fell to 23%. Similarly, the percentage of schools appointing a new principal fell from 63% to 8% between 2004-05 and 2005-06. MDE officials explained that schools and districts were encouraged to decrease the use of these two strategies—the any-other option because it was not very specific, and replacing the principal because it sometimes appeared not to have a large effect on student achievement. Studies have shown that replacing principals and staff had no clear effect on student achievement and did not necessarily secure a more capable or committed staff (Hess, 2003; Malen et al., 2002).

The option that saw the largest increase of users from 2004-05 to 2005-06 was "appoint/employ an independent turnaround specialist." Indeed, this option was used by the largest percentage of restructuring schools (72%) in 2005-06. MDE officials explained that in 2005-06 some schools were required to implement this option based on a review of their individual grant proposals. Detroit Public School officials, for example, reported that MDE required all of the district's schools to employ turnaround specialists.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF RESTRUCTURING

In our 2005 study of Michigan schools in restructuring, we examined how many schools using various strategies in 2004-05 made AYP based on spring 2005 testing and also how many schools using multiple strategies over two years made AYP. We found that schools using particular strategies were no more or less likely to make AYP than schools in restructuring in

general, but that schools using multiple strategies were more likely to make AYP after two years (CEP, 2005).

We had anticipated conducting similar analyses in the current study. For the 2005-06 school year, however, changes in testing dates make the analysis of one year of individual strategies suspect. Testing for 2004-05 occurred in January 2005, while testing for 2005-06 occurred in October 2005, so Michigan schools did not have very long to implement their strategies before the fall tests. We decided, therefore, not to examine the relationships between individual strategies and AYP based on fall 2005 testing.

However, we were able to examine the use of multiple strategies over time. In order to do this, we analyzed the AYP performance of the 82 schools that were in restructuring in 2004-05 and needed to make AYP two years in a row to exit restructuring in 2006-07. In other words, of the 90 schools in restructuring in 2004-05, we eliminated 8 schools from the analysis because they had met AYP targets the previous year and might exit restructuring before 2006-07, the final year of our analysis.

Our analysis showed that for these 82 schools, multiple strategies were more effective than fewer strategies over the past two years (2004-05 and 2005-06). Schools that implemented five or more restructuring strategies over the past two years were significantly more likely to meet AYP targets two years in a row and exit restructuring than those implementing fewer reforms.<sup>2</sup> All (100%) of the restructuring schools that exited restructuring in 2005-06 had implemented five or more strategies over the past two years, compared with only 49% of those implementing four or fewer options.

### COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL AUDITS

While the number of schools in restructuring in Michigan has been cut in half since 2004-05, state officials said they remain concerned about schools that have failed to make progress, particularly those in years 6 and 7 of school improvement. The federal NCLB law and the new federal guidance about school and district improvement issued in the summer of 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) makes no ref-

<sup>2</sup> The analysis used Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ):  $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 17.16, p < 0.001$ .

erence to schools in year 6 and 7, Caamal-Canul noted; therefore, she said MDE is stepping in with a new intervention—the comprehensive school audit.

“The idea is that we can eliminate years 6 and 7. There will be no year 8,” said Ricardo Briones, the MDE consultant who heads up the audit team. The team is made up of 17 Advancing Excellence in Education/North Central Association (AdvancED/NCA) “ambassadors” and 3 Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools (ABCS) coaches. The North Central Association is one of six national school accreditation associations under the parent organization AdvancED, and ambassadors are consultants employed by NCA to work with NCA schools in improvement. ABCS is an alliance of 13 different organizations—including higher education institutions, teachers’ unions, parent groups, public schools, and professional associations—that trains coaches to work with schools in restructuring. The 20 members of the audit team also completed additional training specifically in conducting school audits. Most are former superintendents, principals, or assistant principals.

MDE conducted a pilot of the comprehensive school audit in 2005-06. Briones participated as one of the auditors. “It was uncharted territory,” he noted. “We were flying it as we were building it.” Although Briones called the 2005-06 pilot “toothless,” he said the process had been refined for 2006-07. At a November 6, 2006, statewide workshop on the comprehensive school audit, he said he expected the audits to be able to target what schools needed to do to improve and to recommend large changes, including examining governance.

For 2006-07, the audits focused on 30 schools in year 5, 6, or 7 of school improvement, and the audit instrument was revised, Briones explained. During the summer, Briones and others worked to align the instrument with MDE’s School Improvement Framework. This framework outlines what schools and districts need to do to improve and is based on a review of national research as well as observations of Michigan schools. The framework includes five strands, 12 standards, and 26 benchmarks. Each benchmark also includes characteristics and questions. Schools and districts are charged with discussing these questions in order to determine what steps to take to improve. The document is central to all of MDE’s reform initiatives

and will soon be used as part of the state report card for each school. It is available at [www.michigan.gov/schoolimprovement](http://www.michigan.gov/schoolimprovement).

The audit instrument redesign also had input from Brian McNulty, a consultant formerly with the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning laboratory and now with the Center for Performance Assessment. McNulty is known for his work with Robert Marzano and Tim Waters on “balanced leadership” a set of best practices for school administrators, based on a meta-analysis of research on effective principals. In addition, MDE’s special education office partnered with the Office of School Improvement on the revision, since many Michigan schools have particular difficulty moving students with disabilities to proficient levels on state tests.

Before the 2006-07 audits, school and district officials met with MDE officials about the audit, although the exact questions the auditors would ask were not revealed. Participants were given a list of who should be involved in the audit—namely, representatives of the administrative staff, teachers, parents, and significant partners such as university advisors or staff from the intermediate school districts. Participants were also provided with a sample visit schedule, a final report template showing how the school would be evaluated, and a form to evaluate the auditor’s visits, Briones said.

During the audit, Briones explained that two to three auditors spent an entire day interviewing and observing at each school. The auditors also examined five years’ worth of school data prepared by a MDE analyst. Reports and recommendations were released to the schools in February 2007, Briones said.

In the future, MDE plans to implement audits sooner. According to Caamal-Canul, new state policy would say to schools in year 3 of improvement, “You’ve known for the last three years that you needed to change. Let’s find out now what you’ll need to restructure later.”

## A Closer Look at the Results of Restructuring in Michigan

To identify districts to participate in this CEP study, CEP asked the Michigan Department of Education in

the summer of 2004 to submit a list of districts that were on track in implementing their restructuring plans for 2004-05. From this list, CEP chose to study the Harrison, Flint, and Willow Run school districts because each was using one or more of the four most popular restructuring strategies at that time. The three districts were also chosen because they represented different types of districts: Harrison Community Schools is rural, Flint Community Schools is urban, and Willow Run Community Schools is suburban. Districts recommended schools in restructuring for participation.

Since the 2004 study, Harrison's schools in restructuring exited school improvement and have continued to meet AYP targets, as have all rural schools in Michigan. Since Harrison has no schools in restructuring this year, CEP added Detroit Public Schools to the study because the majority of schools in restructuring in Michigan are urban districts, and most of the urban schools in restructuring in Michigan are in Detroit. District officials in Detroit recommended schools for participation.

### **THEMES FROM RESTRUCTURING DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS**

Declining enrollments and the resulting financial difficulties have challenged all districts in this study. Declining enrollment is not surprising, given that the state of Michigan lost 15,000 students last year (Wilkinson, 2007). The Harrison district closed a school in 2002-03, and Flint and Detroit have had to close schools this year in 2006-07. These school closures have been based only partly on the schools' effectiveness. Officials described the closures as very difficult for many parents and teachers to accept. For example, Detroit had to close a school in restructuring that had just made AYP for the first time. Parents and teachers were understandably disappointed that just when their efforts to improve the school were paying off, they had to quit, a district official said. Although Willow Run has not closed schools, the district closed its administrative building and moved the offices into vacant classrooms in the high school. Due to declines in enrollment and funding, the Willow Run middle school also had to eliminate some extracurricular activities and switch from four multi-grade teacher teams to three grade-level teacher teams, even though multi-

grade teams were part of the school's plan for restructuring and raising student achievement.

No district officials said that their official NCLB restructuring strategies alone would transform their schools. Instead, all reported that they believed a number of additional strategies had been or would be important to raising student achievement. These strategies included using data to make instructional decisions, increasing teacher collaboration, and sharing decision making at the school rather than relying on the principal alone. Interviewees in Harrison, Flint, and Willow Run also reported that coaches and other external experts were essential to school improvement initiatives. Interviewees in Willow Run and Detroit reported that school "reconstitution"—having all staff reapply for their jobs—made a difference.

### **GOVERNANCE CHANGES, EXTERNAL EXPERT, AND OTHER RESTRUCTURING EFFORTS IN HARRISON**

Harrison Community Schools is a rural school district serving about 1,800 students in central Michigan. The vast majority of the students, 96%, are white, and about 55% are low-income, so the district faces challenges related to poverty. Due to declining enrollments and fiscal difficulties, the district closed its most rural elementary school building at the end of the 2002-03 school year. The other two elementary schools, Larson Elementary and Hillside Elementary, historically had difficulty meeting AYP targets. Both were placed in restructuring based on 2002-03 state test scores. Both made significant changes during the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years. Based on 2004-05 testing, both schools moved off the state's list of schools in need of improvement.

As of the 2005-06 school year, no schools in Harrison are identified for restructuring. As shown in **table 5**, 74% to 76% of Hillside's students, depending on grade level, scored at or above the proficient level on state reading tests in 2005-06, and 67% to 83% reached proficiency in math. Comparisons to previous years are not possible because of changes in Michigan's testing system. Test scores for Larson are not shown, because the school serves students in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, which are not tested in Michigan.



**Table 5. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Hillside Elementary, 2005-06**

Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
3	76%	83%
4	75%	74%
5	74%	67%

Source: Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709\\_31168\\_40135---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168_40135---,00.html).

### Restructuring governance

Harrison used a variety of strategies to improve its two schools in restructuring. To comply with the NCLB requirements for restructuring, the schools added a new governance board. Superintendent Christopher Rundle appointed this board, which consists of state and local education leaders, to make major decisions about the schools' operations. Members of the new governing board included Rundle, Harrison's field services consultant in the state Office of School Improvement, the superintendent of the district's Regional Education Service District, and the president of the district's teachers union. The board was eliminated once the school exited restructuring. "The governance board was not what got us out of restructuring," noted Hillside principal Michele Sandro. Instead, she said, staff believed choosing this official option was least intrusive and would allow staff to implement other initiatives to improve the school.

### External expert

Some of the most important contributions to school improvement came from an external expert, Nancy Colflesh, Sandro said. Colflesh had worked with the district previously, so although she was not a state-trained coach, which MDE advocated appointing, she did have a history of a trusting and positive relationship with the district. Colflesh did the initial training with teachers on how to work effectively in teams, and she is currently helping to train peer literacy coaches. She also continues to provide help monitoring and analyzing data. "Nancy holds us accountable," said Sandro. "She sends us e-mails. She stops in. She reminds us 'Are you doing this, this, and this? Are you sticking to your agenda? Are you evaluating your meetings?' It is really nice to have someone watching."

Sandro emphasized that this kind of accountability is important because Colflesh examines data beyond test scores and provides suggestions for immediate improvement.

### Teacher teams

Harrison's schools in restructuring instituted two types of teacher teams to guide reforms: grade-level teams and vertical curriculum teams. Grade-level teams met for about an hour and a half twice a month and consisted of all teachers in a particular grade. Vertical curriculum teams were cross-grade-level and met for half a day, once a month, to work on math and writing curricula. Restructuring funds provided substitutes for teachers while they were meeting. Both types of teams continue to meet at both schools even after restructuring has ended, although the district no longer receives a school improvement grant to fund the substitutes.

Decisions of teachers in cross-level teams changed the curriculum and instruction in the schools, teachers said. Curricular teams had funding from the district's restructuring budget to buy supplemental materials, such as computer software for improving math achievement and math textbooks that matched the texts used in the middle school. These curricular teams bought the materials, passed on information to the grade-level teams, and recommended professional development to support curricular goals.

These teams also helped to facilitate a move toward flexible grouping for language arts and math. In grade-level teams, teachers frequently analyzed student achievement data, grouped their students according to the skills they needed to work on, and then designed lessons to meet the needs of each group. This flexible

grouping was a departure from previous practice when some teachers taught one lesson to the whole class. Flexible grouping based on analyses of student needs continues in both schools.

### Peer literacy coaches

Training for peer coaches was initially funded through a federal Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program grant, and teachers were hand picked to receive training and become coaches. Coaches made a big difference in improving instruction and raising student achievement at both schools, Sandro said. The CSR grant ended at Hillside in 2005-06 and will end at Larson in 2006-07.

In order to sustain peer coaching, teachers at Larson are required to be peer literacy coaches, while teachers at Hillside are strongly encouraged to volunteer, which the majority have done, according to Sandro. The coaches are involved in professional development that encourages teachers to open their classrooms to their colleagues, examine student work with a colleague, and coach one another on good teaching. Sometimes coaches teach model lessons, and sometimes they observe. As coaches, teachers focus on particular areas they feel they have expertise in, Sandro explained.

### Other restructuring efforts

Another initiative Sandro credits with making positive changes is the Smart Schools / Smart Teams / Smart Goals process, a professional development program offered by a national corporation, Quality Leadership by Design in Wisconsin. The professional development helped Larson and Hillside staffs develop school-wide goals and teams to meet those goals. The goals developed through the Smart Schools process have been adopted by both the vertical curriculum and grade-level teams, Sandro said. Although the training has ended, she said, the process is “an integral part of our daily work here at Hillside.”

Although Harrison schools have been out of restructuring for two years, maintaining the reforms remains a priority, Sandro said. The teacher teams, peer literacy coaches, and Smart Schools process are ongoing this year. Having time and funding for these initiatives, however, may prove difficult in the future, she said. Declining enrollment, the end of state grants for

restructuring, and the end of the CSR grant all mean less funding to support reforms. “That all adds up to less financial support in a time when you need the help most,” Sandro explained.

### COACHES, TURNAROUND SPECIALISTS, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAMS, AND SCHOOL AUDITS IN FLINT

Located in southeastern Michigan, Flint Community Schools is the fourth largest urban school district in the state. Brownell Elementary, in the center of Flint, is a predominantly African American school with high student mobility and high poverty. A former center for heavy industry, the city has been losing population since the decline of automobile manufacturing in the U.S.

Addressing the challenges of poverty and declining enrollment is paramount in the city’s schools, where 68% of students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch and all elementary and middle grade schools receive Title I funds. Based on 2004-05 testing, all elementary schools, including Brownell, made AYP. This was a first for Flint, where elementary schools have typically struggled to meet rising AYP targets. Brownell Elementary had never before met all AYP targets. Brownell again met AYP targets on 2005-06 tests and exited restructuring. The percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level at Brownell on 2005-06 tests are shown in **table 6**. Comparisons to previous years are not possible because of changes in Michigan’s testing system.

Based on 2005-06 testing, only the district’s four middle schools remained in restructuring. As a response to both the academic needs in these schools and to declining enrollment, Flint officials said, the district opted to close all four middle schools and reassign 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to newly created “Foundation Academies” housed in high school buildings. The percentages of students reaching proficiency in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in Flint on 2005-06 tests are shown in **table 7**. Again, comparisons to previous years are not possible because of changes in Michigan’s testing system.

### Coaching and turnaround specialists

As its districtwide strategy for restructuring, Flint placed state-trained coaches at each school in restructuring and additional turnaround specialists in some

**Table 6. Percentage of Students Scoring at or Above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Brownell Elementary, 2005-06**

Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
3	86%	62%
4	74%	74%
5	68%	45%
6	52%	59%

Source: Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709\\_31168\\_40135---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168_40135---,00.html).

**Table 7. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Flint's Middle Schools, 2005-06**

Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
7	49%	23%
8	40%	27%

Source: Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709\\_31168\\_40135---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168_40135---,00.html).

schools as funding allowed. Bringing in outside expertise was an appealing option for Flint because it focused on making real changes at the school, said David Solis, director of state, federal, and local programs. Flint had past experience with reconstitution, another state program that replaced staff at schools that were having difficulties. But, as Solis explained, “We found that just replacing staff in and of itself is not an option. Changing staff and having staff do the same thing does not in any way change the academic performance of students.” In 2005-06, Flint only made one staff change based on restructuring; that was at Whittier Elementary and was required by MDE based on a school audit.

At Brownell Elementary, the staff attributes the increase in student achievement in part to coaching. In the 2004-05 school year, Brownell had a state trained coach who focused on leadership in literacy and a turnaround specialist who focused on math. In the 2005-06 school year, both positions were filled by state-trained coaches hired through the schools’ \$45,000 school improvement grant.

As explained by the Brownell principal and staff, the role of the coaches was to help analyze student data in order to group students based on instructional needs; model quality instruction for teachers; provide professional development for staff, especially in teaching higher-order thinking skills; evaluate and organize the school’s curricular materials; and serve on the school improvement team, which at Brownell made all curricular and purchasing decisions. Although the coaches have changed over the past two years, they have played similar roles. In 2005-06, said 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Phillip Patterson, “They came in, and they immediately assumed a leading role.”

In 2004-05 one of the lasting contributions of the coaches was the leveled reading library of more than 50,000 books, said new principal Valeria Shepard. “A lot of the books had already been purchased and were in the building. We just didn’t have anybody here who could come and actually organize them and catalog them,” Shepard explained. “We never would have been able to do that without the coach.” This coach also trained teachers to use the leveled library to make sure

students had books to read that were exactly right for the student's reading level.

The coach who focused on reading in 2005-06, Daryl Evans, maintained the library. She also helped the teachers analyze student data to group students based on the reading skills they needed to learn. These groups, which changed every few weeks based on students' needs, were instructed by a rotating staff that included the coach and paraprofessionals as well as classroom teachers. The classroom teachers spent the most time with the lower achieving students, while Evans worked with middle to high achievers. Paraprofessionals were trained to provide very specific interventions, Evans explained. "We were able to tailor our instruction to meet kids' needs at different levels," Patterson said.

In 2005-06, Evans also introduced the *Step Up to Writing* curriculum, which focuses on the writing process and writing across the curriculum. The program was used in addition to the district-required, 90-minute English language arts block, which also has a writing component. The school also gave students many opportunities to write and share their writing, such as a monthly schoolwide writing prompt, a weekly writing prompt from a local paper that published a small number of student responses, and a Coca-Cola writing contest. "Quite frankly, many students became motivated by these activities," Evans explained. "Not only were they learning strategies. They suddenly were starting to love writing."

In math, curricular changes were also made. Although Brownell uses a math textbook that addresses the state standards, it had not been clear to teachers what to teach when, or how much emphasis to place on particular areas of the curriculum. The math coach did an audit of the text book series. "She was able to provide us with clear information and an understanding of what those texts had to offer based on what children were going to be asked on state tests," Patterson said. The staff ultimately created tabs for each teacher's edition that showed state standards and gave sequencing information.

While district and school staff said coaches had been essential to raising student achievement, all expressed concerns about the sustainability of their efforts. For 2006-07, schools that have just come out of improve-

ment will no longer be able to apply for the school improvement grants that funded coaches in Flint. One teacher at Brownell compared coaching to physical therapy. In good physical therapy, she said, "You give the patients everything that they need from the beginning. Then you begin to wean them off little by little." Withdrawing coaches and other supports for schools coming out of improvement, she said, was like a physical therapist saying, "I've got you up off the bed. Now, you stand with those crutches. Now, give me those crutches."

### School improvement committee

School improvement teams were another strategy used districtwide, district officials said. The teams, usually made up of the principal, the coach, and teacher representatives, took responsibility for all curricular and purchasing decisions at the school. Since all Title I purchases come through Solis's office he could monitor whether the teams were collaborating on requisitions. At times, for example, he would get requisitions with just a principal's signature, which he would have to return to the school for an assurance that the team had approved the purchase. He explained that he would accept signatures from the school improvement team chair, the coach, or a consensus of the school improvement team, but the team had to decide on a process and stick with it. "There were some concerns about who was calling the shots at the building, and we worked through that," Solis said. "Change is difficult. Brownell handled requisitions in a very amicable fashion. With other schools, it was a little more difficult."

For 2006-07, only one of the four restructuring middle schools has a school improvement team with decision-making power: Whittier Middle, which moved to the Central Academy high school building as a Foundation Academy within Central. In the fall of 2006, when data collection for this study took place, the team was still deciding how it would take responsibility for curricular and purchasing decisions. Brownell is also keeping its school improvement team for 2006-07.

At Brownell in 2005-06, the team was made up of the principal, the two coaches, and teachers who volunteered to participate. While staff at Brownell said it took a while to figure out exactly how the team would work, there was little resistance. "There's too much for one person to do in any elementary school," Patterson

pointed out. “I think that’s why there’s been little resistance from the administration.”

Lucy Smith, who was principal in 2005-06 when the team started, retired at the end of that year. Valeria Shepard, who became principal in 2006-07, decided to keep the team in place even though the school is no longer in restructuring. “I know that I can’t make this work without them,” she said. “So, why would I want to come in and destroy the team effort that’s already been established?”

In addition to teachers taking more leadership at Brownell through the school improvement team, teachers also took leadership by departmentalizing in the upper grades, creating a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade team and a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade team. Within these teams, teachers chose areas of specialization. For example, Patterson on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade team specialized in and taught all students math and social studies. These teachers were also responsible for communicating with the school improvement team about curricular needs. “Everybody participated in a stewardship that brought in more materials from the district and from their own findings,” explained Patterson.

### Comprehensive school audit

District staff reported mixed responses to the state’s audit of Whittier Middle School in 2005-06. Initially, district-level staff members were enthusiastic about the audit. Karen Lee, assistant director of state and local program, said, “I had a few school staff members who were somewhat in denial about the need for change. And when the audit was first announced, the state made it sound like they were going to really come in and drive change.”

Solis and Lee both emphasized that they realized that the audits were just being piloted in 2005-06 and had not been perfected; however, they did not think the audit was effective in helping Whittier. “The suggestions were just too vague,” said Lee. “What they basically said to the school was just enough to start more chaos.”

For 2006-07, the district decided to abandon efforts at reforming Whittier and moved students to a new school site as part of the districtwide initiative to eliminate traditional middle schools and start 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Foundation Academies on high schools sites. This move also helped Flint deal with declining enroll-

ment and revenues. Middle school administrators across the district reapplied for their jobs. The new structure required an administrative staff for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Foundation Academies as well as the 9<sup>th</sup> grade Success Academies and the 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade Commencement Academies. This meant that more administrative positions were actually required than in the past, so this gave middle school administrators more job opportunities than they previously had, Solis explained. While Solis said the state audit was not the drive for the current transformation at Whittier, he did say that he expected the 2006-07 audits to have improved based on what the state learned from the pilot in 2005-06.

### TURNAROUND SPECIALIST COORDINATES PAST REFORMS IN WILLOW RUN

Willow Run Community Schools is a suburban district with about 2,500 students in southeastern Michigan. It is home to many people who work in Ypsilanti and some who work in Ann Arbor and Detroit. Due to its easy access to these larger cities, Willow Run has a very transient population, and its enrollment and revenues are currently in decline. About 56% of its students are African American, and 41% are white. The district faces challenges related to poverty; about 63% of students are from low-income families.

Willow Run Middle School was placed in restructuring in 2003-04. Over the summer of 2004, the district built a new building and restaffed the school. This new staff implemented a new research-based curriculum. Although some district officials argued that the new school should get a clean slate for NCLB, state officials determined that the school’s past performance was still relevant to NCLB status. Due to the performance of students with disabilities in math, the school did not make AYP in 2004-05, but on 2005-06 testing the school met all AYP targets. If the school meets targets again on 2006-07 tests, the school will exit restructuring. The percentages of Willow Run Middle School students scoring at or above proficiency on the 2006-07 state tests are shown in **table 8**. Comparisons to previous years are not possible because of changes in Michigan’s testing system.



**Table 8. Percentage of Students Scoring at or Above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Willow Run Middle School, 2005-06**

Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
6	59%	36%
7	60%	37%
8	68%	47%

Source: Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-22709\\_31168\\_40135---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-22709_31168_40135---,00.html).

### Past reform: External research-based reform model

Willow Run's research-based reform model was developed by a design team made up of teachers, parents, and district administrators. The team met regularly for a year to explore possible reform models and come up with a specific plan for the new school. The reforms chosen were based on proven strategies identified by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, effective middle schools research from the National Middle School Association, and Turning Points research by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Many reforms, such as small learning communities and the Freedom to Learn, were made possible by the physical structure of the new building, which has four separate classroom wings and many technological enhancements.

Over the 2005-06 school year, "the new curriculum was embraced," said Mel Anglin, the school's new principal. "Within our building we began to utilize our technology and integrate it with education." The school had established benchmarks based on state standards and had set up benchmark assessment in 2004-05, he said, noting that in 2005-06 teachers developed additional assessments to monitor students every week or two rather than every nine weeks. This year, he said, "teachers are sitting down and planning by looking at how well the kids did. We've actually got everyone on the same page."

For 2006-07, the school has increased its intervention opportunities for students, Anglin said. The last instructional class of each day in the school's block schedule is Academic Enrichment, a time when students participate in enrichment activities in English language arts or are identified for reteaching. Grade-

level teacher teams determine how students are grouped. The program is very new, Anglin said. "I have no two teams that are doing things alike. We're trying to get comfortable with it, and we're really trying to find ourselves as far as what a good strong intervention program is going to be for our kids."

### Past reform: Replacing the principal and staff

In addition to developing a new curriculum, the district also replaced the principal and much of the middle school staff when it opened the new middle school building in 2004. The district negotiated with the union and determined that all teachers would reapply for their jobs, transfer to a grade other than 6, 7, or 8, or retire. Some teachers who had taught at the old middle school took advantage of an attractive early retirement package and did not move to the new school. Other teachers did move to the new school, and the remaining positions were filled with transfers and new hires.

District staff and teachers both said that restaffing had a positive effect on the school because of the way the restaffing was done. "It's not just replacing staff; it's asking them to buy into change," said Regina Williams, the district's director of secondary education. In the staff interviews, Williams explained that to be rehired teachers had to commit to the planned changes in the middle school. "When you buy into a process, then you're willing to make some changes and be flexible," she pointed out. "You could just change staff and still have some people who don't buy into it."

Sixth-grade teacher Betty Hopkins also saw the staff change as essential to the school's successes. "All the teachers had to commit to following the principles of

the school and make a commitment to achievement,” she said. “Whatever we do, the children will be first, and we will achieve. I think that’s what we’re seeing.”

The school’s original plan to have the new staff work in four small multi-grade pods has not been fulfilled, however. Declining enrollment and finances have meant that the district did not have enough funding to employ enough teachers of electives to support the four pod arrangement, Williams explained. For 2006-07, three grade-level teams have replaced the pods.

Superintendent Ron Ciranna pointed out that the decline in enrollment has been ongoing, as the entire state of Michigan has been steadily losing population. In addition, he said, the district loses students every year to other districts, charter schools, and home schooling. For 2006-07, the district lost 115 students, a larger number than usual. He attributes this loss to a controversial school board election over the summer, in which the district received a good deal of negative media attention, even though the middle school had met all AYP targets for the first time in years. Finally, he noted that even without unusually large loss of students for 2006-07, the district would have been in a financial hole.

When Ciranna was promoted to interim superintendent in 2005-06, “it was evident the district was on a downhill slide,” he said. Many administrators had thought the new middle school building would draw large numbers of new students and increased revenues. “Anytime you do open up a brand new building, you will get a bump in enrollment,” Ciranna said, “but the bump wasn’t as significant as it could have or it should have been for a \$20-some million dollar building.”

Hopkins noted that teachers were discouraged by no longer having the multi-grade level pods and smaller classes that had allowed them to work closely with students for several years. The district did, however, protect the middle school teachers’ team planning times. “It was a good morale booster for our teachers,” Anglin said, especially since the teachers now have larger classes.

### **Turnaround specialist**

As the district administrators and middle school staff rewrote the school’s improvement plan in 2005-06, they realized that there were too many different initia-

tives at the school, Williams said. Instead of starting something new, she explained, “we needed to tie all these initiatives together.” The district and school decided to use their school improvement grant to hire a turnaround specialist to make sense of and consolidate the school’s efforts at reform. A turnaround specialist and the any-other restructuring option were the middle school’s official restructuring options for 2005-06 and 2006-07.

The district chose Bill Hamilton as its turnaround specialist because he had been a successful administrator in a neighboring district and had experience with Freedom to Learn, the laptop instructional model that the school was still attempting to implement fully. The first order of business for Hamilton was to help the school finish revising its school improvement plan, Principal Anglin said. Next was to work with staff to plan professional development activities for the year. Typically, Hamilton met at least once a month with the full staff.

With Hamilton’s assistance, the school also developed a balanced leadership team, based on the research of consultant Brian McNulty. The team took on the responsibility of making decisions in school governance and management and in curriculum, Anglin said, noting that he was more comfortable sharing power with teachers than making all of these decisions himself. Members of the balanced leadership team include the teacher leader for each grade level, a special education teacher, an electives teacher, the principal, a Title I teacher, a school board member, and two district administrators including Williams.

District officials noted that this team is especially important in the middle school because the school and district have both experienced a great deal of turnover in administrative staff. Anglin officially retired from Willow Run in 2002 and worked in the Detroit charter school system. Willow Run convinced Anglin to come out of retirement to lead the middle school in 2005-06 when the search for a permanent principal proved fruitless. Anglin plans to retire again within the next five years, although he said he would like to see Willow Run through its school improvement process.

Hamilton and the balanced leadership team have helped deepen the existing initiatives at the school by involving staff in decision making, leadership, and

implementation, district and school officials said. Speaking of consultants like Hamilton, 6<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher Hopkins said, “We’re actually making decisions together, and then the consultants are keeping us on track by asking, ‘Well, how are you? How are you doing now? How did that go?’ They’re actually helping us reach our goals, not making our goals for us.”

### TURNAROUND SPECIALISTS, REPLACING STAFF, AND SCHOOL AUDITS IN DETROIT

Detroit is the largest school district in Michigan. An urban school system in a city known for factory closures, Detroit suffers from population loss and financial decline. Over the past eight years, the district has lost about 50,000 students, roughly a third of the student population. Some students have moved out of the city. Others attend charter schools or schools in neighboring districts. At the beginning of the 2006-07 school year Detroit had 35 vacant buildings, many of which have suffered vandalism; in early 2007, the district was considering closing an additional 51 buildings for a projected saving of \$19 million (MacDonald & Menard, 2007). In addition to financial difficulties due to loss of enrollment, the district and the Detroit Federation of Teachers failed to reach a contract agreement by the start of the 2006-07 school year. The 16-day strike resulted in additional loss of students, amounting to an estimated \$12 million loss of revenue (MacDonald, 2006).

Of the approximately 119,000 students in Detroit, 90% are African American, 6% are Latino, and 3% are white. In addition, 71% are enrolled in the free or reduced-price lunch program, an indicator of poverty.

Based on 2005-06 testing, four Detroit schools are in their fourth year of NCLB improvement, the restruc-

turing planning year. Seven schools are in year 5, restructuring implementation, but one of these schools closed. Seventeen are in year 6. Four are in year 7, but one of these closed. Two schools participating in this study are in year 6: Cerveny Middle School and Cleveland Middle Schools. William Beckham Academy is in year 5. Like the district, these schools serve a student population that is predominately African American and low-income. In addition, about 12% of the Cleveland Middle School students are Bangladeshi. The percentage of students in the three schools scoring at or above the proficient level on the 2006-07 state tests are shown the **tables 9, 10 and 11**. Cleveland did not make AYP due to the performance of the general population in English language arts, while Cerveny missed AYP targets due to the general population performance in math. Beckham Academy missed AYP due to the performance of just one subgroup—students with disabilities in English language arts only. Comparisons to previous years are not possible because of changes in Michigan’s testing system.

### Turnaround specialists

MDE required all Detroit schools in restructuring to employ turnaround specialists. Detroit officials expressed mixed reactions to these specialists and their effect on student achievement in 2005-06. “Principals and stakeholders in general question the value of the turnaround specialists,” said Otis Stanley, director of the district’s Office of School Improvement and Development. This was because many turnaround specialists were former Detroit Public School administrators, said Stanley, and school staff believed these administrators were partially responsible for the decline of the school system. “Most [teachers and school administrators] believe that they could use the

**Table 9. Percentage of Students Scoring at or Above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Cerveny Middle School, 2005-06**

Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
6	46%	8%
7	37%	8%
8	42%	19%

Source: Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709\\_31168\\_40135--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_31168_40135--,00.html).

**Table 10. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in Cleveland Middle School, 2005-06**

Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
6	47%	24%
7	39%	16%
8	45%	32%

Source: Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-22709\\_31168\\_40135---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-22709_31168_40135---,00.html).

**Table 11. Percentage of Students Scoring at or above the Proficient Level on the Michigan (MEAP) Tests in William Beckham Academy, 2005-06**

Grade	Percentage Proficient in Reading	Percentage Proficient in Math
3	75%	65%
4	59%	50%
5	52%	35%

Source: Michigan Department of Education Web Site [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-22709\\_31168\\_40135---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,16077-140-22709_31168_40135---,00.html)

monies in a way more beneficial to the school's goals," he added.

It was not that the work of the turnaround specialist was not appreciated, said Juanita Chambers, associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction. Instead, she said, the district and schools would have liked to use the \$45,000 restructuring grant for other things. In particular, she favored instructional coaches who worked more closely with students, but she acknowledged that these coaches did not count as "restructuring" under the federal guidance. Detroit will follow the federal law, Chambers said, "but I also know that if we don't directly support students, it's difficult to make AYP."

While middle school principals in this study said they received useful assistance from turnaround specialists, the specialists were not among the changes that they reported had made a difference in improving their schools. Both schools also replaced staff as one of their "official" restructuring strategies. Describing the role of the turnaround specialist, Cervený Principal Gladys Stoner said, "She worked with me two days a week. She

was able to assist me because of her prior knowledge and experience in the role. She was also willing to perform some principal duties when I was otherwise engaged."

At Beckham Academy, where the turnaround specialist is the school's single "official" restructuring strategy, Principal William Batchelor said the turnaround specialist "gives me someone to bounce ideas off of who has sat in the principal's chair. There's nothing like having someone around who has walked the walk." Batchelor and the turnaround specialist meet twice a week. After several years in restructuring planning under NCLB, the general student population at Beckham met all AYP targets. Only the performance of special education students in English language arts kept the school from making AYP.

Still, Batchelor reported that the turnaround specialist is not the only factor that has helped the school improve. Instead, he attributes improvements primarily to the Comer model and increased staff stability after a period of layoffs. In the late 1990s, the school began adopting various aspects of the Comer model, a whole school reform initiative that focuses on creating

a collaborative staff culture and empowering students. A federal Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grant allowed the school to train all staff to implement the Comer model fully in 2002. At the beginning of this year, Beckham's staff had increased by 25 teachers due to the opening of a new building. Batchelor said the important thing about the Comer model is that new staff and community members learn to work together: "There's a strength that's released when staff works toward a common goal."

After Beckham's initial training of staff in 2001-02, the entire district experienced declines in student enrollment and laid off teachers with low seniority. From 2002 to 2004, these layoffs affected 25 Beckham teachers with low seniority. Most of the laid-off teachers had been recently hired when the new school opened, and all had been trained in the Comer model. Other district teachers who had not participated in the Comer training but had more seniority were transferred into the school. The school has about 50 teachers total.

Changes in staff made it difficult to maintain the Comer model, Batchelor noted. Over the last two years, however, the school staff has stabilized, and the model has again been fully implemented at the school, he said. This period corresponds with the school's rising percentages of students reaching proficiency on state tests. "It's detrimental when staff keeps turning over," Batchelor explained. "We're beginning to get a handle on things now."

### Replacing staff

Principals in both middle schools in this study were among the five Detroit schools in restructuring that replaced staff as their primary restructuring strategy for 2006-07. A few years ago in a "letter of agreement" in its contract, the Detroit Federation of Teachers agreed that in schools that had been in restructuring for a number of years, the district would be allowed to require all teachers to reapply for their jobs and be involuntarily transferred if they were not hired, Chambers explained.

Principals in both schools said that replacing staff was an arduous process. "It was a long, drawn-out process," recalled Donna Thornton, principal of Cleveland Middle School. "I spent all summer downtown at cen-

tral office from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. every day interviewing, and then after I interviewed, I went over applications and resumes." Ultimately, at Cerveny Middle School, three special education positions remained unfilled because qualified applicants were not found. The percentage of teachers at the school who were highly qualified according to the NCLB definition, however, increased slightly after the restaffing, principal Gladys Stoner said.

Despite the difficulty of finding new staff, both Stoner and Thornton said the result was worth the effort. "They're all here because they want to be here," Stoner said of her new staff. "We're all working for a common cause. The greatest thing about it is that if I suggest something, they're willing to try. There's very little resistance." In previous years, both principals said that not all teachers followed through with planned improvement efforts, which led to frustration. "Having folks who are not necessarily cooperating with you and who are not willing to buy into the vision of the school or the district is like banging your head up against the wall," Stoner explained.

Besides finding cooperative, committed, highly qualified teachers, the two principals had additional strategies for restaffing. For Stoner, the goal was to hire teachers at various points in their careers. "I needed some seasoned teachers to mentor the younger teachers coming in. I needed the young teachers because they're fresh, idealistic, and ready to try anything. And I needed people in the middle to just keep it all going." Thornton's focus was on staff diversity. Although she emphasized that she did not discriminate by race or gender, she was cognizant of the diversity of her staff as she made hires. "I wanted to make sure that not only did the school have a diverse student population but a diverse instructional population, because I want students to see a real picture of the world," she explained.

Both principals said their new staff had helped them implement major changes at their schools this year. At Cerveny, these changes include creating "houses" for each grade level, giving teachers common planning time, increasing professional development targeted to teacher needs, and forming a school improvement team made up of teachers and administrators who make decisions about the school. Teacher commitment to the house system had led to vast improvements in student discipline and time on task Stoner said. Prior



to the house system, students changed classes frequently and teachers did not monitor the hallways adequately, which led to many discipline problems. As an example of how discipline has changed at the school, Stoner described an article in the school's new student newspaper. "The article was titled 'What's Happening in the Halls of Cerveney Middle School?' And the young lady who wrote the article started off by saying, 'Absolutely nothing.' Kids are in class where they should be. Learning is taking place," Stoner said.

Cleveland has also added a school improvement team to involve teachers in school leadership and has organized the students and teachers into grade-level teams. These teams are designed to become small learning communities and to use an alternating block schedule, which reduces time in the hallways, increases learning time, and decreases discipline problems. The school has also added electives and an on-site after school tutoring program. Another primary change, Thornton reported, was in the maintenance of the building. "When I got here [in the fall of 2004], the school looked like a dump. I was totally appalled by what I saw," she recalled. Due to lack of district resources, general maintenance had been neglected for years, she explained. With the help of grants and partnerships with local business people, Thornton said the school has remodeled the media center, turned an obsolete home economics room into a Title I reading and writing center, created a community room for parents and volunteers, and painted the interior of the building.

Some renovations have been called to a halt because Cleveland is one of 51 schools slated to close at the end of 2007. Thornton said staff and parents are pushing for the school to stay open. "The district started this initiative, and they've only given it a year and a half. What was the point in going through all of this, if the district is not going to follow through?" Thornton asked.

### School audits

Principals said the school audits they participated in were helpful but not particularly surprising. Thornton said that the recommendations from the audit conducted as part of the pilot run in 2005-06 "were already on my list because I had taken my first year at the school and just observed to see what was going on. The audit team came in and pretty much did the same thing." She said she expected positive results from the

audit of 2006-07. "I'm not worried about the audit because I know we have done what we said we were going to do."

Although Cerveney Middle School had yet to receive the recommendations of the audit in 2006-07, Stoner said the auditors had very positive things to say when they visited the school. She said she and her staff appreciated having the audit. "It let us know whether or not we were on the right track," she explained. "The fact that we could answer affirmatively or present evidence of everything they asked about really helped us become more grounded. It's eliminated our doubts."

## Conclusion

In the last two years, Michigan has been successful in moving more than half of its schools in restructuring out of school improvement altogether. Some of these schools' successes in meeting AYP targets may be due to the state's adopting a confidence interval in 2004-05, which made it easier for schools to make AYP, and changing the testing system substantially in 2005-06. More study is needed to determine how successful restructuring will be in Michigan over time.

At this point, CEP's analysis of state data on schools in restructuring in Michigan since 2003-04 and our annual case studies of Michigan districts and schools show that Michigan has some important lessons to share about restructuring under NCLB. First, there are no simple quick fixes. Schools that reported using multiple strategies for improvement were more likely to meet AYP targets. Case study districts that moved schools out of restructuring altogether, Harrison and Flint, confirmed these quantitative findings. Strategies these districts have in common, in addition to their official restructuring strategies, include using data to make instructional decisions, increasing teacher collaboration, sharing decision making at the school rather than relying on the principal alone, and employing coaches and other external experts. Districts and schools typically reported that no single thing had increased the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on state tests. Instead, multiple initiatives—some "official" restructuring strategies and others not—were given credit for the schools' successes.

Second, Michigan's school improvement grant process has helped shape the multiple strategies at schools in restructuring. Our analysis shows, for example, that when state officials required or recommended particular strategies in order for schools to get grants, these strategies were adopted. In addition, district and school officials knew what was in their grant application and how these funds were being used, even though these official strategies were not always their only school improvement strategies. Michigan's comprehensive school audit may increase state leadership in restructuring in the future. As of January 2007, results of the 2006-07 audits had yet to be reported.

Finally, while our findings indicate a need for intensive, multiple initiatives at restructuring schools, finances to support these initiatives in Michigan are limited and may decrease in the future. Financial experts currently predict state budget shortfalls of \$377 million in school aid, which could lead to a \$224-per-student reduction to local districts (Hornbeck, 2007). Our case study districts all reported they currently did not have the funding to implement all the initiatives they thought were necessary to improve schools. This problem may grow worse in the future. In addition, districts that closed schools said closures were not based on failure to meet AYP targets as the spirit of NCLB would dictate. Instead, financial concerns and declining enrollments drove decisions. Until schools have adequate funding, it may be unrealistic to suppose that all schools in restructuring will have the resources to implement the multiple strategies necessary to consistently meet AYP targets.

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